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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ASSISTANCE FOR YOUNGER SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDERS IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL SPACE

Abstract. The article reveals the stages of psychological and pedagogical support for primary schoolchildren with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their organization. It is established that not every child with ASD can continue their education in an inclusive class even after studying in a correctional class. Often the main reasons are serious intellectual or behavioral problems, the solution of which is impossible in school. Such students should continue their education in the system of special schools (special correctional schools for children with intellectual disabilities, for children with severe speech pathology, etc.). Those students, who, after the correctional stage, can study in the mode of full inclusion, should move to regular classes and study according to the general schedule together with normally developed children under the obligatory support of a tutor.

One of the proposals was the use of a specialized monitoring system, which allowed to adapt the assessment system, so that, on the one hand, children with ASD could achieve results and demonstrate knowledge of the subjects they studied, and on the other hand, allow timely action to address gaps.

Also during the educational experiment it turned out that the team approach is one of the main requirements for the organization of training students with ASD in school. Only using such a method makes it possible to develop a single strategy for a comprehensive impact on children with ASD both in lessons and in frontal and
individual correctional and developmental classes. It is important that the team includes a sufficient number of specialists to ensure a comprehensive and systematic correctional and developmental impact.

The study is promising and allows to continue working in the following areas: development of specialized methods, technologies and forms of teaching students with ASD at the level of primary and basic education; development of the content of psychological and pedagogical correctional work for different groups of children with ASD, differentiated depending on the manifestation of disorders of the emotional-volitional and cognitive sphere of students.

Keywords: inclusive education, junior schoolchildren, disorders, autism spectrum, psychological and pedagogical support, inclusion, individual educational trajectory, educational program, adapted programs.

Introduction. One of the main directions of reforming the modern education system is the creation of conditions for full involvement in the educational space and successful socialization of children with limited educational health needs (PWD). An important step in this process was the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Education", within which the status of a student with SEN and the need to create special educational conditions for persons with SEN are legally defined. The right of parents to choose the form of education for their child, including inclusive education, is also enshrined in law.

Children with autistic spectrum disorders are a special group of children with ASD. Autistic spectrum disorders (hereinafter – ASD) refer to pervasive disorders, therefore the construction of an educational environment for such children requires taking into account a number of interrelated factors determined by their characteristics (A. Kolupaieva [3], L. Lavrinenko [4], G. Sokolova [9], B. Chamberlain [15], S. Cohen [16], etc.). All children with ASD need the creation of special educational conditions, which would include support and support during schooling, but the amount of help can vary significantly depending on the manifestation of symptoms of developmental disorders of an individual child (B. Myles [19], F. Sansosti [20]).

Analysis of recent research. The question of the organization of education and socialization of children with ASD in institutions of general secondary education is particularly acute today, in particular because the number of children with ASD studying in schools is constantly increasing (N. Tertychna [11], S. Yakovleva [14], B. Haller [17]). As a result, there are requests from both pedagogical practice and the parental public. However, in the scientific literature on the education of children with ASD, this topic has not received comprehensive coverage.

Despite the fact that in the foreign practice of inclusive education of children with special educational needs, a lot of experience has been accumulated and many
publications have been devoted to this problem, this potential can be used in a modern Ukrainian school without adaptation and taking into account the peculiarities of the domestic educational system (V. Zasenko [7], T Skrypnyk [8], N. Sofii [10], A. Shevtsov [13]). In addition, inclusive education of children with ASD is a hotly debated scientific and practical problem that has both supporters and opponents. Also, until now there is not a sufficient number of scientific studies that would evaluate the effectiveness and success of inclusive education of children with ASD (K. Hess [18], J. Sansosti [20]).

Thus, further thorough organizational, methodical and scientific research work is necessary, which anticipates the mass arrival of children with ASD in general secondary education institutions.

**Aim and tasks:** The purpose of the proposed article is to reveal the content of the stages of psychological and pedagogical support of younger schoolchildren with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and its organization.

**Research methods.** In accordance with the research aim and tasks we used general scientific methods (analysis, comparison, generalization, systematization, and concretization) in order to teach the level of interpretation of the problem and determine the features of psychological and pedagogical assistance to younger schoolchildren with autism spectrum disorders in an inclusive educational space.

**Results.** In order to provide variable provision of accessible education and socialization of children with ASD in the conditions of general secondary education institutions, an educational experiment was conducted on the basis of a general secondary school. The educational experiment took place in several stages: adaptive-diagnostic, content-organizational, result-reflective.

At each stage, the main task was the development of an adapted educational program both for the group (class) and an individual adapted program for each student with ASD.

Within our study, adaptation for students with ASD concerned not only work programs for all subjects taught in remedial classes, but also individual adapted programs developed for each student with ASD.

The curriculum consisted of a basic educational component, designed for 19–20 hours per week, and a corrective component, designed for 4–9 hours per week.

Since ASD is classified as a pervasive developmental disorder in children, the program was comprehensive and consisted of three blocks: basic, programs for the correction of cognitive impairments, and programs for the correction of emotional and volitional development.

