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## ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ ІНКЛЮЗИВНО-РЕСУРСНИХ ЦЕНТРІВ У ГІРСЬКИХ РАЙОНАХ

**Анотація.** Актуальність проблеми полягає в постійно зростаючій кількості дітей з порушеннями розвитку в Україні, потребі надання їм відповідної допомоги з боку фахівців та наявних перешкодах у розвитку інклюзивної інфраструктури в гірських селах нашої країни. Віддаленість, погане транспортне сполучення, відсутність кваліфікованих фахівців, неповна поінформованість населення гальмують розвиток інклюзивної освіти, перешкоджають її здобуття особами з особливими потребами. Мета статті – проаналізувати специфіку діяльності інклюзивно-ресурсних центрів, що надають допомогу педагогам, батькам та дітям з порушеннями розвитку, які проживають у гірських районах України. Авторка використала теоретичні (аналіз, узагальнення психолого-педагогічної літератури) та емпіричні методи (опитування, бесіди, спостереження, методи статистичної обробки даних). У статті порушено питання розвитку інклюзивної освіти в сільській (гірській) місцевості України. Розглянуто основні чинники впливу на цей процес, проаналізовано особливості надання якісних корекційно-розвиткових, психолого-педагогічних послуг дітям з особливими освітніми потребами, що мешкають у гірських районах. Результати дослідження показали, що діяльність фахівців інклюзивно-ресурсних центрів з надання допомоги педагогам, батькам і, зокрема, дітям з порушеннями розвитку, які проживають у віддалених районах, має велике значення як для особистого розвитку учнів, так і для здійснення професійної діяльності педагогів, обізнаності батьків. Питання порушується не лише на місцях, а й сягає державних масштабів, про що свідчить активність у розширенні нормативної бази, державні асигнування на розвиток інклюзії. Проте проблема не є повністю дослідженою на сьогодні й потребує подальшого глибокого вивчення.

**Ключові слова:** особливі потреби, бар'єри, командна робота, співпраця, мобільність, інклюзивно-ресурсні центри, адаптація.

## ACTIVITIES OF INCLUSIVE RESOURCE CENTERS IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

**Abstract.** The urgency of the problem lies in the ever-growing number of children with disabilities in Ukraine, the need to provide them with appropriate assistance from specialists and the existing obstacles to the development of inclusive infrastructure in the mountain villages of our country. Remoteness, poor transport links, lack of qualified specialists, incomplete awareness of the population hinder the development of inclusive education, prevent its receipt by people with special needs. The purpose of the article is to analyze the specifics of the activities of inclusive resource centers that provide assistance to teachers, parents and children with disabilities living in mountainous areas of Ukraine. We used theoretical (analysis and generalization of psychological and pedagogical literature) and empirical methods (surveys, interviews, observations, methods of statistical data processing). The article raises the issue of development of inclusive education in rural (mountainous) areas of Ukraine. The main factors influencing this process are considered, the peculiarities of providing high-quality correctional and developmental, psychological and pedagogical services to children with special educational needs living in mountainous areas are analyzed. The results of the study showed that the activities of specialists of inclusive resource centers to provide assistance to teachers, parents and, in particular, children with disabilities living in remote areas, is of great importance for personal development of students and professional activities of teachers, parental awareness. The issue reaches the national scale, as evidenced by the activity in expanding the regulatory framework, government allocations for the development of inclusion. However, the problem is not fully explored today and needs further in-depth study.

**Keywords:** special needs, barriers, teamwork, cooperation, mobility, inclusive resource centers, adaptation.

### INTRODUCTION

**The problem formulation.** At the present stage of development of mountain infrastructure a special place is occupied by the organization of an integrated system of providing quality services to the population, which will ensure its proper economic, cultural and educational growth. Education and awareness of the people of the mountainous regions of Ukraine, creating opportunities for free access to all services (medical, educational, social) are designed to raise to a new level this unique community of our state. We give an important place to the educational sector, which can bring up a new generation of people, which will differ not only in cultural or family traditions, life, customs, but also the appropriate intellectual level, good health, rich internal potential. To this end, the educational sector should be developed in remote mountainous areas, building a new Ukrainian school and its characteristic inclusive component.



