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Creating Future Together: Problems and Perspectives of Inclusive Education in Russia

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Acknowledgements

Summary

The system of education in Russia undergoes deep changes and the schools experience transformation being influenced by governmental reforms and market economy. Yet the philosophy of inclusion is shadowed in public policy agenda. This paper is devoted to the issues of exclusion and inclusion of persons with disabilities in educational policies.

In the first section of the paper the key literature on inequality in education and key concepts of educational policy are overviewed. In the second section the background and context for inclusion in Russia is described with the short overview of the history of special education and with the emphasis on the current legislative conditions for inclusion.

The research findings are discussed in the third section of the paper, including the concept, method, sample and the results of the survey, interviews and case studies. This section analyzes peculiarities of hidden curriculum in a Russian boarding school for children with disabilities, and discusses the ways how special education constructs the students' identities. In particular, practices of socialization in an educational institution for children with motor impairments are considered using the qualitative methodology of ethnographic observation and interviews. This section goes on to analyze the attitudes of contemporary mainstream school

students towards an idea of inclusive education and considers the case of integration of a disabled child into a regular school settings.

The final section of the paper contains policy recommendations and outlines the perspectives for educational policy analysis.

Literature and concepts

Analysis of disability in a context of education makes it possible to problematize social inequality in spite of the fact that since the Enlightenment, education is considered as a means to achieve equality. Sociological research into education conducted in the West and in Russia since 1960s have shown that education tends to reproduce social inequality. According to David Konstantinovski, the myth of equality of opportunities was one of the most attractive ideological concepts for socialist state, until it has been challenged by sociologists (Konstantinovski, 1999: P.5). In 1960-s there was a considerable breakthrough made by the group of the researchers led by Vladimir Shubkin (Shubkin et al., 1964), whish demonstrated that Soviet society is not at all free of inequality in educational system, that it is characterized by the same processes of status transmission that any other modern society (Konstantinovski, 1999: 5-6). Soviet sociologists studied social stratification, mechanisms of social mobility, related to the system of education (Aitov, 1968; Ikonnikova, 1974; Rutkevitch, Filippov, 1970, Titma, 1975).

Research conducted in the United States and Great Britain in 1960-1970s has demonstrated that the social and family conditions of the student have the biggest impact on the results of school education, which in turn determines the level of income of a person in the future (Ashline, Pezzullo, Norris 1966, Coleman 1966, Jenks 1979). The effectiveness of a learning process is influenced by the social class of a student, that defines unequal status the student receives due to his/her house, district, social environment (Giddens, 1999: 398). These research have stimulated a discussion about the necessity of integrated education of children from difference racial and social groups.

In British sociological research of 1980s the hypothesis was verified about the factors of social inequality outside the school. At the same time, new questions have been posed, why schools themselves are tended to maintain and reproduce inequality (Bloom 1981). However, as the researchers suggested, improving the quality of teaching, creating a healthy social climate at school and applied specialization of the school education, will help children from poor families and children with special educational needs to succeed academically.

Since the mid-1960s it became clear for the researchers of education that children with disabilities, especially graduates of the residential special schools are

becoming a part of the least qualified social-professional groups, being on the low status positions, which do not require quality education or skills, get low income and have the lowest prestige (Davis, Moore 1966). Receiving quality education by children with disabilities is prevented by the multiple structural limitations, that are characteristic for the societies with the complex stratification structure. The concept of deprivation related to the poverty, disability and other forms of low quality of social well-being has become a major term in British and American research of 1970-1980s. Research in UK in 1970s-1980s led by M.Brown and N.Madge (Brown & Madge 1982) have demonstrated the difficulties of definition and finding deprivation that is presented in variety of forms. They introduced a concept of "multiple deprivation", that means intersection and interrelation of factors of unequal access to various social values

A phenomenon of "transmitted deprivation" was discussed along with the concepts of deprivation cycle and poverty cycle, which have been invented by Lewis and other US researchers of so called "poverty culture". This concept was used to explain a vicious cycle of socialization into a certain culture and was later criticized for its stigmatization effects.

A significant influence on the understanding of inequality of education was made by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977). According to Bourdieu, education is an instrument of symbolic violence in a form of classification conflicts, in which the antagonist groups are trying to impose their own classification schemes as the only legitimate. In this and in his later works Bourdieu suggests to search for an answer to a classic sociological question concerning the reproduction of social inequality within the system of education and in other institutions of culture. The schools and universities retranslate initially unequal conditions into the different degree of giftedness; that is why only those with a certain habitus, who possesses the necessary social and cultural dispositions, can get into the universities being initially open for all.

An issue of the intellectual development and ways of its assessment in educational system (Iensen 1977) was an important focus in the research of inside world of school. In my opinion, as far as the Russian children with disabilities are studying both in special and in regular schools, two types of classification conflicts exist: related to identity formation and to academic achievement. As the teachers feel responsible for the outcomes of education, while the schools are rated by the level of academic success, as a result, the attention is paid to the best, to the most gifted and capable (A review of the national educational policy, 2000: 15), and children with disabilities become deprived and expelled down to low levels of the social and academic school hierarchy. In order to study these issue it would be necessary to refer to the theories of language codes (Bernstein, 1976),

organizational anthropology and hidden curriculum, as well as cultural reproduction (Illich, 1877).

In several countries of the world, starting since 1970s, there is a considerable development in elaboration of legislative acts and implementation of educational policies concerning the widening of educational opportunities of persons with disabilities. Implementation of such acts and other measures is classified as positive (or reverse) discrimination as a system of privileges which provide equal opportunities to a group which is otherwise discriminated against in the society. In order to make the system of positive discrimination to function, the special measures are taken that are called affirmative action – measures that promote representatives of minority through the shortening of privileges of majority. Politicians, scholars and activists of civil society today discuss a questions of vulnerable population to quality secondary and higher education.

In recent history of educational policy in the US and Europe USA several approaches have been developed: desegregation of schools, widening participation, integration, mainstreaming, inclusion. Mainstreaming means that the learners with disabilities are included in general education classes to increase their social interaction opportunities but not necessarily to address their educational goals. Integration refers to such a strategy when learners with disabilities attend the same school but not necessarily the same classes. Finally, inclusion means organization of a school so that all students who would usually be assigned to it are educated with their age-peers. Inclusion means a continuum of services that is needed for an individual student.

