

# Psychological readiness of university students with special educational needs for future professional activity

Nina Grigorieva  
*Chuvash State University,*  
Cheboksary, Russia

Anna Zakharova  
*Chuvash State University,*  
Cheboksary, Russia  
zaharova\_an@mail.ru

Evgeni Nikolaev  
*Chuvash State University,*  
Cheboksary, Russia

Svetlana Petunova  
*Chuvash State University,*  
Cheboksary, Russia

Galina Dulina  
*Chuvash State University,*  
Cheboksary, Russia

**Abstract** - Currently, the problem of rehabilitation, adaptation and integration of people with disabilities and special educational needs into modern society is one of the most urgent tasks in Russia. The article reveals the experience of the Center of inclusive education at "Chuvash State University named after I. N. Ulyanov" (the Russian Federation, Cheboksary), involving such activities as: organizational and legal activities; educational and methodological support for educational process of people with disabilities and special educational needs (due to limited health capacities); personnel training; material and technical support for educational process; comprehensive support for educational process and health protection; psychological and pedagogical support. This study is devoted to the problem and prospects of creating an accessible educational environment for students of a higher educational institution with special needs and disabilities. The article describes the study of psychological readiness for future professional activities of people with disabilities studying at higher educational institutions. This paper analyzes and compares features of psychological readiness for future professional activity of students with special educational needs (disabilities) and students who do not have disability. It presents the results of studying the ratio of motives for educational activity, analyzes the combination of identified motives to study, dominant professional preferences, goals and reasons for education, professional intentions, requirements for future potential work and wages, ideas about future professional activities and difficulties in the employment process, means to improve their professional competence. The authors highlight possible ways toward optimization of psychological readiness for future professional activity of students with disabilities. The presented analysis of the experience of psychological and pedagogical support for students with disabilities at a regional university may be of interest for further development of continuous education and support for people with special needs and disabilities.

**Keywords** - *students of a higher educational institution with disabilities, psychological readiness for future professional activities, Center of inclusive education.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, the issue of rehabilitation, adaptation and integration of people with disabilities and with special

educational needs (due to limited health capacities) into modern society is one of the principal tasks in Russia. An important problem of modern higher education is not just training specialists with a certain system of professional knowledge and competencies but training such specialists who are ready to work within the obtained specialty after graduation.

This article highlights the experience of working with students with special needs and disabilities in the Center of inclusive education at "Chuvash State University named after I. N. Ulyanov" (the city of Cheboksary, the Russian Federation). The Center of inclusive education was established in the university in order to organize a system of comprehensive support for students with disabilities and special educational needs, ensuring access to higher education for them. The main objective of the Center of inclusive education is to improve conditions for the education of persons with disabilities and limited health capacities according to programs of higher professional education and additional education.

The Center of inclusive education works in the following areas.

### A. Organizational and legal measures:

The University signed agreements on cooperation (e.g., cooperation agreements with Chuvash Regional Department of the all-Russian public organization "All-Russian society of the deaf", "Cheboksary secondary boarding school for students with special educational needs (due to limited health capacities)", the Ministry of education and youth policy of the Chuvash Republic, other organizations), which provide a joint solution of the following tasks on social rehabilitation, adaptation and integration of people with disabilities and special needs in modern society; creation of a comfortable, barrier-free environment with educational, social and other services to students with disabilities; joint development of grants to receive material and technical resources to create an accessible environment for disabled people; exchange of available experience and knowledge on this issue and others, as well as providing sign language

interpreters and interpreters for individuals who are deaf-blind upon request of the University.

*B. Educational and methodological support for the educational process of people with disabilities and special educational needs (due to limited health capacities):*

The University library purchased electronic educational resources (EER), so it has significantly increased education availability for students with disabilities and limited health capacities. EER include educational and methodical literature for people of different groups of disorders (visual impairment, hearing). The university concluded contracts on access to the following EER: "Yurait", "Consultant of a student", "Lan", "IPRbooks".

Conjointly with the Department of physical education and sports, the university is developing an adaptive program for physical education for students with disabilities and limited health capacities or special needs.

*C. Personnel training:*

To improve the level of knowledge about implementation of inclusive education in higher educational institution the university developed and implemented the program "Organization of educational process for training people with disabilities and with limited health capacities in educational institutions of higher education" for academic teaching staff and "Organization of educational process for training people with disabilities and with limited health capacities in educational institutions of higher education" for support personnel of the university.