### AIM AND TASKS RESEARCH

The content, forms and methods of work on the development of inclusive infrastructure of the region are determined by its geographical and regional features. The problems of people with special needs living in the difficult social and economic conditions of the modern mountain village are relevant in the context of general social development, scientific and technological progress. It should be noted that mountain regions have always been characterized by a low level of social life, difficult working and living conditions, a unique culture and customs. At this stage, the population of mountainous areas of Ukraine needs a different approach, based on the recognition of national identity and uniqueness of ethnic groups. At the same time, opportunities should be created to address other pressing issues, namely: active self-education and professional development; participation in the creative activity of young people and the organization of their leisure; provision of quality social, educational, medical services; rehabilitation and promotion of a healthy lifestyle. They are indicative in defining the socio-economic, demographic, moral and psychological, educational problems of mountain dwellers, and, therefore, deserve attention from the state.

### RESEARCH METHODS

We used theoretical (analysis and generalization of psychological and pedagogical literature on the research problem) and empirical methods (surveys, interviews, observations, methods of statistical data processing). Our research has shown that the problems of professional development of teachers have been the subject of research by many scholars in various aspects: professional development of a teacher (O. Bondarchuk, N. Volyanyuk, I. Zyazyun, L. Karamushka, E. Klimov, N. Kolominsky, V. Russol); training of future teachers to work in schools of rural and mountainous areas (I. Bekh, L. Drobit, K. Zhurba, L. Kobylanska, S. Kalaur, K. Ostrovskaya, I. Ostrovsky); development of inclusive education (A. Kolupaeva, Z. Leniv, N. Sak, A. Shevtsov).

### RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The issue of accessibility and barrier-freeness today is raised both at the state level and at the local level. Thus, First Lady O. Zelenskaya has compiled a "Handbook of Barrier-free", which emphasizes that we should turn to the philosophy of barrier-free: "Barriers are those barriers that prevent different people from accessing opportunities, and through it does not allow them to fully realize their potential" (Directory of barrier-free). Such obstacles include the geographical location of mountain villages, poor transport links, inadequate information provision of the population and more.

According to the Ministry of Education, in 2010 there were 160,000 children with special needs in Ukraine. According to official data, as of March 2010, 103,000 children with special educational needs were enrolled in secondary schools, including 45,000 children with disabilities (Resolution "On approval of the Regulations on the inclusive resource center"). The number of people with different types of disabilities indicates the need to develop inclusion as a model of education and society. All governing bodies, educational institutions, out-of-school and social institutions and organizations are called upon to perform this task. This is stated in the legal documents on education, namely the Laws of Ukraine "On Education", "On General Secondary Education", "On Higher Education", "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", "On Approval of the Regulations on the Inclusive Resource Center", the Concept of Development of Inclusive Education, "On approval of the action plan to create a barrier-free living environment for people with disabilities and other low mobility groups for 2009-2015 ("Barrier-free Ukraine)", "On approval State standard of primary general education for children with special educational needs". Unfortunately, mountainous terrain is no exception when it comes to possible diseases, both acquired and genetically inherited.

In 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a decision on the organization of inclusive resource centers, which should become the main in providing assistance and providing psychological and pedagogical support to people with special educational needs. It was envisaged that such inclusive centers would ensure the rights of children (aged 2 to 18) with special educational needs to receive pre-school and secondary education. The main task of the latter was to conduct a comprehensive psychological and pedagogical assessment of the development of a child with special educational needs, providing them with psychological and pedagogical assistance and providing support. According to this document, the main principles on which the activities of the centers were to be based were: respect for the child's personality; taking into account the individual capabilities, abilities, interests of the child; non-discrimination and violation of children's rights; confidentiality; availability of educational services; cooperation with other institutions, schools, and families.

Inclusive resource centers have to solve many tasks, namely:

- 1) conduct a comprehensive assessment of the child's development in order to determine its special needs, develop recommendations for the curriculum, provide psychological and pedagogical assistance;
- 2) provide psychological and pedagogical assistance to children with special educational needs of preschool and school age;
- 3) keep a register of children who have passed a comprehensive assessment; educational institutions, rehabilitation institutions of the healthcare system, social protection and public associations, as well as specialists;
- 5) organize and conduct consultations, cooperate with teachers of preschool institutions, schools;
- 6) consult with parents or guardians of children with special educational needs;
- 7) to carry out informational and educational activities by holding conferences, seminars, training sessions on the organization of psychological and pedagogical assistance to children with special educational needs, etc. (Resolution "On approval of the Regulations on the inclusive resource center").

In general, psychological and pedagogical assistance involves the organization of psychological and pedagogical services for children with developmental disabilities, aimed at their socialization, education of independence; preparation for study in educational institutions; development of self-regulation skills. At the same time, the centers must have



premises adapted for children with special educational needs in accordance with the requirements of the legislation, state sanitary and construction norms. In such premises rooms for rendering of individual psychological and pedagogical help, the organization of group psychological and pedagogical employment, works of the teacher-speech therapist, the defectologist, occupational physical training classes and others are arranged.

