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**DEMOCRACY AND
EDUCATION**

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Foreword

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The conference, "Democracy and Education" held in Kyiv, Ukraine June 1-2, 2001 was a direct outcome of a NIS Partnership Grant from the State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Exchange between Montclair State University and Kirovograd State Pedagogical University. The gathering of over 150 scholars and practitioners from over 30 institutions in Eastern Europe and the United States produced significant discussion on the impact of reform in higher education and the democratization of the classroom on the future of societies of Eastern Europe.

The Proceedings represent 45 presentations from participants from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Latvia, Poland and United States. Works include theoretical papers on topics such as reform in higher education, development of Critical Thinking in Ukrainian schools, development of personality in a democratic society, gender initiatives as strategy for democratic changes, and the impact of technology on democratic teaching.

By exploring the various themes of democratization, we hope the Proceedings will contribute towards further enhancing efforts in creating democratic institutions. The success of democratization will largely depend on the continuation of active discussion amongst all of us.

Providing Access To The General Education Curriculum For Students With Disabilities... Tensions Posed By A Democratically-Based System Of Education

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Abstract

The challenge for educators and policy makers of the 21st century is to provide students with disabilities meaningful access to instruction that is aligned with high-level standards and supported by special education interventions. Enhancing access to the general education curriculum requires a new approach to collaboration between general and special education. This paper offers an overview of the critical issues facing educators and policy makers in the New Independent States as well as the United States. Included in this presentation will be a review of legislation, litigation, and regulations that facilitate or hinder the ability of students to access the general education curriculum. This discussion will focus on issues related to curricular expectations and frameworks, instructional pedagogy, assessment of student progress, teacher preparation and professional development, and self-determination of students.

Policy makers and educators in the New Independent States and the United States are increasingly focusing attention on the role of students with disabilities in an educational system that is based on democratic principles. The tension between a national desire for excellence juxtaposed with the effort to provide equitable access to an appropriate education for all students is coming to the forefront of national debates and discussions.

The right to an education of every individual was declared in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the Declaration spoke of "every" individual, advocates for students with disabilities soon became concerned with its applicability for this population. As a result, the delegates of the World Conference on Special Needs Education assembled in Salamanca, Spain in June 1994 to reaffirm its commitment to education for all students. The Salamanca Statement addresses the principles, policy, and implications for effective practice to support students with disabilities.

This paper addresses the work of the United States and New Independent States to improve the educational opportunities for students with disabilities

Reflections on Initiatives in the United States

The passage of EL 94-142 in 1975 focused the attention of policy makers and educators has been on policy and practice related to the access of students with disabilities to an education – an individually designed, free appropriate public education provided in the least restrictive environment. This focus on access has provided a generation of children with disabilities with the initial preparation needed for successful adult life in the community and workforce. However, for a

growing number of students with disabilities, special education today is not preparing them for increasingly rigorous graduation requirements and career skills that are based on problem solving, collaboration, and technology. Why is this? Special education has typically been viewed as an intervention of remediation. As students with disabilities demonstrate difficulty in academic skills, they are provided intensive instruction on the basic foundation skills, which are considered to be prerequisites to higher level, abstract reasoning, and problem-solving skills. While they receive remediation intervention, their peers without disabilities refine their foundation skills through application in more complex activities (Gensten, 1998). Thus placing students with disabilities in a continual position of trying to play catch-up.

This gap between students with and without disabilities continues to widen. Students in special education have lower school completion rates than their nondisabled peers; as adults, they are the largest unemployed group of Americans; they experience higher arrest rates; they are less likely to live independently in the community (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). The challenge for educators and policy makers of the 21st century is to provide students with disabilities meaningful access to instruction that is aligned with high-level standards and supported by special education interventions. Enhancing access to the general education curriculum requires a new approach to collaboration between general and special education.

What does it mean to access the General Education Curriculum?

