

Professional Orientation of Special Needs School Pupils: Psychological, Pedagogical and Social Aspects

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Abstract—The article talks about schoolchildren having visual impairments and facing difficulties of choosing a profession. The authors present a project of psychological and pedagogical support in the professional identity development of schoolchildren with visual impairments in the process of the project specific training. The project combines the humanistic, systemic and activity approaches. Based on the project, we designed a system of seminars for specialists accompanying academic training programs and elective courses for blind and visually impaired students. We also specified the stages and sequence of work contributing to the formation of a conscious professional self-definition of students with disabilities.

Keywords—visual impairments; psychological and pedagogical support; professional self-definition; professional identity

I. INTRODUCTION

The modern social policy in Russia contributes to the expansion of opportunities for vocational education, its accessibility and further employment of people with disabilities. Since 2012, vocational guidance of children with disabilities has been significantly improved through various programs.

Graduates of special needs schools for the blind and visually impaired as well as children with visual analyzer disorders graduating from general education schools receive information about higher and secondary vocational schools from various sources. In August 2014, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation published *The Methodological Recommendations* on the list of the recommended types of labor and professional activities for persons with disabilities, taking into account the impaired functions and restrictions of their vital activity.

Each disabled child has an individual rehabilitation program. Health workers offer him/her special recommendations. Many are guided by their parents' advice and positive examples of other blind or visually impaired graduates of their schools who are already involved in further education.

The media make their contribution. Some TV channels show social video clips. The official Internet radio station of the All-Russian Society of the Blind "Radio VOS" broadcasts special programs. Educational institutions, libraries, and social centers also work in this direction:

- They conduct tests on professional self-definition and social games.
- They organize meetings of disabled children with different professionals.
- They distribute information about the primary and secondary vocational institutions and higher education institutions.
- They help disabled children find special literature.

However, the majority of the blind and visually impaired children receive all this information discretely. There are a number of reasons for this ranging from the low psychological and pedagogical culture of their parents, a low degree of children's independence to the limited social advertising. In our opinion, providing targeted vocational guidance for each school student would be more effective.

Our project "*Professional self-definition of children with eye diseases*" is devoted to this. It unites teachers of the Vladimir State University, undergraduate and graduate students in psychology, teachers of the Vladimir Special Needs (correctional) Comprehensive Boarding School for blind and visually impaired children, the children themselves and their parents. The main objective of the project is the formation of professional self-definition among high school students with visual impairments resulting in their choice of a professional education institution for further training.

II. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Children with disabilities are in need of specially-organized rehabilitation within a psycho-pedagogical support with a high profile of profession-oriented direction. Specialists need to

consider pathology time acquisition, its intensity, nature and also the presence of specific developmental challenges. Professional self-definition of disabled children is aimed to develop knowledge, the vision of their future profession and skills identifying the possibilities of mastering them.

The project is designed to assist students with different degrees of visual impairment in choosing a profession. It has the following expected results:

- Students should know what professional self-definition is, types of professional activities, values and motives for work; the importance of an individual's psycho-physiological and psychological resources for the selection of a profession; their individual typological and emotional-volitional characteristics; the value of creativity and career for human life.

- Students should understand the meaning and significance of work in the life of a person and modern society; different modern forms and methods of work organization; and the situation in the regional labor market.

- Students should be able to compare their psychophysical and other features with the requirements of different professions; build their first professional plans and quickly change them; analyze the retrieved information about different professions, the labor market in the region of residence and many other factors; search for information about entering vocational institutions of different levels.

Project goals:

- to increase the relevance of professional self-definition for blind and visually impaired school graduates;

- to develop their ability to navigate towards vocational orientation in the current socio-economic conditions;

- to familiarize students with visual impairments with different professional fields such as technical, humanitarian, and decorative and applied arts; and

- to form pre-professional skills of students with eye diseases.

Tasks:

- to increase the level of psychological competence of blind and visually impaired high school students by expanding the boundaries of their self-perception and forming the need for self-improvement;

- to form a positive attitude towards themselves and awareness of their individuality; confidence in their ability to get a profession;

- to familiarize high school students with eye diseases with the peculiarities of professional activity and modern forms of work organization in the conditions of market relations and competition;

- to provide the ability to compare their inclinations and skills with professional requirements.

Principles of activity of the project participants:

- personality-activity principle - compliance with the age and personal characteristics of the students;

- the principle of humanization - the lack of restrictions for the students' intellectual and personal development regardless of their health status;

- the principle of non-harming or "Do no harm!" - the process or the result of the work should not harm the health, psychological condition, and social status of the children or other project participants;

- the principle of development - long-term planning to improve the obtained result and learn from mistakes;

- the principle of optimality (competence) requires the project participants to be competent in solving professional issues and have practical skills;

- the principle of cooperation - teachers, psychologists, visual impairment specialists, educators, and others. Specialists should not compete with the other participants in the educational process, they should be pursuing one goal.