Today, there are community development programs from the Ministry of Regional Development, Construction and Housing of Ukraine to open the IRC. As of 2018, there were no direct targeted subventions for the opening of the RDI, but the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine allocated 502 million for the development of inclusive education. Such a subvention was calculated according to the number of children registered in inclusive school classes. The total distribution of the allocated money per child (UAH 16,000 in 2017, about UAH 30,000 in 2018) included: 65% - to pay for additional classes with specialists, in accordance with the child's correctional program, and 35% - to purchase equipment.

In order to create a barrier-free space in Ukraine by 2030, work is underway to improve the activities of the centers. At the state level, clear steps have been taken today, namely amendments to the Regulations; the staffing of these centers was reviewed and the needs for increasing the duration of vacations, working week, and remuneration of specialists were established. According to the new version of the Regulation on Inclusive Resource Centers, adopted by the Government of Ukraine, its work should be closer to European standards of accessibility, which should improve services for people with disabilities. For example, it is an opportunity for parents to apply to the centers much earlier, from the birth of a child; provision of special services to persons over 18 years of age. The innovation is the creation of branches and mobile inclusive resource centers; use of new diagnostic tools to support children with learning difficulties and international approaches to identifying categories of educational difficulties in people with special educational needs. In order to encourage the improvement of the quality of professional activity, specialists will be offered a different salary (allowance of at least 25%); the duration of the working week of teachers was reduced to 36 hours / week. These and other innovations in this area are provided by the project "School education for all", which is part of the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Strategy for the creation of barrier-free space in Ukraine.

The urgent task is to organize such a space in difficult conditions in mountainous and rural areas of Ukraine. Another issue is to ensure the effective operation of all components of the education system; adaptation of the activity of schools and social organizations, institutions of special education and inclusive resource centers to the specifics of the region, its traditions, the special nature of educational and labor activity of the population, attitude to the disease and ways of life.

Importantly, inclusive resource centers in mountain areas should become one of the main institutions of inclusive education and development, promotion of high culture, spirituality, and humanism. The difficulties that arise are primarily related to the socio-economic situation, slow development and insufficient technical equipment of schools, kindergartens and other educational institutions. This requires from the specialists of the inclusive resource center of the mountain area the following qualities:

- high professionalism and available personal traits and qualities;
- ability to adapt to the society of the village;
- ability to generate promising ideas for the development of inclusive education;
- sociability in different social groups (in communication with children, parents, the public);
- purposeful use of theoretical and practical potential for providing psychological and pedagogical assistance to the population, carrying out educational activities and cooperation with colleagues, teachers, families of children with special needs.

But practice shows that the activities of inclusive resource centers in mountain areas do not always meet these requirements, which can be explained by the specifics and opportunities created for their quality work in the area. The main problems and difficulties in the development of inclusive education in mountainous areas and, in particular, the work of inclusive centers are:

- some issues of providing psychological and pedagogical assistance and correctional services to children with disabilities.

Thus, in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine on the rights of persons with disabilities (Laws of Ukraine "On Fundamentals of Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine", "On Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine"), education of persons with disabilities is considered in special institutions

- funding: the operation of regular general secondary education institutions is provided from district budgets, which is not beneficial to local authorities.
- establishing teamwork and cooperation of the center's specialists and teachers, educators.

On the one hand, this is due to limited transport accessibility, and on the other - an underdeveloped system of social, educational, information services. Working with school teachers, who are mostly poorly informed about the rules, regulations, features of the development of children with disabilities, is a matter of paramount importance. Our study showed that the main sources of information about inclusive education for teachers of educational institutions in mountainous regions of Ukraine are colleagues and administration (58%), as well as Ukrainian media (33%) (Inclusive education in Ukraine). Insufficient awareness in this area leads to the fact that when working with students with disabilities, teachers often adapt programs to their own discretion, on the principle of reduction, rather than taking into account the individual needs and learning opportunities of the child; not always guided by scientific and methodological developments.