Blocks of the educational program:

I. Working programs of general primary education in grades 1–3, used in special correctional classes, were developed on the basis of the educational program adopted in the educational institution. If necessary, they were corrected by replacing or supplementing individual educational topics with topics from
adapted basic educational programs for children with mental retardation, intellectual disabilities, and severe language pathologies.

II. Work programs of courses in the correctional and developmental sphere, aimed at the development and correction of higher mental functions and the formation of educational activities. Based on the results of the initial diagnosis of the level of psychophysical development, an individual curriculum was developed for each student, taking into account their individual educational opportunities and personal characteristics. These programs were implemented by specialists who work in the service of psychological and pedagogical support of students (teacher-defectologist, psychologist, teacher-speech therapist).

III. Extracurricular activity course programs are aimed at developing the student's emotional and volitional sphere.

As part of extracurricular activities, two groups worked - "Let's talk" and "Art Studio". This is an important component of correctional work with children with disorders of the emotional and volitional sphere, since it is in such classes that children get the opportunity to master social communication skills, learn socially acceptable norms of behavior, and learn to interact with adults and among themselves.

Children studying in remedial classes could attend general school clubs and sections: choir, karate, football. It turned out to be a great advantage that the leaders were most often teachers whom the children had already met in music, physical education, or art classes.

When determining the content of the education of children with ASD, we took into account that at the initial stage of education, an educational route and an educational program must be developed for each child, which guarantees, in any approach, a final result that corresponds to the child's real educational opportunities. This means that even if the characteristics of a child with ASD do not allow him to continue studying in an inclusive class, the student must maximize his potential and demonstrate the success of mastering the adapted educational program (AOP).

The creation of a specially organized environment for the education of children with ASD at school is determined by the need to solve the following problems:

1. Most children with ASD need a long time to adapt to school. A change in the usual schedule of the day, the appearance of new adults and children, complications of the environment often lead to the fact that children demonstrate negativism, affective outbursts, etc. At this time, the child may exhibit inappropriate and impulsive behavior, and affective outbursts are sometimes accompanied by verbal and non-verbal aggression towards the environment.

2. Particular difficulties in the organization of group education of children with ASD are created by the unevenness and variability of the manifestation of
abilities in specific children. Because of this, it is impossible to use educational and methodological complexes developed for students of general secondary education institutions without making serious changes to the basic educational program. In addition, most often at the initial stage of education, the development of educational motivation in children is delayed, and taking into account such differences becomes especially important.

Inclusive education of a child with ASD begins with the preparatory stage, which we define as adaptive and diagnostic. The education of children with ASD at this stage is organizationally and content-oriented, taking into account the characteristics of such children. It is also important that training at this stage has a diagnostic focus. As K. Hilbert, and T. Piter points out, an autistic child at this stage "...needs more protection than integration" [1, p. 82].

Tasks of the first stage:
1. Conducting extensive psychological and pedagogical diagnostics aimed at determining the actual and potential level of cognitive and personal development of students with ASD.
2. Formation of learning behavior skills and formation of learning motivation.
3. Development of a special didactic environment to facilitate adaptation and prevention of various forms of protective behavior of children with ASD; involvement in developmental interaction, in particular with peers.
4. Gradual (as the individual child is ready) expansion of the social and educational space for students with ASD at school: use of the locker room, canteen, participation in school-wide events.

The level of competence development of a child with ASD and a normally developed child at the beginning of schooling will differ significantly. Therefore, when organizing the learning process, we developed a program for the development of universal educational activities (UND), which has a corrective focus. At this stage, students are observed to have underdeveloped learning behavior skills, marked violations of interaction and communication both with peers and with teachers. The choice of UND, thus, was determined by tasks aimed at correcting these violations.

Training in the first grade took place with a small number of students (six people) and included both group (lessons, classes within additional education, subgroup corrective and developmental classes, participation in project activities) and individual corrective and developmental classes (defectology, speech therapy, psychological). The scope and content of programs of individual correctional assistance for a specific child was determined by the manifestation and structure of violations. All students with ASD participated in group remedial and developmental classes.

Despite the fact that children with ASD studied in a separate class at the first
stage, social integration was ensured for them at school: they used a common locker room, school canteen, participated in school-wide events.

This organization of the educational process made it possible to more effectively solve behavioral problems that arise during the adaptation period in children with ASD. For example, the problem of a child screaming in class was solved. A child can scream loudly every time he wants to get out of an uncomfortable situation: he was called to the blackboard; the teacher paid attention to other children; she didn't want to do assignments, etc. Almost the only way to change this behavior is to continue the lesson, despite the child's screams, and find a way to keep him interested. Such a technique can be implemented only in a small correctional class.

Often, at this stage of learning, frontal forms of work in class are not effective enough due to the lack of formation of students' learning behavior and learning motivation. Individual corrective and developmental classes during this period allow not only to compensate for developmental disorders, but also to prevent students from falling behind the curriculum.

The corrective and developmental program was developed as a complex psychological and pedagogical influence that takes into account the patterns of ontogenesis and morphological features of the central nervous system of a child with ASD. Therefore, during the classes, methods and techniques developed by scientists and practitioners in psychology, speech therapy, defectology and adapted for students with ASD were used.