As part of the study some methodological aspects are contained in the article: a complex of psychological methodologies aimed at obtaining data for studying individual psychological qualities of students with visual impairments and ensuring their further psychological development: "Differential diagnostic questionnaire" (E. Klimov), "Map of interests" (A.E. Golomstok), "Technique for the study of professional inclinations" (L.A. Yovaishi), "Motives for choosing a profession" (R.V. Ovcharova), "Questionnaire for the study of self-assessment of a high school student's personality" (L.A. Golovei, E.F. Rybalko), "Diagnostics of the structure of signaling systems" (E. F. Zeer, AM Pavlova, N.O. Sadovnikova), questionnaires.

Forms of work (individual and group):

- workshop, combined lesson, seminar, training, "round table", elective, special course;

- conversation, meeting with representatives of various professions, excursions to enterprises, organizations, and vocational schools.

- cooperation with administrations of schools, enterprises, institutions.

Activities:

- diagnostic,

- counseling,

- corrective-developmental,

- educational,

- tutor assistance.

Stages of the project:

- Planning stage. The formulation of goals, objectives, the definition of tactics of work on the basis of the psychological examination of students with eye diseases and the provided psychological conclusion about the specifics of their development.

- Drawing up the Program, definition of individual and group forms of work. Selection of the necessary technologies,

work methods, course content, planning the necessary participation of parents and teachers. Organizational stage. Creating conditions for the project. Counseling parents. Selection of participants in the group - high school students with different degrees of vision impairment. Informing the school administration about the vocational guidance plan. Discussion of the program with teachers and administration.

- Implementation stage. Conducting classes with students in accordance with the developed program. Scheduling classes in parent groups. Monitoring the performance of all project participants. Correction of the program. Providing parents, teachers, psychologists, social educators, visual impairment specialists, and school administration with feedback.

- Expert evaluation stage. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Program. Evaluation of the results of the program in terms of student achievement, effectiveness of the teachers' and psychologists' activities.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Studies show that congenital or early acquired defects significantly complicate and reduce children's orienting-search activity. This feature requires correction in the period of preparation for school and in the process of primary education. Violations in the sphere of sensory cognition limit the possibilities for the formation of imaginary images in such children. The disadvantages of sensory experience are compensated for in the process of rehabilitation work with the help of mental operations of analysis and synthesis. Visual defects cause difficulties when comparing objects. Therefore, children are bad at classification and systematization. They often perceive concepts dogmatically and operate them formally.

At the same time, their thinking process can be corrected with an organized perception and use of the intact functions of the visual analyzer. Depending on the type and degree of visual impairment, children may manifest certain features of the psyche: changes in the emotional-volitional sphere, the system of interaction of the analyzers, the specific formation of images, concepts, and speech; violation of the ratio of images and concepts in thinking. Social deprivation and mistakes in family education lead to communication problems with healthy peers and adults and formation of negative character traits. Doctors note a pathology of the autonomic nervous system and somatic weakness in a significant proportion of children with visual impairments.

Physical development and sensory control disorders complicate the spatial orientation of children, their freedom of movement and decrease their motor activity in general. These difficulties result in low self-esteem and motivation to work. Thus, children with eye diseases need a specially organized comprehensive rehabilitation with a pronounced component of vocational guidance. This is done by doctors, psychologists, social teachers, educators and teachers; many parents are also actively involved. All specialists should take into account the history of the child's visual pathology, its severity, nature, and specific developmental problems.

It is worth mentioning the results of the study. Let us consider in more detail the organization of vocational guidance

for special needs school graduates with visual impairments. In the process of diagnostics, professional interests and preferences, inclinations to various spheres of professional activity, motivation for choosing a profession, and levels of self-assessment of the nine- and eleven-grade-students were identified. Diagnostic results are the basis for designing of an individual educational program for a high school student with visual impairment. It defines the content and scope of knowledge and skills to be mastered in various academic subjects. It also includes rehabilitation work and vocational guidance.

Elective courses promote successful vocational orientation. These are compulsory courses for the students. They include material that goes beyond the curriculum. They can be organized as a circle or studio. Students must attend at least two elective courses per year, and the school must provide them with a wide choice. The content of the courses on the choice of pre-professional training acquaints students with the methods of activity necessary for the successful development of the program of a particular professional profile or occupation. One of the important tasks is to orient a student in the world of professions at the "junction" of various subjects within the framework of natural sciences, socio-economic, physical and mathematical profiles.

Tentative topics for the elective courses for students with visual impairments taking into account their professional capabilities, requests and personal preferences:

- Musical education;
- Basics of sound editing;
- Typhloinformatics;
- Acquaintance with office work on a computer;
- Basics of medical knowledge;
- Psychology. Body-oriented therapy;
- Tactile collage as a kind of decorative art for the blind and visually impaired;
- Choice of profession.