Perhaps the first question to ask is: What is the general education curriculum? On first glance, the answer is clear: It is the curriculum designed to prepare students for adult life and, more specifically, for the high school diploma. Frequently, the general education curriculum contains both academic (e.g., literacy, science, math, and social studies) and nonacademic (e.g., career/vocational, arts, healthful living, practical living skills, citizenship) domains; however, student performance is assessed primarily in academics. As pressures mount for teachers to cover the content of the assessed curriculum, less attention and instructional time are devoted to the nonassessed areas. Thus, it is not uncommon for portions of the general education curriculum to receive limited attention – or to not be addressed at all (Warren, 1997). The result is a lack of consistency in how the general education curriculum is defined and taught.

Considerations related to providing access to the General Education Curriculum

This lack of consistency is not limited to special education. In its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, the National Commission on Excellence in Education called for the adoption of "more rigorous and measurable standards..." (p. 27) which will require "...more effective use of the existing school day" (p. 29). This bold recommendation has resulted in the current focus on standards-based education and more specifically on issues of equity: ensuring that all students have equal access to common standards, relevant yet challenging assessments, and enhanced accountability for student performance (McDonnell, McLaughlin, & Morison, 1997). Such issues have been addressed in recent Federal legislation (e.g., the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Goals 2000, Educate America Act, the Improving America's Schools Act, and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act). Each of the laws contains provisions requiring the

development of challenging common standards and the reporting of all students' performance on progress in meeting the standards. Together, these are intended to satisfy the national need to produce highly skilled graduates.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 contain several provisions directed at providing greater access to the general education curriculum. These include:

- state performance goals – each state wishing to receive federal IDEA Part B funds must identify goals for the performance of students with disabilities which are to be consistent with the goals and standards established for all students;
- state improvement plans – through stakeholder input, plans are to identify critical program components in need of improvement. One of the indicators which must be addressed is the performance and participation of students with disabilities;
- program funding – coordination between special education and other federal resources is encouraged for direct services to students as well as personnel preparation;
- Individualized Education Programs – the general education curriculum is to be considered throughout the development and implementation of each student's Plan. Initial assessments reflect the student's ability to access instruction aligned with the general education curriculum and standards. Subsequent goals and instructional supports are also to be aligned with the curriculum and standards;
- assessing student performance – All students are to participate in state and district assessment systems. To the greatest extent possible, students with disabilities are to participate in the large-scale assessments that are aligned with the general education curriculum and standards. Individual accommodations are to be identified and implemented during instruction and assessment activities. Alternate assessments are to be administered to those students who cannot participate in state- and district-wide assessments; and
- reporting student performance – The performance of students with disabilities is to be publicly reported in the same frequency and detail as the performance of nondisabled students. Such reporting is to reflect performance on large-scale assessments as well as alternate assessments.

Future challenges

Virtually every state has developed standards in at least one academic content area; however, there is no "standard" for the state standards. They differ in what they are called as well as in subject areas, level of specificity, and difficulty. The challenge noted earlier of the increasing trend to "teach to the test" has direct implications for vocational training opportunities. A diminished focus in career development is likely to result in lower post-school employment opportunities and success for young adults with disabilities.

Special educators are rarely involved in the development of the general education curriculum standards. Instead, they are typically called upon to identify instructional strategies or curriculum modifications (Goertz & Friedman, 1996). This results in general and special educators needing to decide when to modify a

standard, when to provide instructional accommodations, how and when to plan collaboratively, and how to find instructional time to cover the content (McLaughlin, Henderson, & Rhim, 1997).

Universal design is receiving increased attention as a viable means for expanding access opportunities. It is based on the premise that curricula and standards are flexible in order to include students with a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, and learning styles – including students with disabilities. (Orkwis & McLane, 1998). Effective design does not result in lowered expectations or watered-down instruction. Rather, it calls for multiple ways of expressing competency in regard to a given standards.

Perhaps the most intriguing challenge this issue relates to the ability of students with disabilities to participate in the decisions that are made about their educational programs. The self-determination is receiving increased attention as policymakers, educators, advocates, and family members strive to identify the appropriate and effective ways to directly involve students. This process necessitates the opportunities for students to engage in learning opportunities focusing on their unique abilities and disabilities, effective accommodations, and appropriate self-advocacy skills.