As a result of training, 460 people of the faculty and 88 employees of dean's offices and departments (support personnel) received certificates of advanced training in this program.

*D. Material and technical support for the educational process.*

As a contribution to elaboration and implementation of action plans for developing a barrier-free environment in academic buildings of the university, the Center of inclusive education took an active part in implementation of the "Road map" to increase the values of accessibility indicators of the object for people with disabilities and services provided to them.

*E. Comprehensive support for educational process and health protection.*

To implement this direction, they carry out career guidance activities for future students with disabilities and special educational needs, high school students of special (correctional) educational institutions, general education institutions.

*F. Psychological and pedagogical support.*

Currently, within psychological and pedagogical direction the Center is working on the following: adaptation to the university, development of the personal activity, facilitating professional adaptation in the labor market, etc.

The university continues to implement the program "Adaptation of first-year students at ChSU named after I.N. Ulyanov", one of the tasks of which is to create conditions conducive to increasing adaptive capacity, autonomy and social activity, to promote development of intellectual processes, personal fulfilment, to form students' value systems, including students with disabilities and with special educational needs.

As part of psychological and pedagogical direction, a study was conducted, which addressed the problem of higher education accessibility for students with disabilities and special educational needs and the prospects of employment in the chosen direction. In the psychological aspect we are talking about formation of students' readiness for future professional activity. For university students with special needs and disabilities, this problem is most acute.

Many people with disabilities, despite the fact that they may have the opportunity to work and be independent, do not participate in the work activities. Such non-participation in professional activities is associated with many barriers to their employment: non-availability of specially created jobs for people with disabilities, lack of accessible transport, lack of support in employment, negative attitudes of heads of enterprises to the abilities of persons with special needs, as well as self-doubt of persons with disabilities themselves concerning their own abilities, low motivation to work due to less wages compared to other workers. Working people with disabilities make up only 10% of their number. No less important barrier is also psychological readiness of young professionals for professional activities. Work in this direction will allow disabled people to get the opportunity of rehabilitation, inclusion in public life on an equal basis with healthy people.

Such scientists as Alekhina S.V., Vachkov I.V. [1], Boginskaya Yu.V. [3], Grigorieva N.V., Petunova S.A., Mukhametzyanova A. R. [5], Sokolova V.R., Veselovskikh T. N., Baranova O. B., Sokolova O. S. [6], Stepanova, O.A. [7], Shayakhmetova N. N., Ishembitova Z.B., Saitgalieva G.G. [8] studied the problem of psychological readiness to professional activity of students with disabilities.

The theoretical analysis of phenomenon under study shows that psychological readiness for professional activity is understood as the degree of formation in the personality of motivational-target structure that makes it possible to effectively carry out practical activities. Psychological readiness for professional activity also includes: degree of development of professionally important knowledge, abilities and skills, degree of compliance of chosen profession with individual characteristics of a person, interest in activities, need to achieve results, a sense of professional responsibility, confidence in success, that makes it possible to evaluate and understand not only their opportunities in the labor sphere, but also need and options for social activities required for forming their social relations with other subjects of social action.

The aim of this study is to analyze factors affecting psychological readiness of students with disabilities for future professional activity.

Based on the aim of our work, we can identify several tasks:

1. According to subjective assessment to determine the level of motivation of students with disabilities.
2. To study the leading motives for the educational activity of students with and without disabilities.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To study quantitative and qualitative indicators of psychological readiness of students with disabilities for a future professional activity we used:

1) Author's questionnaire aimed at identifying psychological readiness for future professional activity. To identify psychological readiness for professional activity, we have compiled and used author's questionnaire aimed at identifying dominant professional preferences of subjects, goals and reasons to obtain professional education, professional intentions, requirements for potential work, etc.

2) Methodology to analyze the motivation to study in a higher educational institution (author T. I. Ilyina.) The methodology in this study was used to identify the leading motives of educational and professional activities of students with disabilities and healthy students. This methodology involves three scales: "acquisition of knowledge" (desire to acquire knowledge, curiosity); "mastering the profession" (desire to acquire professional knowledge and form professionally important qualities); "obtaining a diploma" (desire to acquire a diploma even with formal assimilation of knowledge, desire to find workarounds when passing exams and tests) [4].