To clarify the difference between the inclusion and integration, let us present their features in a table:

Inclusion	Integration
Including someone from the start	Returning someone back in
All children need to be included in the educational and social life of their neighborhood school	Meeting needs of certain categories of children
All students are provided the supports to be successful, secure and welcome	Adjusting special needs children to regular school environment, which basically remains the same

All the concepts noted above are based on a several theoretical perspectives: theory of social justice, social systems theory in regard to human development, social constructionism, information society, structuralism and social criticism. In regards to the systems theory it is important to mention the works of U.Bronfenbrenner who has shown that human development as the process through

which growing person acquires a more extended, differentiated, and valid conception of the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It happens so because children are being involved with greater interest into the more actions and contacts, changing their social environment. Therefore, we should not control individuals but help them develop self-management and decision-making capabilities.

A similar idea was presented by Breme (Breme 1975), who says that each human being has his/her own curriculum, own rules, and we cannot participate in any group activity unless we learnt the rules of the group. Therefore, the students should learn how to survive at a school, while the teachers should teach them not just academic skills but social and organizational structure of a school. At the same time, the teachers should remember that the rules are different outside the school. Therefore, while the conditions of a residential special school can be as comfortable and nurturing as possible, the students are not adjusted to the post-school independent life. The nature of a school becomes a problematic issue for the students with disabilities. In special segregated education we face with a dilemma of helping children to survive at school while we should constantly help them to develop skills of self-management, decision making, to develop independent living skills for adulthood.

A US scholar Jane Mercer has stressed in her research (Mercer 1971) that each social system gives a person new definitions, therefore, disability is a result of societal conventions (Mercer, 1970). She has shown on empirical evidence that many students who were seen incompetent in school were competent in other social systems.

The legislative acts of 1977 and 1990s in the US have guaranteed education for all disabled children in the least restricted environment. In 1962 M.Reynholds introduced (Reynholds 1962), and later E.Deno developed (Deno 1970) a concept of "cascade of services" which is a continuum model for service delivery for an individual student from education at a hospital and home based education to special schools, link classes and finally, to ordinary classes of regular schools. In the latest case we can talk about inclusion – a concept which was first introduced by Mrs. Madlene Will an ex-assistant of the State Secretary of the Department of Education in the US (Will 1986). Since then a concept of inclusive education is developing and today it is understood as a commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It means bringing the support services to the child rather than moving the child to the services. Principles of inclusive education are as follows:
- ➢ Various needs of the disabled students should correspond with a continuum of services, including such educational environment, which is the least restrictive and the most inclusive

- Arranging physical and organizational conditions to accommodate the unique needs of each student
- Providing every student any services (s)he might need: physical, occupational, or speech therapy, instruction in Braille, sign language, mobility and orientation training, computer for communication
- Challenging every student to go as fast and as far as possible to fulfilling his or her unique potential
- Developing and maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere important to learning for all students

Background and contemporary context for inclusive education in Russia

Speaking shortly, the Russian history of societal attitudes towards people with different impairments can be traced back to the middle ages and considered as including the following stages:

- From aggression and intolernace (XV-XVI centuries legislation) towards acknowledgment of the necessity of social care (XVIII c.)
- Discovery of learning capabilities of deaf and blind children (XVIII c.), individual teaching, first special education settings (early XIX c.)
- Acknowledgment of the educational rights of "abnormal" children, establishing institutions of special education (late XIX c.)

The first institutions where children with impairment could get education have been developed under the support of church and philanthropies. In Soviet Russia special education became a responsibility of the State. Secularized state system of education and upbringing was developing under the conditions of inadequate financial resources. There was serious lack of facilities for the deaf, blind and mentally delayed children. A prominent Russian and Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotski has developed a theory of social conditioning of child development: "The development of a defective child is conditioned by a) the feeling of low social value of oneself, b) the social adjustment to the normal conditions of environment" (Vygotski, 1929). Therefore, a disabled child has special needs, which are to be met to prevent his/her handicap. In 1920s a concept "deficient child" was introduced by Vygotsky and a discipline "defektologia" was established. In 1930s there was a tren to develop a system of special education to include not only "deficient" but also "disorganized" children. During economical growth of 1950-60s a wide network of special residential schools was created in Soviet Union.

Special education in the late Soviet period may be in short characterized by the following developments: Children are classified as "capable and incapable of learning"; a concept "disabled child" (rebenok-invalid) is introduced in 1979 following the ratification of international legislation. In the rhetoric of official agenda of the post-Soviet period there is a recognition of the necessity to move

from equal rights to equal opportunities; from institutionalization to integration (1990s). During this period the terms "children with special educational needs", "children with limited abilities" are discussed; a term "Special education" is sometimes used instead of "defektologia". In Russia today special education is a complex system of different types of school, vocational colleges and institutions. It includes kindergartens for children three to six years old, special boarding schools with ten years of study for children aged seven and above, vocational schools, with three years of study. There are also nursing homes for children and adolescents considered "non-educable" due to the diagnosis of severe mental retardation, as well as psycho-neurological nursing homes for children and adolescents with diagnosis of severe mental disorder – both these institutions belong not to the system of education but to the system of labour and social development.

According to national statistics, there are 1800 thousand (5%) children with different impairments; more than 500 thousand children with special educational needs who are studying at 1905 special schools including residential schools (some of the students receive home-based education) or in special classes in regular schools (210 thousand students). Each year about 27 thousand graduates are coming out of special, correctional and residential schools. Only every 5th of them enters vocational educational institution for further qualification, and every 10th gets employed.

In Saratov region (2 mln population) there are about 1,5 thousand (1479) schools including 29 special schools (8 types of special schools) for children with intellectual and physical disabilities. All school students 362 658 (about 600 thousand – incl. vocational schools 'PTU'), 4206 children with special educational needs. Comparing to 1999 the number of such students in 2000 increased by 4%. The number of link classes (special classes in mainstream schools) decreased by 18%. Comparing to 1999 (9,100) by 2000 there were 9,300 thousand disabled children in Saratov region (since 2000 the age for the definition of 'child with disability' is considered 18). The biggest proportion of the disabled children 59% are 8-14 yrs old, the second big group 21% are children 4-7 yrs, 59,9% of the disabled children are boys. Among the population of the disabled children with disabilities 90% are in families.

Does Federal Law favor and/or require inclusion?

The bill of Russian Federation "Concerning the education for people with limited abilities (special education)" which is waiting for its approval by the President of Russian Federation since 1996 emphasizes the opportunity for disabled children to study in regular schools. The report of State Board of Russia "Contemporary educational policy" of 2001year points to the priority of integrated (inclusive) education for disabled children: "Children with disabilities should be

supplied by state medical, psychological support and special conditions for study, predominantly in secondary schools according to their living place, with rare exception – in boarding schools". At present time integrated education could be considered as the priority of state educational policy in Russia. The transition to inclusive education is predetermined by Russia's ratification of U.N. Convention of children and disabled rights.