Reflections on Initiatives in the New Independent States

In 1994 Moscow hosted the conference dedicated to deviant children education. The report of the workshops said "The USA expertise in this field is of utmost importance for the Russian experts". Next year the Draft of the Special Education Law appeared. The creation of this Law was caused by two major reasons: the advancement of special education history in Russia and the democratic changes that Russia and NIS have undergone in recent years.

Historical Factors

The 19th century Russia witnessed the following major historic landmarks in special education:

In the mid of the century charity organizations were mushrooming which supported orphans, the crippled and the mentally ill (as they used to be called then). At that very time the system of differential teaching children with development limitations was laid down. In NIS member countries it has been preserved for years and years. In 1904 the Medical Teacher's Training University was opened in Kiev. And in 1909-1910 the first in Russia special school was founded in Moscow.

By 1917 special schools had already appeared in Vologda, N.Novgorod, Kharkov, and Ekaterinburg. Their opening was preceded by the lengthy and heated debates of the advanced educationalists, social workers and conformist officials.

As a whole, the system of special education of that period was characterized by the growth of the charity institutions not commissioned to educate and raise both exceptional and gifted children. Out of the question was the state care of deviant children in pre revolutionary Russia where illiterate people constituted 72% of adult population and Russia's provinces such as Middle Asia were totally uneducated. Privately owned charity institutions covered no more than 5-6% of children impaired in sight and hearing (deaf and blind).

In separate European states the Law had been passed by the late 19th century about the obligatory primary education of special children. There was no legal counterpart of it in Russia. In 1896 the 2nd Congress of technical and professional educationalists took place. We also call it the "first" Congress of Russian special education workers, because it was namely then when the decision about the establishment of special educational institutions and their curriculum was made.

By February 1917 all institutions for mentally retarded children contained 2,000 children. On the 5th of July 1918 there was passed a Decree canceling private children establishments and their inclusion (incorporation) in the state educational system. The following new research institutions appeared: Child Study Center and Pedagogical Institute of Handicaps (1920). This institute served as a foundation for numerous contemporary research centers. In 1920 there was held the 1st Congress of Children Impairments, Homelessness and Crime Prevention.

In 1924 it was followed by the Congress of Social and Legal Underage Safeguarding. This year there existed in Russia 65 special schools and orphanages with 3,442 people in them. Two thirds of these institutions were located in Moscow and Leningrad (St.Petersburg now). There were 44 schools for the hearing and speech impaired, and 22 - for visually impaired children. It was definitely insufficient for such a huge country. Presumably, these schools catered only 5% of those who needed them.

In 1926 there were adopted Acts "About the Selection of Children to Special Schools" and "On the Institutions for the Deaf, Dumb, Blind and Mentally retarded Children and Teenagers". This Act entailed in 1928 another one: "On Special Schools and Special Groups for the Mentally Disadvantaged Children". In 1923 the State Society of the Blind was formed, and in three years - the Society of the Dumb (Hard-of-Hearing People). In 1929 the special educational personnel gathered for the 1st All Russian Special Schools Convention. In 1931 there was adopted the Law about the universal education and the universal primary education of children and teenagers (from 8 to 16) with limited abilities.

As we can see, the time of all these events coincided with the research and applied activities of L.S.Vygotsky. In general, in Russia there were issued a number of laws on education of children with special needs. But in the 30s the ideological repressions began, which practically nullified the efficiency of atypical children education and upbringing. There appeared a motto that during the socialism construction the number of maladjusted citizens will decrease. This myth was supported by the absence of statistics about the amount of children with limited abilities, by the prohibition (taboo) to carry out sociological researches, by the censorship for the public discussion of these problems. Russian legislation of that time reflected the following social viewpoint on the atypical children problem: **THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO DIFFER FROM NORMAL (USUAL) CHILDREN.** Besides, a man/woman was valued in the Soviet Union from the standpoint of his/her labor productivity. That's why the attitude to people with limited abilities altered (changed) in comparison with that of prerevolutionary times: these people were forwarded to special institutions, which minimized their social contacts. It was proclaimed that "there were no handicaps in the USSR". If a disabled person worked, he/she was deprived of all social allowances. Up to the 50s there were no benefits for parents having atypical children, because a Soviet citizen had to work in spite of anything (under any circumstances).

