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## PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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*In this paper, the principles of inclusive education were considered. In addition, we offered to elaborate and approve the order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus the Plan for 2018-2023 «On measures to implement the principle of accessibility of education».*

Any system in the world is built on the principles that there are the basic ideas and the beginnings. The same can be said about the system of inclusive education.

The legislation of the Republic of Belarus in the field of inclusive education does not contain a single normative legal act, which completely regulated this sphere. In the Belarusian legislation there are such normative legal acts as the Constitution, the Education Code, the Law of the Republic of Belarus «On Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Belarus», which to a certain extent affect the sphere of inclusive education. They contain the basic provisions on education in general, which can be attributed to inclusive education, and moreover serve as a basis for the further development of inclusive education in the Republic of Belarus.

However, we believe that during studying the principles of inclusive education, first of all, it is necessary to rely on international sources that have been ratified by the Republic of Belarus, due to the underdevelopment of the national legislation on this issue.

The first international act that we will consider is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by the Republic of Belarus on October 1, 1990. Part 1 of Art. 2 of this Convention contains the principle of non-discrimination: «States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status [1]». It should be noted that in this norm, during listing the signs of discrimination, an emphasis is placed on the health of the child, which allows us to prove that children with disabilities have the right to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with healthy children, including the right to education.

In addition to the above-mentioned rule, the Convention on the Rights of the Child contains a special rule that relates to the right to education in general. So, according to part 1 of Art. 28 States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
- c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
- d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
- e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates [1].

Analyzing this norm, we can single out the following principles, which, in one way or another, affect the sphere of inclusive education:

1. The principle of free education;
2. The principle of compulsory primary education;
3. The principle of accessibility of education on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means.

In our opinion, the most important principle is the principle of accessibility of education, since it is with this problem that they are faced most often, and not only in the sphere of education. The main reason of this problem is the lack of material and technical support in educational institutions, namely:

- Lack of ramps, elevators or stairs;
- Lack of carpets that must be present along the path of disabled wheelchair users;
- Absence of nameplates and announcements with Braille;

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- Narrow stairs and doors;
- Numerous thresholds (a barrier-free environment has not been created), etc.

Thus, according to the Report on the work of the Special Education Department of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus in 2016 [2], the share of educational institutions with a barrier-free environment is 3.3% out of 100 of the total number of pre-school, general secondary and special education institutions. Among the institutions of higher education, in whose buildings a barrier-free environment has been created today, it is worth noting Polesky State University, Polotsk State University and Baranovichi State University. In other institutions of higher education, we can talk about the elements of a barrier-free environment (the presence of ramps, equipped bathrooms, etc.), since these are mostly old architectural buildings [2].

Returning to Part 1 of Art. 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child [1], we draw your attention to the phrase «on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means». This phrase is the fundamental idea of the principle of accessibility of education, because if we interpret the word «capacity», then it means both physical and mental capacities. In addition, the word «every» is understood as a healthy child, and with disabilities. It should also be noted that the principle of accessibility is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in Part 1 of Art. 26 [3].

The Republic of Belarus also ratified the Convention against Discrimination in Education in 1960 [4]. In the first article of this Convention, the term «discrimination» is deciphered [36]: For the purposes of this Convention, the term 'discrimination' includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and in particular:

- a) Of depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type or at any level;
- b) Of limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard;
- c) Subject to the provisions of Article 2 of this Convention, of establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons; or
- d) Of inflicting on any person or group of persons conditions which are in-compatible with the dignity of man.

Analyzing this rule, it can be noted that this convention does not recognize discrimination as a difference, exclusion, restriction or preference based on health, both physical and mental. However, this article contains a very interesting position, namely the creation or preservation of separate educational systems or educational institutions for any person or group of persons. In paragraph «c» of this article, there is a reference to Article 2 of the same Convention, which contains the following rule [4]: When permitted in a State, the following situations shall not be deemed to constitute discrimination, within the meaning of Article 1 of this Convention:

- a) The establishment or maintenance of separate educational systems or institutions for pupils of the two sexes, if these systems or institutions offer equivalent access to education, provide a teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard as well as school premises and equipment of the same quality, and afford the opportunity to take the same or equivalent courses of study;
- b) The establishment or maintenance, for religious or linguistic reasons, of separate educational systems or institutions offering an education which is in keeping with the wishes of the pupil's parents or legal guardians, if participation in such systems or attendance at such institutions is optional and if the education provided conforms to such standards as may be laid down or approved by the competent authorities, in particular for education of the same level;
- c) The establishment or maintenance of private educational institutions, if the object of the institutions is not to secure the exclusion of any group but to provide educational facilities in addition to those provided by the public authorities, if the institutions are conducted in accordance with that object, and if the education provided conforms with such standards as may be laid down or approved by the competent authorities, in particular for education of the same level.