3) Questionnaire to study the leading motives of educational activities (authors A. A. Rean, V. A. Yakunin, modification of N. Ts. Badmaeva). The questionnaire to study the leading motives for the educational activity made it possible to consider significance of the following motives: communicative motives, motives of avoidance, motives of prestige, professional motives, motives of creative personal fulfillment, educational and cognitive motives, social motives [2].

The base of research. The study was conducted at "Chuvash State University named after I. N. Ulyanov", Cheboksary, the Russian Federation

The study included psychological testing and questioning with each of the students individually, in writing, after a detailed explanation of rules and requirements for tests. There were the same conditions for all students for passing the test, diagnostic testing took place in the usual for students classroom.

Study sample. The study involved 67 students of 1-5 courses aged 18 to 26 years, studying at the university. The average age of the test group was 20.4 years. The total sample is presented in two groups: the first group of 37 people consisted of students with disabilities (group "students with disabilities"), the second one of 30 people consisted of students without disabilities (group "norm").

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of motivation to study at a higher educational institution (by the method of T. I. Ilyina) shows that the group of students with disabilities is dominated by the

motive of "acquisition of knowledge" (81%), which suggests that they have more developed cognitive motives, curiosity than ordinary students. All motives of students in the group "norm" are expressed at about the same level (43.3%).

The motive of "obtaining a diploma" is in second place (59.4%). Desire to acquire professional knowledge and form professionally important qualities (the motive of "mastering a profession") ranks third (37.7%) in the scale of motivation of students with disabilities. Thus, there is some discrepancy in motives to study, where obtaining a diploma prevails over mastery of profession, which may not always demonstrate willingness of students to work in a certain profession. The very fact of having a diploma is more valuable for them.

The study of leading motives for educational activity (by the method of A.A Rean, V. A. Yakunin) has shown that leading motives for students with disabilities are the following: professional motives (average score – 4.3, students of the group "norm" – 4.4), educational and cognitive motives (average score – 4.0, students of the group "norm" – 4.1). Motives of creative self-realization of students with disabilities – 3.8 (students of the group "norm" – 4.3). Least of all, students with disabilities are guided by the motives of avoidance (average score – 2.6, students of the group "norm" – 2.9) and the motives of prestige (average score – 3.3, students of the group "norm" – 3.1). The analysis of comparison of indicators of motivation for professional activity on Student's t-test has deduced distinction on motive "creative self-realization" ( $t = 2.4$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

The results of the survey on preferences of future professional activity have shown that 40.5% of students with disabilities prefer technical specialty, 21.6% choose natural sciences, 27.0% are most interested in social sciences, the remaining 13.5% prefer humanities.

In the group "norm", the majority (53.4%) choose humanities, 33.3% prefer technical direction, the remaining 13.3% prefer social disciplines. In the group "norm" there are no students who wish to obtain specialization in natural-scientific direction. Also, none of the groups included people preferring exact sciences.

According to the analysis of significance of differences by Student's t-test, unlike students with disabilities, students of the group "norm" prefer humanities ( $t = 3.7$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Students with disabilities, unlike students of the group "norm", prefer natural sciences ( $t = 2.9$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Interests in other areas of professional activity in both groups are similar.

Main objectives of education in the selected groups are similar. These are "interest in the chosen profession" (67.5% - with disabilities, 70% - the group "norm"), "the desire to be educated" (37.8% and 26.7% respectively), "obtaining a diploma" (10.8% and 3.3% respectively). The analysis by Student's t-test did not show significant differences between indicators of students with disabilities and students of the group "norm".

For most students with disabilities (62.2%) as well as students of the group "norm" (66.6%) the choice of an educational institution is due to a relevant specialty. For 24.3% of students with disabilities the choice was due to

close location of the institution. Among regular students there were 16% with such a choice. 13.5% of students with disabilities and 10% of students of the group "norm" chose educational institution on the advice of parents, friends and acquaintances. The remaining 5.4% of students with disabilities and 6.7% of ordinary students do not actually study where they would like to.