Meanwhile, the majority of schools, colleges and universities are not ready to meet the entrants with disabilities: there are no special constructions, special programs designed for such kind of education. Equal rights and opportunities do not exclude, but on the contrary, suppose the creation of educational sphere for disabled (personal tutor, special lifts and elevators in every educational center, special keyboards for people with visual impairments). Only several institutes of higher education have centers for study of disabled students.

Modern social policy in the sphere of higher education is not based upon class principle, but on categorical approach. Besides, the institutes of higher education have comparative freedom in admitting the students. The legislation regulates access to higher education for citizens of Russia and legitimates certain conditions for entering colleges. It's confirmed by several documents, first of all by the Education Act of Russian Federation Education, adopted in June 1992 whish guarantees conditions for vulnerable social groups regarding their positive discrimination: "To admit without a competition to the state-based and municipal institutes of higher education following persons: orphans and children without guardianship, disabled children, disabled persons of I and II categories, … children with one parent, children with disabled parents, discharges, persons from low income families, … war disabled, successfully passed the entrance examinations and have no counter-indications for studies". However, is an issue of quality of secondary education for those social groups that are listed in the Act.

Research: method and findings

The research design represents a multi-methodological model and includes three types of studies: ethnographic case studies (case study in a residential school for disabled children, case study of a disabled child in a regular school), series of interviews with school administrators and officials of the department of education, and survey of three types of social actors – school students, parents and teachers.

Case study at residential school

In context of social and economic transformation of the last ten years in Russia a school for children with motor impairments experience changes but at the same time it reproduces Soviet stereotypes and educational discourses. This section discusses cultural forms which support positive identities and friendships but at the

same time nurture patriarchal and disabling structures of communication and socialization. An inside world and organizational culture of the residential school is observed with its features of isolation, power hierarchy, social segregation which contributes to the life style of the disabled. This segregation is reinforced through a strong social control, not just through manifest discipline and punishment, but also through the hidden curriculum.

Close and familial relations within the classroom are joined by a strong social control, lack of privacy at the school and deficit of parental involvement into their children's education. The latent goal of this system is to form such individuals, which can survive on everyday base, who can cope with daily needs. However, the politics of special education for children with disabilities marginalize children and limits their social orientations and perspectives. The liberal democratic vision of education as the vehicle for individual development and greater social equality does not correspond with separate school system which develop a problem of educational inequality. The individuals who are recipients of education cannot be identified as the source of the problem, rather, the special education system itself demonstrates its inadequacy with the notion of human rights.

Method

The methodology of this research combines survey, in-depth interviews, and ethnographical case-studies. Survey has focused on the study of public attitudes towards inclusive education. Ethnographical case study (Bassey 1999) helps study an institution in frameworks of a concept of hidden curriculum that, according to R.M.Hall and B.R.Sandler, is understood as verbal and non-verbal communication practices in education (Hall, Sandler 1982) and depicted by M.Stubbs as meta-communication which is a means of social control (Stubbs 1976). Hidden curriculum includes following elements (Wood 1994): (i) organizational culture of an institution, (ii) content of subjects, and (iii) teaching style. These three dimensions of hidden curriculum not just reflect stereotypes of gender and disability, but also reinforce social inequality by constructing identities according to symbolic classifications of feminine and masculine, disabled and able-bodied. The research intends to pragmatic tradition (Giarelli 1988) trying to influence the widening educational chances of children with disabilities.

Context and case

A boarding school in focus of our study includes both elementary and secondary levels. The school was founded in 1960 as a residential educational facility for children who were affected by polio disease. That polio epidemic happened in Russia in early 1950s. Today school accepts children from 7 years old

who have motor impairments of different kinds – mainly the polio and cerebral palsy. It needs to be stressed, however, that the school building is inappropriate for special needs so that the children with severe motor impairments, those in wheel-chairs cannot study here neither they are denied the access to public activity in a wider context due to the physical barriers, unadjusted transportation, buildings, toilets and elevators.

Among the students today there are orphans, children whose parents have lost parental rights, as well as kinds from well-to-do families. There are two types of groups in the school: A and B. The 'A' group is for children with developmental delays (intellectual disabilities). The 'B' group is for children without intellectual delays. There may also be cases of speech-language, hearing and visual impairments. In such cases children will be placed into A or B group according to their intellectual ability, a diagnosis, which is often questioned by parents and professionals, so at least one case we discovered when a child has been transferred from one group to another a few times.

Some children stay over the weekend, some – overnight several days per week, others are here only during the day. The more children stay overnight, the more likely they are coming from lower income families. The orphans live in the boarding school. Anyway, the population of students is very diverse in terms of social class. This situation is unlike the Russian educational system in general where the schools become more and more differentiated according to the status of families of the students. In a boarding school the factor of child's disability plays more important role than the social status of his or her parents. At the same time, this does not equate the social chances of children as the families with higher income invest additional money into home tutoring and they also use their social capital in getting for their child access to higher education.

Gender and disability at the school

Hidden curriculum is analyzed in aspects of organizational structure and culture, content of lessons, and methods of communication. Gender and disability are embedded into organizational structure and culture. All teachers except for the principal, electrician and mechanic all teachers and mentors (mentors work with residents) are female. Authoritarian style of management and discourse of power contributes to the creating sense of hierarchy, discipline and military-like institution. We discovered the absence of big mirrors in bedrooms and toilets. The girls bedrooms are located on the second floor with the class rooms located between them which contributes to the lack of privacy. The rooms of girls differ from the boys rooms in that on the girls beds there are toys – one doll or one stuffed animal to the right high corner (very identically located on each bed).

Following peculiarities of a boarding school contributes to construction of disability:

- Medical services are provided at school comparing to community health services for ordinary children and a minimum of medical service at mainstream school.
- ·Individualised programs comparing to mass education at a mainstream school.
- Life skills classes, occupational classes comparing to a learning such skills in everyday life by an ordinary child, special physical training (OT) comparing to sport classes at mainstream school.
- ·Pre-school class to prepare a child for a school.
- Absence of high school group: after graduating 10 years in boarding school, the child should go to vocational school, nursing home, or if the mainstream school graduation is desired, to the 10th grade of mainstream school to study for another two years.
- "Inclusive schooling" in terms of multiple disabilities in addition to the motor impairments of different levels comparing to the "monoculturalism" of the mainstream Russian school.
- The programme is relaxed – one may be out of school for three months for a hospital and then be back and catch up with the program in a week.