Specialized author's methods were also used, for example, the method of teaching children with ASD to draw [2], the method of forming and developing subject-practical activities in individual classes [12].

One of the most difficult pedagogical problems of teaching children with ASD is teaching writing. In some cases, the complexity of the formation of experience leads to the impossibility of its mastery by students with ASD and the transition to the completion of written work on the computer [5]. The method we developed for the formation of graphic skills and the initial teaching of writing to children with ASD made it possible to develop writing skills in almost all students.

One of the main principles of organizing the educational process in the correctional class is an individual approach to each student. Different level tasks were used in the lesson: the student could perform tasks on the topic of the lesson depending on his capabilities and the learning task set for him.

Different level tasks were developed using the following methods:
- organization of joint activities in the lesson on a single topic, in which each student has his own powerful role;
- performance of outwardly similar tasks with different levels of complexity;
- performance of similar tasks with varying degrees of help from the teacher;
- performance of the same tasks with the use of auxiliary teaching aids or on
general terms;
- use of different forms of response to the same task;
- performance of similar tasks, differing in scope;
- performance of similar tasks on different materials (according to the interests of the child).

There were no grades in the first grade. Instead, a system of conditional qualitative-quantitative assessment of the child's achievements was used (a system of encouragement with stickers or badges on the general sheet of achievements). At first, every student was encouraged to any active action and positive result. Gradually, with encouragement, a result close to the sample began to be taken into account.

After the adaptation-diagnostic stage, pupils with ASD generally formed the basics of educational behavior, and interaction and communication with children and adults became more in line with social norms. By the beginning of the second stage, all students followed the school rules with the help of adults, and were able to negotiate. Therefore, at the content and organizational stage, the following tasks were set (second and third grades):

1. Gradual expansion of the social and educational space of the school individually for each student, development of an individual educational route that includes lessons in an inclusive class.

2. Visiting children with ASD studying in correctional classes, individual lessons in regular classes accompanied by a tutor in accordance with an individual schedule and an adapted educational program.

3. Identification of the current and potential educational level of each student of correctional classes in order to determine his opportunities for further study according to the program of the general school.

In our experience, not all children with ASD can continue their education in an inclusive classroom even after studying in a remedial classroom. Most often, the main reasons are serious intellectual or behavioral problems that cannot be solved in the conditions of a general secondary education institution.

After the end of the second stage, preparation for inclusive education was completed, and according to the decision of the psychological-pedagogical council, students were transferred to ordinary classes and studied according to the general schedule together with normally developed children.

At the third stage, the education of children with ASD took place in the mode of full inclusion in accordance with individual educational routes. Pupils with ASD continued their education in the same classes in which they previously attended separate lessons. In this case, the transition to another form of education was smoother, because before the start of education in an inclusive class, children with ASD were already familiar with the class teacher and singled out some children.

Tasks of the third stage:
1. Organization of psychological and pedagogical support for a student with ASD studying in an inclusive class.
2. Ensuring the availability of educational material for students with ASD.
3. Assistance to children with ASD in inclusion in the group of classmates, participation in joint curricular and extracurricular activities.

Learning at this stage is quite difficult for students with ASD, even despite the previously completed preparatory stages. In a lesson in a regular class, in which 20–25 people study, more events take place, often larger both in terms of volume and speed of information offered, higher requirements for arbitrariness in activities and self-regulation. Therefore, at this stage, the main direction of skill formation is the development of independence in the application of previously acquired and formed skills in the organization of one's own behavior and activities.

At this stage, students with ASD did not need a special spatio-temporal organization of the environment. They studied in an ordinary class, according to an ordinary educational schedule. The accompanying tutor helped them solve problems. For example, before changing the educational schedule, it was necessary to prepare students with ASD in advance, talk about it in detail or allow them not to participate in unexpected events.

Children transferred to the fourth grade studied on an individualized educational route that included both regular classroom instruction and after-school group remedial activities. Education during this period was aimed at preparing for the transition to secondary school.

In the fifth and subsequent grades, students with ASD were fully involved in the educational process of a regular class. They studied according to the general schedule according to the adapted basic general education program.

In our experience, not all children with ASD can continue learning in an inclusive classroom even after learning in a remedial classroom. Most often, the main reasons are serious intellectual or behavioral problems, the solution of which is impossible in school conditions. It is advisable for such students to continue studying in the system of special schools (special correctional schools for children with intellectual disabilities, for children with severe speech pathology, etc.). Those students who, after the corrective stage, can study in the mode of full inclusion, must go to regular classes and study according to the general schedule together with normally developed children with the mandatory accompaniment of a tutor.

One of the proposed innovations was the use of a specialized monitoring system, which made it possible to adapt the assessment system so that, on the one hand, children with ASD could achieve results and demonstrate knowledge of the subjects being studied, and on the other hand, it allowed timely measures to eliminate gaps.

**Conclusions and prospects.** The conducted research is promising and allows continuing work in the direction of developing specialized methods, technologies and forms of teaching students with ASD at the level of primary and basic education.
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