Until the 1950s the system of special education was represented only by schools for children with hearing, sight and intellect impairments. It was only in 1954 that the first school for speech problem children was opened. In 1956 residential schools and special residential schools were formed, and in 1968 the residential schools for children with severe disabilities were transformed into those for teachable and not teachable children. The first schools for children with orthopedic (motor) handicaps were established in 1961-1962. In the 1970s new type of special educational establishments was organized - those for psychically different (mentally retarded) children.

In 1984 the reform of the general comprehensive and professional schools was started. In 1992 the general schools open classes for children with learning disabilities (the so-called leveling and compensatory learning classes).

Current Initiatives

Now, after a long run, we have come up to the period of democratic changes in Russia. During this period the following documents of international renown were recognized in Russia: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of Children's Rights, the Declaration of the Mentally Challenged (Disadvantaged) Rights, the Declaration of the Disabled People's Rights, the Convention of Children's Rights.

Children's rights are reflected in the Constitution of Russian Federation, in the Law of Education, in the federal program "The Children of Russia", in the Program "Special Children", in the Presidential Act "Measures of Forming the Life Activities Sphere for the Handicapped People". Measures for promoting population health are worked out: the Law of the Social Protection of Disabled People, the Law of Motherhood and Childhood, the basics of Health legislation. The system of compensations and social support of children with limited abilities and their families has been introduced. And in 1992 the new Law of Education was passed.

Thus, it was not a mere coincidence that namely in 1994 the question on special education legislation was put on the agenda of the Russian-American seminars. This problem was urgent and its solution was long awaited for. The law project on special education is progressive in full measure and reflects the democratic tendencies in teaching children with special needs (- from complete neglect to the big-scale integration in life). It presupposes the variable education types for deviant children: integrated education, education in a special education institution or home education. The law reinforces the parents' role, who, together with teachers, can participate in the individual educational program of their child.

The Institute of Corrected Pedagogic is one of the leading research centers in the Special Education and the Special Psychology. It was founded in 1929 and almost 70 years it makes the fundamental and practical researches the aim of which is to build the system of the special education for children with disabilities, the system of psychological-pedagogical help, the system of adaptation and rehabilitation by the education. During years of its existence the Institute made a lot for finding special need of children with mental retardation, deaf or children with weak hearing, blind or children with weak vision, for children with orthopedic disabilities or with behavioral-emotional disabilities, for multihandicapped children. Scientific research of special educational fields, of specific educational institutions, of special pedagogical strategies made the opportunity to have the present

educational system with 8 different kinds of schools and 15 kinds of different school strategies, with preschool system for children with different disabilities. The great attention in the Institute was paid to the history of development the system of special education in Russia and Europe. It helped to find out the developmental perspectives of special education in Russia. They found out the evolution of changes in attitudes of society and government to people with special needs which helped to build the system of present special education. It was proved that in any country the transition of the system of special education on new levels is connected with the changes in attitudes of the society and the government to people with disabilities and their rights. We can see the example of such transition in Russia in 90s, when the change in attitudes started and the system of special education started changing according to new rights of people with special needs. In comparison with the Europe this transition was firstly made much later than in Europe and then within absolutely different conditions. These conditions for example such as this transition was not after appropriate evaluation but was because of the sharp change in the political and society system; it was not the high economical level but during the economical crisis; it was with the absence of the laws about rights of children with disabilities. But the main difference between Russia and Europe is that in Russia in comparison with the Europe there were not the same level developed system of special institution for such children.