We considered symbols which are exposed on the walls inside the buildings: the rules / principles of the school, sentences of the famous people, medical prescriptions, boards with hand-made objects. For example, we considered the "rules of the school" that are the commandments on display on the walls at every classroom and at the ground floor on the news board.

The rules of the school'

1. Do not let yourself down, keep your dignity
2. If you wish to be respected, learn to respect others
3. Be kind with the camrades, do not hurt anybody
4. Nurture your patience, learn to protect yourself
5. Nurture courage in yourself. If you are guilty – do not hide yourself behind the others
6. With all your forces try to study and work, and your life in the boarding school will be interesting
7. Strenghthen your body and character, learn to overcome hardships, and you'll become a real person
8. Love and care for your boarding school – and it always will help you

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The first principle is based upon the negation– it is assumed that the student will shame his/her name. A similar commandment could be formulated instead in the following way: "Be proud of your good deals, achievements. You have human dignity". The second principle needs to be compared with the unconditioned respect of human rights that are inherent to any human being. The third commandment is written in a masculine gender and again in negative structure which could have been positively expressed so: "help each other". The fourth commandment corresponds with the violent practices existing among the kids. Parents report about the fights among kids, that are considered as a norm by the school Principal who, according to our interview with the mother of the disabled child, at the first meeting asked her daughter not about her skills to count but about her skills to fight: "it is necessary to fight because at our school older children often hurt younger ones". In the fifth commandment the misbehaviour and dishonesty are assumed, and the feeling of guilt is imposed on the child. A similar principle of conduct could be depicted in a simple "be honest". Interesting life of the students is limited to studies and work inside the boarding school which in return demands loyalty from its students; the circle of support is limited to the boarding school as well.

The disability is interpreted here as tolerated and just ordinary identity. Children are taught to live with disability, to adjust to it. However, this does not necessarily help to develop highly culturally sensitive and valued social identities for students (McIntosh 2002). The content of lessons effects the construction of gendered and dis-abled identity of a student. Gender is learned through manifest and latent translation of stereotypes during and beyond the lessons. Science and math classes demonstrate clear tendency to gendered teacher-student communication. In their classes, teachers of history, Russian language and social skills use gender-balanced communication model. It appears at the first glance that the life skills and occupational skills classes are not gender-specific: both boys and girls in young age are taught to brash their teeth and to take on clothes, to use post office, to shop, and to cook, to sew clothes and stuffed toys, with one exception: the girls are not taught carpentry. However, the occupational skills class is taught separately for older boys and girls is conducted separately for girls and boys and by different teachers. It is assumed the girls will go on for vocational school for seamstresses or training for typing (computer word processing – although such a chance will be very rare), while the boys will get the training in shoemaking, carpentry, TV or radio repair. None of the subjects in the boarding school addresses the issue of disability except for the social skills class that is focused on vocational choices and practicing everyday occupations such as using different services at post office, paying bills, etc. However, the importance of open discussions of disability and gender, sexuality, rights and supportive networks is

obvious as the graduates of this school are not prepared to live in the society after they have for years been nurtured and fostered by the institution.

Gender stereotypes are expressed in everyday communication and in our interviews. According to teachers, the girls must be obedient, assiduous, accurate, not intellectual: Interviewer: "May we talk to the children concerning the graduation party?" Respondent: "You'd better come next week, because now there are only two girls. Boys are more active, more intelligent, they have more humour. The girls unlikely will propose you something worthy"; "In her situation, she must be even more accurate"; "a boy can find somebody to take care for him, while the girls – they must be clean, neat!"

The disability discourse is hidden. A teacher never says to a child 'you are disabled'. The words 'disability, disabled' never sound in this school. However, disability is being communicated, taught and learned through micro-practices of everyday life in this school. For example, although every teacher encourages children to do the job but their attitude is not a demand: if the children do not prepare homework (which happens all the time), the teachers do not insist. The level of academic demand is rather low. As a result the curriculum does not correspond to the program of mainstream school which makes it very difficult for the student to catch up if (s)he would like to transfer there in order to continue for higher education. The standards for education in this school have been even lowered since previous years according to the teachers who work here for a long time.

In the interview with a female student, 17 years we see the effect of stigma (Goffman 1986) of disabled identity which is imposed on children not just by institution and system of special education but also by the societal attitudes towards disability in Russian society: "What are you saying? An institute? I won't be able to go there. Why? Why should I? I sew very good!" Teachers in the interviews are focused on impossibility or unlikeness of personal lives or professional careers of children in the future.

While in education research throughout the world the issues of inclusive education are debated and the different experiences of inclusion are discussed (Daniels and Garner 2000; Shevlin et all. 2002), in Russia the majority of children with disability are taught in segregated schools. Poor developments of special school system in post-socialist countries has been depicted in international studies (Moore and Dunn 1999). In context of social and economic transformation of the last ten years in Russia a school for the children with motor impairments experience changes but at the same time it reproduces Soviet stereotypes and educational discourses. The transition from socialism to market has worsened the conditions of special school system due to significant decrease in public financing of boarding school, lack of specialists who goes to special education upon their

graduation because of inappropriate salary on one hand, and because of possibilities to be employed in private sector, on another.

We observed cultural forms which support positive identities and friendships but at the same time nurture patriarchal and disabling structures of communication and socialization. One cultural form is an inside world and organizational culture of the boarding school with its features of isolation, power hierarchy, social segregation which is contributes to the life style of the disabled. Sometimes this segregation is reinforced through a stronger social control, through the hidden curriculum. Close and familial relations within the classroom are joined by a strong social control, lack of privacy at the school and deficit of parental involvement into their children's education. While classroom babysits, the school polices (Hurst 1991: 187), and the separation of the family from the classroom and school reflects wider processes of isolating the disabled from the society. Another cultural form which is reproduced among the students: the difference in social class, urban/rural background, presence or absence of a family, different plans for the career. It is likely that such differences effect children's conflicts. Conflicts exist between parents and teachers, teachers and children, among the teachers as well as violent relations among the children.

Peculiarities of special education have both positive and negative effects on children. As it is seen at the boarding school, centralization of services – educational and medical services at one place – means cost-effectiveness for the state, as well as time and energy savings for children and parents. At the same time it leads to medicalization of special education (Bart 1984), and all problems in children's academic development are considered from the point of view of medical experts who have a big power here. Physical environment at the school which we studied is not adjusted to the needs of children with severe motor impairments and they are getting home-based educational services. Comparing to mainstream school the number of students is less, boarding school it is not overcrowded which decreases the risks of trauma. Besides, student-staff ratio here provides much more possibilities for individualized teacher-student interactions. The boarding school has a special curriculum – it is individualized, adjusted to the needs of every child but at the same time the paternalistic attitude towards children with disabilities leads to the low demands on the academic side of the school program while the everyday skills and occupational skills are also taught insufficiently. Social interactions are limited here to the contacts among the disabled children and their tutors and teachers; friendships with non-disabled peers are very rare cases. The teachers report, the children from surrounded houses do not come to play together with residents due to the recent decline in the neighbourhood culture (yard games) in Russia.