Revealed professional intentions after graduation showed that regardless of the selected groups, students being tested plan to work (40.5% of students with disabilities and 53.4% of ordinary students) or to combine education with work (40.5% and 43.3%, respectively). However, 18.9% of students with disabilities plan to continue to study only. We believe that this desire is due to psychological and physical unreadiness for work. According to the analysis of significance of differences by Student's t-test, students with disabilities prefer to continue studying rather than working ( $t = 2.6$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Perhaps this is because many students with disabilities are under the care of parents and the state and can afford to continue their education without starting a professional activity. For other parameters, no significant differences between study groups have been found.

The study of career aspirations has shown that 43.2% of students with disabilities in as the ultimate goal in the career ladder see themselves as a "head or assistant manager"; 13.5% want to occupy workforce position"; 43.2% – "no opinion concerning the goal". Most healthy students see themselves as a head (63.3%) or have not yet decided on a goal (36.7%). Unlike students with disabilities, no student of the group "norm" admit a workforce position as the ultimate career goal, which suggests that the level of expectations of healthy students on average is higher, as evidenced by the analysis on the Student's t-test ( $t = 2.2$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

To achieve professional (career) goals, the majority of students with disabilities, and the majority of students in the group "norm" try to study well (students with disabilities – 70.3%; students of the group "norm" - 63.3%), and to adopt the experience of specialists (students with disabilities – 29.7% ; students of the group "norm" - 36.7% ).

According to subjective assessment of difficulties in communication, 16.2% of students with disabilities have them, the remaining 83.8% have no difficulties in communication. These difficulties are mainly manifested in communication with strangers (20.0%). It is important that they do not experience difficulties in communicating with teachers.

Among the students of the group "norm" the situation is different. 43.3% of students have difficulties in communication and mostly it is difficulties in communicating with teachers (26.7%). The study also has shown that it is difficult for most students with disabilities (73.0%) to establish interpersonal contacts. There are only 33.3% (10 people) of such students in the group "norm". The analysis confirmed significant differences in these parameters: difficulty in communication ( $t = 2.5$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), difficulty in communicating with teachers ( $t = 3.0$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and difficulty in establishing contacts ( $t = 3.5$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

According to the analysis of perception of "professional activity" concept by students, for the majority of students in

both groups, work is a means of self-realization (students with disabilities – 86.5%, students of the group "norm" – 70%) and a way to provide for themselves and their families (students with disabilities – 64.9%; the group "norm" – 66.7%).

Even if it were possible not to work, 89.2% of students with disabilities would still prefer to work. Among the students of the group "norm" who wish to work at all costs – there are only 56.7%. This difference is confirmed by the Student's t-test ( $t = 3.2$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

As for requirements for a future profession, most students with disabilities (73.0%) want their future work to be interesting in the first place. For students with disabilities it is also important that future work could meet the requirements of their health (24.3%). In the group "norm", there were no students making such a requirement. Thus, ordinary students seek to secure primarily interest in work ( $t = 2.2$ ;  $p \leq 0.05$ ), and students with disabilities besides that also think about their health ( $t = 3.0$ ;  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

As for salary expectations of students, in both groups they are roughly the same: almost 60% of students with disabilities and 70.0% of students of the group "norm" chose the maximum of the proposed salary level. There were no significant differences in terms of this indicator.

Most students in the group with disabilities (75.6%), as well as in the group "norm" (76.7%) consider no work experience or too young age to be the main difficulties for their employment.

Attractiveness of the profession (83.8% – in the group of students with disabilities; 83.3% – the group "norm") is the main motive for choosing their specialty (field of study), regardless of the selected groups.

To further improve their professional competence, most students with disabilities plan to attend courses of advanced training (62.2%), learn foreign languages (32.4%) and adopt effective methods of successful workers (29.7%). The results of students of the group "norm" are generally similar, no significant differences in terms of this indicator were found.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study is devoted to the problem and prospects of creating an accessible educational environment for students of higher educational institution with special needs and disabilities.

It has shown that among all the motives to study at the university for students with disabilities cognitive motive (the desire to acquire knowledge, curiosity) plays dominant role in educational activities. Pragmatic motive – "obtaining a diploma" is in second place, i.e. formal attitude to the educational process, and professional motive (desire to acquire professional knowledge and form professionally important qualities) is in third place.

Professional motives as well as educational and cognitive motives are the leading motives of professional activity for students with special educational needs. For students with disabilities, the motive of creative self-realization in future professional work is less evident than

for students of the group "norm". Students with disabilities are least guided by motives of avoidance and prestige. Low level of a motive of avoidance is favorable because high level of this motive can lead to negative emotions in the learning process, low level of independence and inability to organize their own training.