Social-psychological-pedagogical support of children during the implementation of the vocational guidance program involves visiting secondary and higher vocational institutions; conducting practical classes, homeroom hours, meetings with professionals with eye diseases.

As an example, we offer here a lesson plan named "The formula for choosing a profession: I WANT-I CAN-I HAVE TO". Making the right career choice means finding a profession that is:

- interesting and attractive (I WANT!),
- available and feasible (I CAN!),
- in demand in the labor market (I HAVE TO).

In the "I WANT!" part of the class students answer the questions:

What do I like doing?

Do I want to do this in the future?

Do I like the proposed future profession?

Does this profession correspond to my life plans?

After the discussion, the students should independently make appropriate conclusions.

In the "I CAN!" part of the lesson students are invited to:

- evaluate their success in various school subjects and hobbies;

- determine how easy they are learning something new and inclined to develop;

- determine how the chosen profession corresponds to their abilities, character traits, psychological characteristics and health condition.

This is a difficult part of the lesson, it requires objective introspection. The children need to have a positive attitude and faith in their future. They also need to feel psychological support.

The "I HAVE TO!" part assumes that the graduates learn about the promising sectors of the national economy, jobs in demand and chances of finding employment for a person with visual impairment in the chosen occupation.

Employees of the Regional Employment Center tell the graduates about the state of the labor market in the region and help them determine whether their future professions are promising. The students should find out their chances to get a job after graduating from a secondary or higher vocational school and learn how well-paid it will be. They should also be informed that the status of an unemployed is not a good start for a successful career.

The future masters of psychology and teachers held a series of lectures devoted to the problems of socialization of people with visual impairments:

- The world of professions for me;

- Professions of our parents;

- Blindness did not prevent them from becoming great (biographies of famous people with visual impairments);

- My place in the state (meeting with the visually impaired - members of the All-Russian Society of the Blind - representatives of various professions).

It is important to state the role of the parents whose disabled children are choosing a profession cannot be underestimated. Many of them also require help in order to better understand the special needs of their child, stop fussing about him or her and be able to promptly support him/her. Parents should also have information about vocational schools for young people with visual impairments and forms of education available to them. This will help these families choose an educational institution based on the professional preferences of their child and convenient location, which is also an important factor of choice for blind and visually impaired children.

The results of the project are the following:

- Creation of professional motivation programs, vocational guidance, adapted educational programs, social and psychological support programs for students, programs for the promotion of employment and postgraduate support at the Vladimir State University.

- Creation of physical (architectural), informational, educational and methodical conditions, accessibility for students of various nosological groups at Vladimir State University.

- Mastering of the higher-education teaching personnel of the Vladimir State University with special working competences with people having disabilities of various nosological groups.

IV. CONCLUSION

The program was completed with the participation of the graduates of the special needs school for the visually impaired in the annual Welcome Days of the Vladimir State University, Polytechnic, Pedagogical and Medical Colleges in the city of Vladimir. At the end of the school year, out of 17 graduates of the boarding school for blind and visually impaired children, 15.4% entered the Medical College and 15.4% the Polytechnic College.

Moreover, the vocational guidance activities of teenagers with visual impairments can be supplemented taking into account the foreign experience. In 2018, Jennifer L. Cmar, Michele McDonnall from National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University in their report "Helping Youth Put Their Best Foot Forward Through Job Search Skills Training" stressed that youth of transition age are in need of some job hunting experience. These authors have developed a special program for young people with visual impairments, that provides not only the necessary knowledge about finding a possible workplace, but also helps to form the right behavior in this situation. Jennifer L. Cmar, Michele McDonnall also have tackled self-efficacy controversial subjects. Analyzing the work experience of Jennifer L. Cmar, Michele McDonnall with blind and visually impaired young people can facilitate training courses organizations on the effective interaction of blind job seekers with the public placement officer.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the quality of "Professional self-determination of children with eye diseases" project is necessary to organize:

1. Counseling and methodological assistance guiding in preparation of teaching and methodological support for education of the children with disabilities and HIA with the help of e-learning, distance learning technologies.

2. Psychological counseling and assistance for children with disabilities and HIA including the usage of distance learning technologies.

3. Professional advice to students with disabilities and HIA, including those using distance learning technologies.

4. Career guidance assistance to applicants with disabilities and HIA, including the use of distance technologies.

5. Counseling and technical assistance in education providing for students with disabilities and HIA using e-learning, distance learning technologies.

6. Information technology support and training guidance through the portal of the regional resource center for people with disabilities and HIA.

7. Formation of job hunting skills and employees interaction at the employment service for blind and visually impaired adolescents.

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