The ratification of state standard in professional rehabilitation of disabled people lies ahead, just as organization of the retraining and raising the skills level in the conditions of integrated education. Institutes if higher education must develop their activity to achieve "barrierless" environment and to create new technologies of education. However, it will take place only after elaborating the federal conception of the continuous professional education for disabled persons, its legal support and recommendation for curricula at those institutes where disabled students study.

Survey

In March-September of 2002 a survey has been conducted in order to learn about the attitudes of 289 school students, 276 teachers and 260 parents towards an idea of inclusive education.

Parents and teachers have somewhat similar opinion towards the inclusion, although in general parents are more tolerant than the teachers. Answering the question "Is integration possible?", the parents demonstrated greater positive attitude towards inclusion of children of all types of impairment (Figure 1).
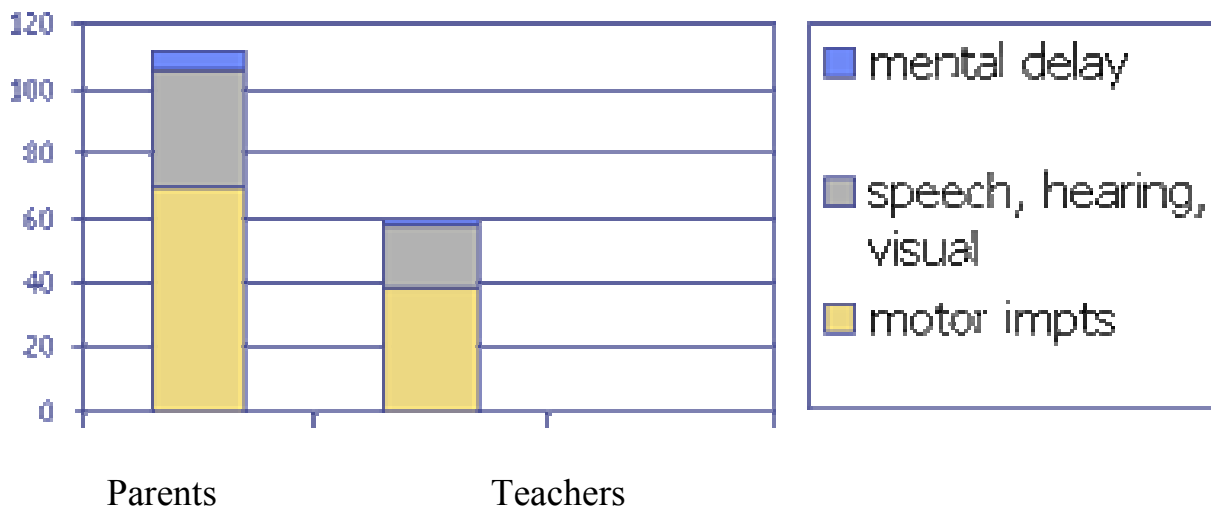
Parents   Teachers

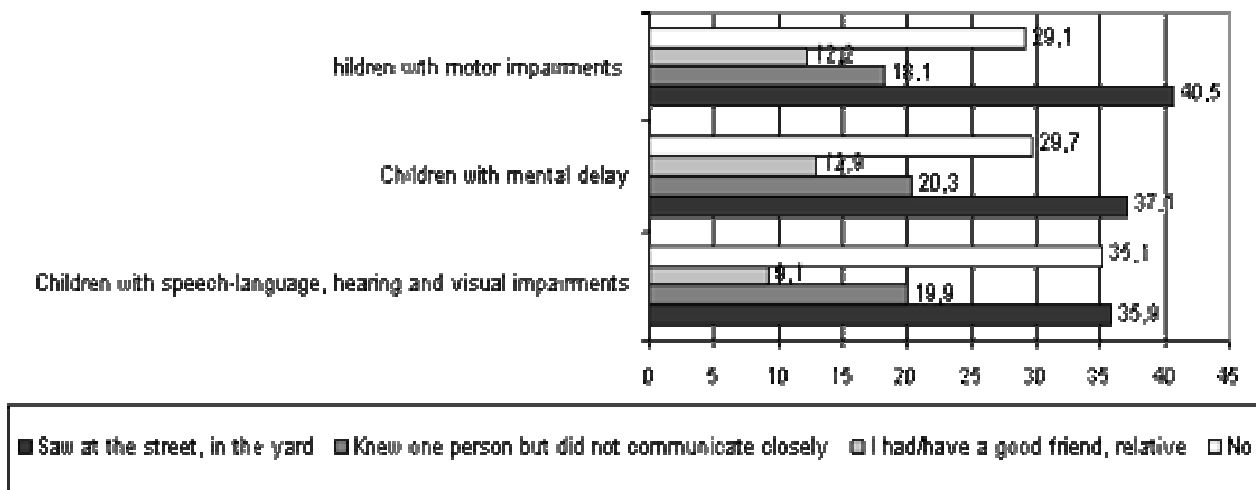**Figure 1. Is integration possible? (Parents N=260 and teachers N=276)**

We asked both parents and teachers for their personal agreement about inclusion, and about 80% of parents answered positively to a question "Would you personally agree if a child with motor disability would study together with your child?". At the same time, only 16 % of teachers answered "yes" to the question "Would you personally like to see children with motor impairments in the groups you work with?", while 32% said "No" and 52% had difficulty to answer this question. It may be explained through the fact that inclusionary policy would obviously affect a teacher's professional position (Figure 2).