Analyzing this article, we can note that the first two items do not suit us in the sense of inclusive education and, in our case, it is worth paying attention only to the last point. The paragraph «c» refers to the establishment or maintenance of private educational institutions, the purpose of which is to supplement the possibilities of public education. At first glance, it may seem that this paragraph involves the creation of special institutions for a certain group, including for children with disabilities, but in this case it is meant that children, besides attending public school, will attend a private school for a certain fee, i.e. not instead of the state school, but with it.

Based on the above, we can conclude that since people with disabilities belong to a certain group of people, according to the Convention against Discrimination in Education in 1960, the establishment of special institutions for people with disabilities is a significant violation of this Convention.

The next document that we will consider is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of December 13, 2006 [5]. It should be noted that, despite the fact that this Convention was adopted in 2006, it was ratified in the Republic of Belarus only in 2016 and entered into force on December 29, 2016.

Article 24 of this Convention is devoted to Education, which consists of several parts. The first part of this article contains the following rule [5]: «States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning». Analyzing this rule, we can conclude that the state should take all sorts of measures to ensure the possibility for people with disabilities to receive education, from kindergarten to university. In addition, this norm also duplicates the principle of non-discrimination, which we identified in other international documents.

Part 2 of Art. 24 of this Convention contains rules that the state must ensure compliance with [5]: «In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

- a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
- b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
- d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion».

In addition, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provides for a practical solution to one of the most important problems of disabled people in modern society - the problems of the process of socialization of disabled people.

Part 3 of Art. 24 of the Convention [4] provides that States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

- a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring. For example, one of such schools in the Republic of Belarus is the State Educational Institution «Special Boarding School for Children with Visual Impairment in Vasilevichi»;
- b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community. For example, in 2015 in the Palace of Culture, N.F. Sharko in the city of Minsk were opened free courses on the study of sign language [6];
- c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.

In the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in addition to the previously mentioned principle of non-discrimination, the principle of accessibility of inclusive education is enshrined. Part 5 of Art. 24 of this Convention contains a provision that States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities. [5]

Many people don't understand the importance of inclusion for people with disabilities at all, which is a huge problem for the Republic of Belarus. In order to solve it completely, it will take a lot of time, because the decision is to re-educate the younger generation. In our opinion, in order to introduce something radically new in any process and to reconstruct the consciousness of the population of your country, it is required to begin with the upbringing of children in schools. For example, if children with disabilities are initially from the first class with fully healthy children, then in the minds of both groups the thought will not develop that this phenomenon is abnormal, unacceptable, that it should not be so that they need to be divided. If children with disabilities are

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initially placed in a society where they will consider themselves equal in terms of exercising their rights and legitimate interests, it can be assumed that both groups in the future will become full members of society who do not see the difference in the rights of ordinary people and people with disabilities. Discrimination will disappear here.

On the basis of all of the foregoing in this paper, we can distinguish two principles that definitely should form the basis of inclusive education and form its foundation:

1. The principle of non-discrimination in the field of education;
2. The principle of accessibility of education.

Without exception, all the principles listed in this paper undoubtedly play an important role in the education system of any country, they must be guided by each country in building their own education system. But, based on subjective opinion, we believe that the most important of all the principles we have studied is the principle of accessibility of education. As for the problem of implementing this principle, on the basis of all the above, we propose to develop and approve the Plan for 2018-2023 by the order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. «On measures to implement the principle of accessibility of education» by allocating funds from the republican budget for equipment and creating a barrier-free environment:

- 1) at least one school in each city of the Republic of Belarus in order that each child has the right to receive general basic and general secondary education;
- 2) each secondary specialized and vocational education institution (including all buildings) so that everyone has the opportunity to get a secondary vocational education;
- 3) all institutions of higher education (including all buildings) in the Republic of Belarus.

However, we cannot fail to mention that any convention, whether the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention against Discrimination in Education or any other convention in the world are only recommendatory, which means that even if the country has ratified this or that convention, this does not mean that it will fully fulfill its demands. And in this, in our opinion, there is a huge problem. At the moment there is no such international or normative legal act in the world that would completely regulate the sphere of inclusive education. Therefore, first of all, we propose to include in the Education Code a separate chapter that would only deal with inclusive education, consolidate the basic principles, rights and duties of subjects of inclusive education, etc.

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