The study has shown that for students with disabilities the choice of specialty is more determined by the possibility of making money fast, they are less interested in career advancement. In the context of psychological readiness for professional activity, it is interesting that they are more focused on acquiring necessary knowledge than ordinary students are. Basically, they have little difficulty in communicating, if they arise, it is most often difficulties communicating with strangers. For students with disabilities, it is important that their work meets the requirements of their health.

Most students with disabilities want their work to be interesting and well-paid, to achieve professional goals, they prefer to study well; after graduation, prefer to go to work in full accordance with the profession obtained or to work and study at the same time; to improve their professional competence they are going to attend advanced training courses, learn a foreign language, and learn from the experience of professionals.

These students consider the absence of experience as one of the main difficulties in the future employment process.

The results of the study revealed the need for psychological and pedagogical correction of professional attitudes and motives. For example, their desire for high earnings and avoiding career advancement are rather contradictory. In this regard, it is necessary to take measures at the stage of vocational training aimed at informing students about the cause-and-effect relations to form a highly paid competitive specialist. The necessary direction of correctional work is also to form understanding by students the role of professional activity motive for success of future specialist. These tasks can be realized through psychological trainings to form motivational attitudes, develop professional qualities of future specialists, skills of the competent setting of professional goals. Business simulation games are aimed at understanding stages of professional development, understanding possible barriers and developing skills to overcome them; it will also contribute to correction of these areas and be aimed at improving personal competitiveness [9] as well as psychological well-being [10]. For further development of professional attitudes, aspirations and actions, meeting with successful professionals may be of interest; they can acquaint future graduates with specific experience of professional development. Work in this direction is possible in close cooperation with the Center of vocational guidance and the Center for employment promotion for students and graduates of a higher educational institution.

The presented analysis of the experience of psychological and pedagogical support for students with disabilities at a regional university may be of interest for further development of continuous education and support for people with special needs and disabilities.

## REFERENCES

- [1] S. V. Alekhina, and I. V. Vachkov, "Methodological approaches to psychological and pedagogical support of inclusive process in education", in *Siberian pedagogical journal*, no. 5, Pp. 97-104, 2014.
- [2] N. Ts. Badmaeva, "Influence of motivational factor on the development of mental abilities: Monograph", Ulan-Ude, 2004, Pp. 151-154.
- [3] Yu. V. Boginskaya, "Educational integration of students with disabilities and special educational needs", in *Innovative science*, no. 8-2, Pp. 117-120, 2016.
- [4] E. P. Ilyin, "Motivation and motives", SPb.: Petersburg, 2002, 512 p.
- [5] A. R. Mukhametzyanova, "Inclusive education for people with disabilities: sociological-psychological aspect", in *Engineering technologies and systems*, no. 3, Pp. 127-131, 2011.
- [6] V. R. Sokolova, T. N. Veselovsky, O. B. Baranova, and O. S. Sokolova, "Ensuring access to vocational education and employment for young people with disabilities", in *Perm pedagogical journal*, no. 8, Pp. 232-237, 2016.
- [7] O. A. Stepanova, "Social and pedagogical integration of people with disabilities: Russian vector of development", in *Research in education*, no. 12, Pp. 35-45, 2012.
- [8] N. N. Shayakhmetova, Z. B. Ishembitova, and G. G. Saitgalieva, "Career guidance and social adaptation of students with disabilities in inclusive education", in *Bulletin of Cherepovets State University*, no. 7 (68), Pp. 152-155, 2015.
- [9] N.S. Morova, A.N. Zakharova, T.V. Talanova, G.S. Dulina, and E.L. Nikolaev, "Psychology of personal competitiveness of students in the system of higher education", *Proceedings of the 30th International Business Information Management Association Conference, IBIMA 2017 - Vision 2020: Sustainable Economic development, Innovation Management, and Global Growth*, 2017.
- [10] S.A. Petunova, A.N. Zakharova, N.V. Grigorieva, L.V. Rezyukova, G.S. Dulina, D.V. Gartfelder, "Psychological well-being of unemployed individuals with troubled adaptation to labor market", *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences EpSBS*, Vol. L., Pp. 1432-1442, 2018. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2018.12.175>