Figure 2. How would inclusion affect a teacher's professional position? (Teachers N=276)

| □ Futher qualification | ■ No change | □ Easy adjust |
| □ Hard to say | ■ Cannot adjust | |
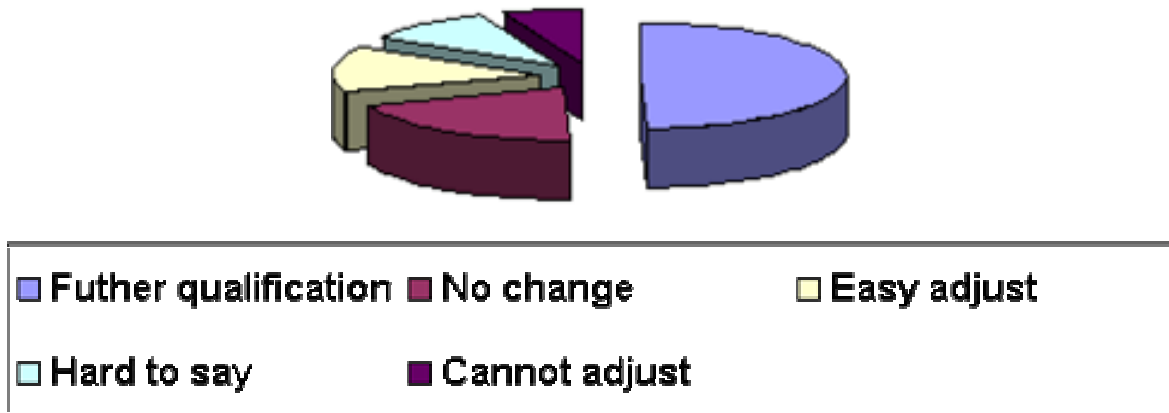
Both parents and teachers answered similarly to the question "What prevents inclusion?", ranking the obstacles from the unadjusted physical environment, inadequate financing of the schools, to the quality of teaching, lack of specially adjusted educational programs, social inequality within a society, and lack of legislative base. Such factors as negative social attitude and parental preferences were ranked with the lowest scores.

It's necessary to notice that only a small number of the students never mentioned children with disabilities in our society. Approximately 40% have seen them in the street, 20% have been acquainted without any communications, and 10% have been in touch with them (figure 3).

■ Saw at the street, in the yard ■ Knew one person but did not communicate closely □ I had/have a good friend, relative □ No

Figure 3. Are there persons with disabilities among your friends or relatives? (School students N=289)

The analysis shows that the closest contacts, characterizing the relations between good friends and relatives, are put into practice among respondents and children with motor impairments (12,4%) and mental disorder (12,9%). Contacts between respondents and children with speech, hearing, vision impairments occurrarely (9,1%). Children with visible disability are among those who have been seen in the street by our pupils (40,5%). So, approximately 70% of questioned school students demonstrate different knowledge of disability's problem. The fact, that only small proportion the school students could make the acquaintance with disabled children, proves its small possibility, which is enclosed by institutional frames, especially by the structure of educational system.

The dilemma of segregated special education is two-sided: on the one hand it helps to combine medical and teaching skills, one the other, it prevents social integration of disabled children and promote their segregation and limitation in their life chances. Children and their parents are dissatisfied with this situation, which is not in accordance with the reformative intentions of the modern educational system in Russia. But as a whole, one can see the importance of a new approach to social policy, which replaces the technocratic discourse. Inclusive education provides the humanistic alternative and allows decreasing the process of marginalization of disabled children (Iarskaia-Smirnova, Loshakova 2002).

Inclusive education during the process of introduction may run into the organizational difficulties of physical barriers (ramps, one-storied school building, using the gesture-translators, reconstructing of public places), and with such social obstacles as stereotypes and prejudices, refusal to admit differing children into the group of peers.
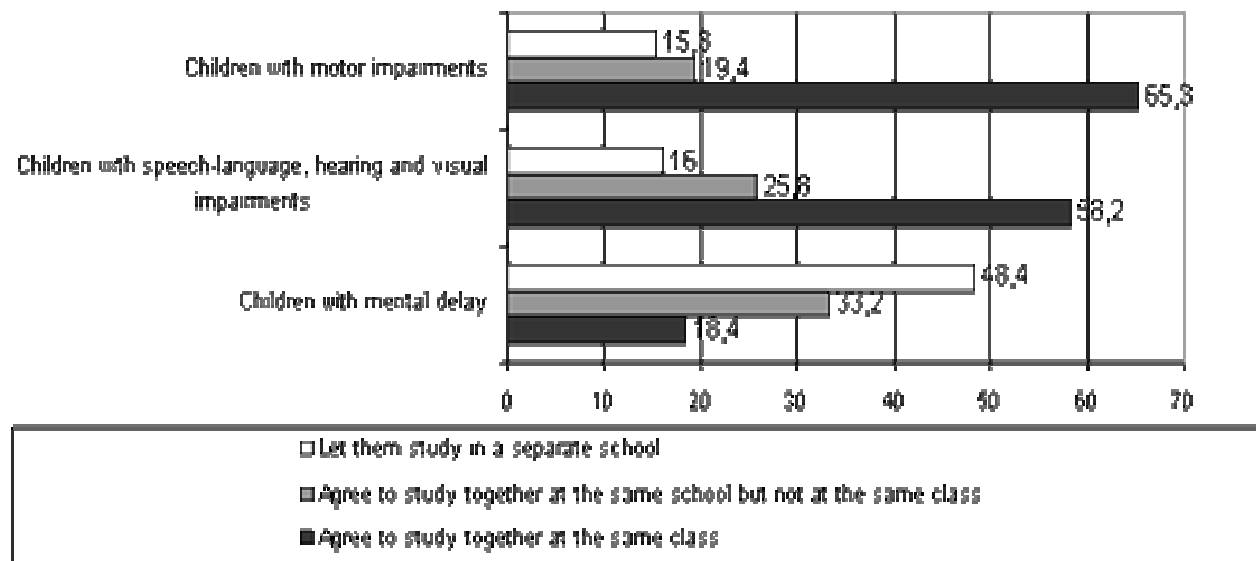

Figure 4 . What do you think of integration with disabled children in same school? (N=289)