The transition was very specific because of the uncompleted previous stage of development of special education in Russia. The building of the scientific strategy of overcoming the present crisis in the system of education in Russia needs the attention to all specific features of evaluation this crisis, to all experiences in this field. The main purpose of the reforming the present system of special education is its reconstruction, which means the rebuilding the absent link such as the system of the early diagnosing and correcting the child's disability. N.N.Malofeev mentions that the researches in the Institute shows that the providing special educational needs to the child in early ages helps to prevent the appearance of new special educational needs, to provide the maximum of the rehabilitation and to help this child not to feel the lack of social life. The data showed that the right correction in early age helped children to mainstream, to get the integrate education in regular classes, that excludes the necessarily to get special education. To better providing the transition in Russia to the following and the new level of the development of special education we should understand the main and the first contradiction of 90s. That's why the purpose of the special education, defectology as it is called in Russia is in decision the main means that are directed to the finishing the previous level and only then to the building the new better level of the development of the special education.

These purposes are: 1. to maintain and develop the functional and governmental system of the special education on the level of different variants of institutions, educational strategies and school forms in the frame of the present content; and 2. to provide the professional teaching that can help to reach the appropriate level of professional competency which provides the maximum possible quality of teaching children with disabilities in the frame of the present content of special education.

The Adaptation Center of Children of the Krim (Ukraine) provides innovative services to children-invalids who can not work. The main directions of this program are: 1.) using the new technologies and strategies of the education and rehabilitation of children with special needs according to the experience of

all countries; 2.) making scientific researches and using the results directed to the decisions of the educational problems, diagnosis, rehabilitation and correctional problems of children and adults with different kinds of disabilities on the basis of new modern strategies and methods of teaching, and 3.) teaching and re-teaching of the professional working with children with different kinds of disabilities.

This Center is working with materials for the programs " Visual Speech" and " Speech Therapist". It works with the animation of the sounds' profiles and their resounding. The main attention is paid to making scientific researches with children having different disabilities. They change the experience with Russian and foreign scientists. They involve new technologies not only in education and correction activities but also in the process of governing the special education institutions (making the non-paper curriculum, electronic journals etc.). This Center has a great number of psychological diagnosis strategies (about 81 different strategies). There is the program of professional orientation of children with disabilities with the following working places for them in this Center.

The legislation work in the NIS member countries develops in the similar direction. Examples are numerous: this is the Belorussian Law on Children's Rights, the document of the Lithuanian parliament "On Providing Special Educational Assistance for Children with Special Needs in the General Educational Institutions"(1993); the amendments in the typical provisions of special study and educational institutions for deviant children and teenagers in the Ukraine (1997).

Future Challenges

One of the last legal documents in the field of special education in Russia, adopted at the millennium finalizing year was the Program project for creation of united state system of early revealing and rendering special assistance to children with development deviations. But, in the same year the participants of the convention "Special Education and Social Support of Children and Teenagers with Limited Abilities" from Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Latvia and Lithuania highlighted the absence of the stable legal basis in the area of special education. It is to be worked out in the forthcoming years.

Some of the most important challenges for us include: 1.) developing a system of the early diagnosis and psychological-pedagogical correction as the basis element of the national system of the special education of the XXI century, 2.) preparing federal law providing rights to children with disabilities beginning from the birth and providing them the realization of the educational needs, 3.) developing of the concepts of the reforming the whole system of the special education providing the constant education for children with all kinds of disabilities, 4.) cultivating a new concept of the content of the correctional education for children from birth and till 3 years; for children from 3 to 7 years old in new kinds of educational institutions; for children in school and post-school age; cultivation of the new standard determining the level of education and life level for children with different kinds of disabilities, 5.) developing new strategies, institutions, tools and professionals for this experiment with children with different kinds of disabilities, and 6.) re-teaching and teaching new professionals according the new project.

Conclusion

While each of our countries is approaching education opportunities for students with disabilities in different ways, there are important areas of similarities which offer opportunities for future collaboration. Some of these include early identification and support of students with disabilities, access to equal educational opportunities for all students, and preparation for employment opportunities following school. These new ways of "doing business" are requiring policymakers and educators to reconsider the types of programs we offer and how we prepare educators and other staff to work with students with disabilities.

Seymour Sarason (1996) provides guidance to us in approaching these challenges in a democratic environment. He encourages us to take a close look at the wisdom provided by John Dewey as he reminds us of the value of collegiality, cooperation and collaboration as we strive to create social, philosophical, and pedagogical changes in the ways we educate and support students with disabilities.

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