One of the problems of cooperation between specialists of inclusive resource centers and teachers of educational institutions is to equip the latter with basic knowledge in the field of inclusion, medical indicators and features of



development of children with different types of disorders. This is necessary because often teachers and educators do not have the proper training, theoretical and practical skills to work with this category of people, which leads to erroneous decisions during practical work. That is why the specialists of inclusive centers involve teachers and educators in cooperation, participation in a comprehensive assessment of the level of child development, joint seminars, webinars, and meetings. For example, the latter allow the specialists of inclusive resource centers to expand the knowledge of teachers of schools and kindergartens about the development of inclusive education; to raise their professional level by learning new forms, methods and techniques that should be used in working with children with special needs. The cooperation of the specialists of the inclusive resource center and teachers allows to intensify the creative activity of teachers, develops their creative thinking, and stimulates initiative in working with children. Joint conferences, trainings, lectures acquaint teachers with methods, techniques, games and exercises for children with developmental disabilities, which are aimed at developing emotional intelligence, communication skills and self-care, facilitation of adaptation and socialization. At the same time, teachers and educators, parents of children with developmental disabilities have the opportunity to discuss important issues of inclusive education, stages of monitoring the child's development, and drawing up an individual program. Practice shows that teachers of schools in the mountainous region show low motivation to work with students with special needs, not showing a desire to "obey" the instructions of other professionals or, conversely, seek to transfer their responsibilities to them. This state of affairs can be prevented by the educational work of the specialists of the inclusive resource center, which takes place through the organization of lectures on various topics: "Child with special needs: understand and help", "Disability is not a sentence", "On love and tolerance", "Features work with children with developmental disabilities", "Teacher's assistant - the child's mentor" and others. The main issues raised by the specialists of inclusive resource centers in mountainous regions are:

- 1) compliance with European standards of accessibility in inclusive education;
- 2) ways to improve inclusive education in educational institutions in mountainous regions;
- 3) levels of support in the educational process of children with special needs;
- 4) functions of educational institutions and inclusive resource centers.

The current problems we are considering today are the result of the fact that in mountainous areas there is no consistent work to support inclusion by various NGOs, the education department, which is reflected in the imperfect provision of necessary information, incomplete provision of medical and counseling support to children with special needs and their parents. Also imperfect is the activity of exchanging experiences of specialists, teachers, parents on inclusive education.

The solution of the personnel issue remains significant - providing educational institutions and regional inclusive resource centers with qualified specialists (social pedagogues, psychologists, speech pathologists, speech therapists, rehabilitation specialists and others).

To date, the issue of providing inclusive resource centers in the mountainous regions of Ukraine with the required number of premises and their arrangement in accordance with the specifics of the activity has not been resolved; filling with auxiliary equipment, devices; didactic materials that should be used in correctional and developmental work, providing psychological or pedagogical assistance.

These and other difficulties in the work of inclusive resource centers are solved on the ground, with the support of the authorities and management, or with the help of sponsors. For example, in order to provide the necessary services to the mountain population by the specialists of the inclusive resource center in the Lviv region, a mobile inclusive resource center was purchased (for Skole district). Such a car, equipped with everything necessary, can provide psychological and pedagogical assistance to children with special needs who are unable to get to the regional center due to the severity of the violation or poor transport links. According to the head of the Department of Education and Science of the Lviv Regional Administration Ihor Haiduk, the mobile inclusive resource center was made to order and is the first and so far the only one in our country (A mobile inclusive resource center will operate in the Lviv region). In addition to the equipment available in the traditional center, relevant didactic, technical, methodological materials, the mobile inclusive resource center has a special platform for children in wheelchairs, which allows for a comprehensive assessment of children with musculoskeletal disorders, plan correctional and developmental work, to conduct classes, consultations, examinations.

But there are also positive moments. Today in Ukraine, according to the draft State Budget-2021, a separate program is provided to support children with special educational needs, an estimate of UAH 505 million has been set, 30% of which is planned for the purchase of aid. For ease of use and to help parents of children with special needs living in remote areas, there is a mobile application of the IRC, hosted on PlayMarket and AppStore (A mobile application has been developed to help parents of children with special educational needs and IRC specialist). It was developed in 2018 in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 22.08.2018 № 615 LLC "New Knowledge" with the assistance of the "Institute of Educational Analytics". Thus, the system automates the conclusion of the application for a comprehensive assessment of the child, the formation of expert opinions. This approach facilitates the work of professionals and is useful for parents of children in remote areas who do not have the opportunity to come in person to the center to write an application. Practice has shown that its use has halved the number of required personal visits of parents to inclusive resource centers, and helps to raise awareness.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

Thus, the issue of supporting teachers, parents and children with special educational needs in the mountainous regions of Ukraine by specialists of inclusive resource centers remains relevant, and requires further study and development of new approaches to solving difficulties that arise in practice.

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