As we can see, the school students feel the most tolerance towards children with motor impairments, less – to children with speech, hearing and vision impairments. The lowest level of tolerance is concerned children with mental delay – almost half of the pupils wish them to study separately, at another school. It's evident, that in this case we are dealing with deeply rooted stereotype, stigma of mental retardation, which forms serious barriers for integration of these children and adults to the society. The distribution of the answers to the question about possibility of communication with disabled children points to this fact. There are groups with the negative attitude towards disability (up to 5,9%) regarding children with motor activity, speech, hearing, vision impairment, but the deepest intolerance is mentioned toward children with mental delay (figure 5).
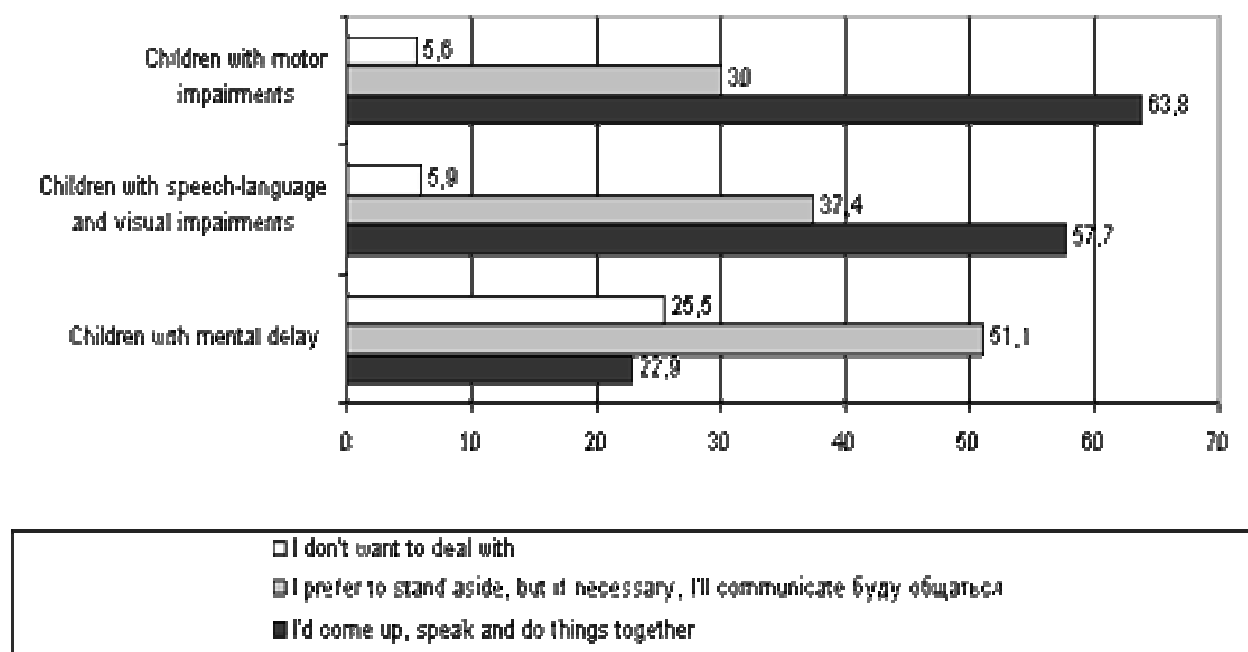

Figure 5. What about your communication with disabled children? (N=289)

With the help of our research we clarified the high school students attitudes toward inclusive education of disabled children, who have difficulties in movements, hearing, speech or vision, mental delay. The research shows gender differences in correlation between the attitude towards disabled. Girls notice the children with disabilities more often, and they show positive attitude: including the attitude towards studying together and communicating. We have checked different factors of tolerance, including age, gender, social economic status of the family, type of impairment, and experience. It turned out that the character of this attitude

depends on several factors, the most significant is the experience of contacts with the disabled in everyday life. The essential differences in the opinion is between those who haven't seen the disabled in the street, and those who have got relatives or friends with disability. About 35% of children, who have the experience of contacts with disabled persons, are ready to study together in the same class.

Though there is the demonstration of intolerance to disability, the majority of respondents are sure in the necessity to undertake special measures for equality (85%). Just as the answers point to the self experience of contacts with disabled. More than a half of respondents consider that there is a need to assist in perceiving them without prejudice, approximately 40% are sure that it's necessary to help the disabled children to live and work without limitation in their movements – sound traffic lights, ramps for wheelchairs, facilities in public places and transport.

Interviews with the officials of the Department of Education and school administration

The officials and administrators in principle support integration but excluding children with mental delay from the inclusion policies. They stress the necessity to remain special education for children with severe disabilities and for the orphans. The main difficulties of transition to inclusion according to the interviewed are as follows:

1) Lack of legislative base for implementation of inclusive education
2) Inadequate financial base of educational system, which prevents proper staffing and technical development of the program

School administrators and officials of the department of education believe that children with motor impairments to be integrated at the first place – who can "normally" keep up with the curriculum, however, they think that those in wheel-chairs will not be capable to follow up as they are limited in mobility. To introduce inclusion, according to the experts, it needs to increase state budget for overall educational system and to raise non-state funds

Case study at a regular school

In several states of Eastern Europe the policy towards integration of children with special needs into the mainstream schools has been successful (Education for All 1998), while in the others such a strategy nor is has recognised yet as a feature of democracy, neither the economic effects of integration have been studied. The research of inside world of special school may not just provide educators and policy makers with critical assessment of segregated school system. It may help better understand special educational needs of the students if an official policy of integration is to take place. Nowadays there are a few students with motor disabilities in Russian mainstream schools, however, the research is demanded in

such cases of inclusion. Such research could be stimulating tools for teachers as well as for students with and without disabilities in developing effective strategies of learning and positive communication (see for example Kershner and Chaplain 2001).

In Russia there are several preschool and school settings mainly in Moscow and in some other regions. Some of them are developing as pilot projects with the support of Soros foundation. However, our hypothesis is that as a rule children with disabilities who have the privilege to study at regular schools, are enrolled in a typical school settings that are not adjusted to special conditions of inclusive environment and the principles of inclusion are not recognised by the staff.

A longitudinal case study was conducted at a regular school where a girl Masha with slightly visible motor impairment (caused by cerebral palsy) was enrolled. She has previously studied for one year at a residential school for motor impaired children and her mother was dissatisfied with the level of academic success her daughter could achieve due to a very relaxed educational program at a special school. After a year, the mother decided to bring her child to a school, which was located at the nearest distance from their home. A girl, whose documents contained a medical record prescribing her to study at a special institution, failed the entering test. In spite of all efforts the mother received only the following explanation: "she has a narrow worldview". At the private meeting the school principle told the mother: "I do not want your child at my school because this school is a very good one and is often visited by the Governor. What if he would see a cripple here?"

The mother decided to change the tactics and falsified the documents with the help of her friend MD. Now the girl did not have such a prescription that prevented her from entering a regular school. In the same year, the mother took her to another school, which was far away from their home but was also a good one. Although without a record but with visible impairment, a girl receives special attention at the entering test:

An entering test (8yrs):
-Let's see, you know all the means of transportation except for one.
-There is not any other.
-Yes, it is an airplane.
-But my mom does not like airplanes!

With this only "bad" answer the girl receives a permission to become a student of first grade this school. Naturally, the mother keeps in secret that Masha has already finished the first grade in a school for the disabled.

In 2001 we have filmed this case and made a TV program on the problems and perspectives of inclusive education. The mother, the child, the class tutor and the principle were in support of each other and of the situation itself. Masha has played with other children in her class, she was considered as a good student. Two years later the situation changed. The rigidity and selective approach in organization of primary education, lack of teachers' reflectivity and of professional advise and support, huge workload of the teachers and big sizes of the classes lessened the chances of inclusion. A class tutor in the interview told us about the difficulties of teaching this child. She has focused not just on her own incapacities to cope but rather on the behavior or intellectual development of Masha, which she classified as abnormal. As an illustration, she has explained us why we did not see Masha's drawing among the other children's works at the exhibition on a wall in school corridor:

Drawing an illustration for a fable (10 yrs):
"Her drawing will be removed from exposition. She should've focused on a crow instead of a pine-tree!.."

Such situation when the child and the teacher are left without any supervision and without adequate resources to fulfill educational goals, leads to abuses of power and practices of semi-corruption:

•Mother: Our class tutor told me: "Not only your daughter. We have a few students with low scores. I am going to expel them from the class Administration said me, it is up to me. You see?"
•Interviewer: So what do you think, she meant?
•Mother: Well, I am glad the 8th March is very soon, so we're gonna settle this down for a while.

After two weeks of making observations, collecting interviews and participating in classes, we have been rejected by the school principle to continue our work. She referred to a class tutor who should be paid some bonus for the

trouble we make by sitting in the class (a graduate student was present at the classes and no teacher complained or rejected her to participate). Our offer to compensate the trouble to the class tutor was received with anger and we had to leave the field. Right now we achieved an agreement in a City Committee for education to conduct case studies at several schools in Saratov. We hope to come back to this school, too.

Policy implications

The politics of special education for children with disabilities marginalize children and limits their social orientations and perspectives. The latent goal of this system is to form such individuals which can survive on everyday base, who can cope with daily needs. The liberal democratic vision of education as the vehicle for individual development and greater social equality does not correspond with separate school system which develop a problem of educational inequality. The individuals who are recipients of education cannot be identified as the source of the problem, rather, the special education system itself demonstrates its inadequacy with the notion of human rights. The opinion of the key actors of the educational system – teachers, parents and children – is favorable towards the idea of inclusion as a project. At the same time, when it comes to a real life situation, a very practical concern arises, that hinders the true inclusion of the child. The most important concern is that the system of education remains unchangeable when it integrates a child with special needs who succeeds in graduating a regular school only due to enormous energy to be spent by parents and teachers. This often leads to burnout effects, to abuses of power and to withdrawal of the child from the regular school setting.

Principal criticisms of current practice of education

1) The part of teachers don't expect the special-ed children to succeed, and unwittingly fulfill their own prophecy.

2) Regular classroom teachers are willing to refer even slightly problematic learners to special education (and out of their classrooms).

3) There is a stigma associated with being placed in special education that damages a student's self-esteem. Undesirable in itself, this also interferes with learning.

4) Handicapped and non-handicapped children are unexposed to each other. A divided school experience makes each group more ready to accept discrimination against the handicapped in the future.

5) No special conditions are created for the integrated class, neither special training nor support staff is provided, which makes the teachers feel unsupported

and overwhelmed, blaming the victim which is the child and the family (predominantly the mother)

How to overcome exclusion within the inclusive settings

Appeal processes must be developed that allow teachers to challenge the rightness of inclusive education placements that they determine to be inappropriate for a child.

At the same time, supervision and independent expertise should be available to avoid teachers' collaboration and discrimination against the child and parents.

Successful inclusion practices depend on restructured schools that allow for flexible learning environments, with flexible curricula and instruction.

Sufficient support staff, helping professionals should be employed to address the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of all students.

Reduce class sizes and/or increase numbers of teachers in the classroom are necessary

Advantages of inclusive education

1) A reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness

2) Growth in social cognition

3) Improvement in self-concept of non-disabled students. Development of personal principles and ability to assume an advocacy role toward their peers and friends with disabilities

4) Warm and caring friendships

5) Although inclusive education seems likely to improve children's social development more than their academic achievement, the employment rate for high school graduates with special needs who had been in segregated programs is lower than for special needs graduates from integrated programs.

6) Integrated programs are more cost-effective than the traditional ones.

Recommendations for transition

1. The entire school community should be involved in a thoughtful, carefully researched transition.

2. Top-down mandated full inclusion is inappropriate, such directives will polarize parents and teachers and will create environments that are hostile to any change.

3. Before any new programs are developed, the staff must agree on a clearly articulated philosophy of education (an education ethic).

4. Teachers and support staff must be fully involved in the decision-making, planning and evaluation processes; involve parents and students as partners in the decision-making process.

5. Teachers, parents, students and wider society should come to an agreement that diversity is not just a reality to be tolerated, accepted, and accommodated – it is a reality to be valued

Perspectives for policy analysis and implementation
 ➢ We have started an essay writing competition among the school and university students "From tolerance towards cooperation. Disability, Society and Me"
 ➢ An ongoing research project "Access to higher education for people with disabilities" is being conducted under the support of Ford Foundation.
 ➢ Educational policy analysis and advise is provided by a newly established Center for Social Policy and Gender Studies in Saratov
 ➢ A collection of papers "Inclusive Education: Problems and Perspectives" and/or a thematic issue of a newly established Journal of Social Policy Studies is to be published within a few months.
 ➢ Conferences and seminars with school teachers and officials of education are organized.

One of such conferences has recently taken place – a Conference "Education for All: Ways to Integration" 9-10 January, 2003 Saratov, Russia. At this conference different stakeholders of special/inclusive education have been present, in that number, adults with disabilities, teachers of a special residential school, parents of disabled children, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor and Social Development. Some of the recommendations that come out of this conference and are in concert with contemporary research on inclusion, are as follows:

 ➢ •Early intervention to identify appropriate services for a child
 ➢ •Individualized decisions to include any handicapped student in regular education.
 ➢ • Work toward unifying the special education and regular education systems. There should be one system for evaluation of special and regular educational systems
 ➢ •Real inclusion involves restructuring of a school's entire program and requires constant assessment of practices and results.
 ➢ •A restructured system that merges special and regular education must also employ practices that focus on high expectations for all and rejects the prescriptive teaching, remedial approach that leads to lower achievement.

While planning policy measures for social integration, the wider context of inclusion has to be taken into account: with regards to family issues, employment opportunities, availability of natural supportive networks such as circle of relatives, friends and neighbors, networks of professional helpers. Mass media have a fuzzy position in regards to social inclusion, as the predominant image of the disabled person is associated with weakness and miserability. A very important obstacle is unadjusted physical environment, while the level of tolerance in the society seems to be quite high.

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