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The system approach to psychological intervention of mental development in early dysontogenesys.

This article describes the results of the experimental studies of possibilities of psychological interventions and support of mentally retarded children. The author pays attention to the analysis and the systematization of the experience in psychoeducational intervention and support organization for retarded children. The major point of this article is the cooperation of specialists and services (psychological, educational, medical, social etc.) in intervention organization. The article reports the issues of qualified personnel training and formation of adequate social attitude regarding to the disabled children.

Key words: mental retardation, developmental lagging, system intervention, psycho-educational (support), dysontogenesis, social situation of development, primary defect, secondary defect, direct and indirect psychotherapy, body-oriented therapy, abilitation.

In connection with the growing of the numbers of children with mental retardation it appears that raising of urgency of differentiation and individualization of the process of teaching and upbringing retarded children, their intervention in early ontogenesis, and their adaptation to the modern society.

In the middle of 1990s years the approaches to psychological and educational support of mentally retarded children service realization started due to development of psychological service in Russia. The numbers of papers which claimed to be the scientific base for this service appeared in that period. (Dubrovina I., 1988, 1991, 1995, 1998; Abramova G., 1993, 1998; Markova A., 1993; Ovcharova R., 1993, 1996, 1998; Rogov E., 1995, 1998; Kazakova E., 1998; Shipizina L., 2005 and etc.) In some papers organization aspects of rendering of practical service to disabled children including children with mental retardation are considered. (Zabramnaya S., 1985, 1988, 1990; Kumarina G., 1990, 1991; Zasherinskaya O., 1995; Yamburg E., 1997; Mamaychuk I., Ilina M., 2004 and etc.) The researches revealed the fact that there is no possibility today to provide the system approach to intervention and support for all retarded children and participants of educational process. They also showed that the principals of efficient intervention and support (which are continuity, individuality, autonomy, complexity, systematic of organization and including all school subjects) often are not followed.

Although the problem of special study were formed only in 1960s years, there were a lot of significant scientific information about the children with mental retardation collected in Russian psychology. It should be mentioned, that gathered information concerned mostly children of 7-9 years old and toddlers. It is also significant that most researchers limited their tasks to a description of clinic and neuropsychologi-



cal aspects of disorders. Besides the lack of the concrete organizational, methodical papers and practical recommendations for organization of composite educational and psychological support in early ontogenesis is observed. There are also some difficulties with embedding theoretical elaborations in practical work and the lack of materials about the possibilities of integrating retarded children into general educational institutions.

Hence the problem of organization of the system intervention and timely overcoming of mental retardation before sensitive stages are missed and secondary social defects appear becomes extremely actual.

In our research we made an attempt to create a theoretic and a practical base for the system intervention support of the children with mental retardation in child institutions. The object of the research was the personality and its development in dysontogenesis. The subject of research was the organization of the system intervention of the personal development in dysontogenesis. The aims of the research were to define scientific finds, to develop and to approve the system intervention and support in dysontogenesis. According with the aims of our research we suggest a hypothesis that the system intervention is optimal condition for children with mental retardation for overcoming the developmental lagging and to reduce the risks of disadaptation in school society.

We claim the system intervention as the complex of methods and means of specifically organized psychological and educational impacts which include the methods of formation of lacking mental functions, the methods of interventions, the methods of psychotherapy and simultaneous optimization of social situation of development. The methods of intervention of mental retardation in early dysontogenesis include a direct and an indirect psychotherapy, individual and group approaches to development and intervention of both cognitive and personal systems and development of child's subjectivity in the context of age-related activity. Within the bounds of the described method we found it effective to use indirect body-oriented therapy. To optimize the social situation of development it is necessary to create a particular developing and emotionally comfort environment, to include close child's surrounding in the intervention, to harmonize interrelations in child-adult community.

Based on the aims of our research we posed the following tasks:

1. to develop a multilevel system of diagnosis and assessment of mental development in dysontogenesis;
2. to conduct a multilevel system analysis of developmental dynamic of retarded children in comparison with norm group;
3. to create and approbate the system of conditions and means of the system intervention including personal intervention to compensate the developmental lagging;
4. to study the influence of the system intervention and conditions of optimization of social situation of development which created on the base of specific groups



integrated in child institutions and to study the overcoming of developmental lagging and preventive measures on possible social disadaptation of retarded children;

5. to justify the necessity of timely system intervention and complex psychoeducational support of mentally retarded children on the base of specific integrated complex "kindergarten-school".

To control the hypothesis and to reach the aims of the research we planned and conducted the experimental investigation which was composite of main and additional parts and included the followings:

The first block (main experiment) included a practical study of specific of development of mental retarded children, evaluation of the influence of the system intervention and optimization of social situation of development in specific groups integrated in child institutions. It consisted of statement, formative and control experiments.

The second block (additional experiment) included a longitude research in the course of which the results of social adaptation of mentally retarded children who had received timely psychoeducational help in specific kindergarten groups were analyzed. The development and socialization of children of 7-16 years old who were claimed to be mental retarded in early childhood and to whom the assistance was not been rendered were studied. Also the specific of adaptation of mentally retarded children and their self-esteem and behavioral disorders as an attribute of secondary defects were studied. The longitude research data which we used for evaluation and analysis were gathered in 1995-2005 years.

The main parts of the process of the system intervention were claimed as following:

1. the multilevel system diagnosis of the essence of developmental detours, adequate and complex information about child's condition, prediction of his or her further development;
2. the elaboration of the plan of support of child development in which all necessary specialists and close child's surrounding are included;
3. the complex multifunctional developing and forming work with developmental lagged children;
4. the system intervention of child developmental lags;
5. the optimization of social situation of development in the context of differentiated integration of retarded children in general education schools, including child's close surrounding in the context of intervention.

In the bounds of this research we claim as main directions of the system intervention the following:

- the optimization of the social situation of development;
- the interventional and developing direction.

Firstly the optimization of social situation of development connected with optimization child's communications in social interrelations.

The second task was to amend in educational component that is the type of edu-



educational institute, the way of child's participation in different forms of extracurricular activities, types of pedagogical communication.

The third task is connected with changing of child's position in society. This task is solved in the process of differentiated integration of retarded children in general education institutes, when appears more productive way of self-esteem.

The fourth task is creation of a specific developing environment which creates conditions for realization of child's activity, developing of child's subjectivity in the context of age-related activity.

We also refer peculiarities of the professional and personal preparedness of an educational specialist to work with children, taking into accounts the parents' position and degree of their participation in the interventional process. The efficacy of interventional programs mostly depends on the time of their holding: the earlier a developmental lagging is revealed and interventional work starts the greater possibility of success in solving child's developmental problems. Thus the process of the system intervention appears as quite long.

The main aims of intervention include:

- the overcoming of developmental lagging, excluding all the sources of problems;
- preventive measures for behavioral disorders and problems of emotional development, reducing of the symptoms of developmental detours;
- intervention and development of cognitive, psychomotor, emotional and personal child's systems;
- preventive measures and intervention of social and psychological disadaptation in school age.

Making conclusions of the research we claim the following:

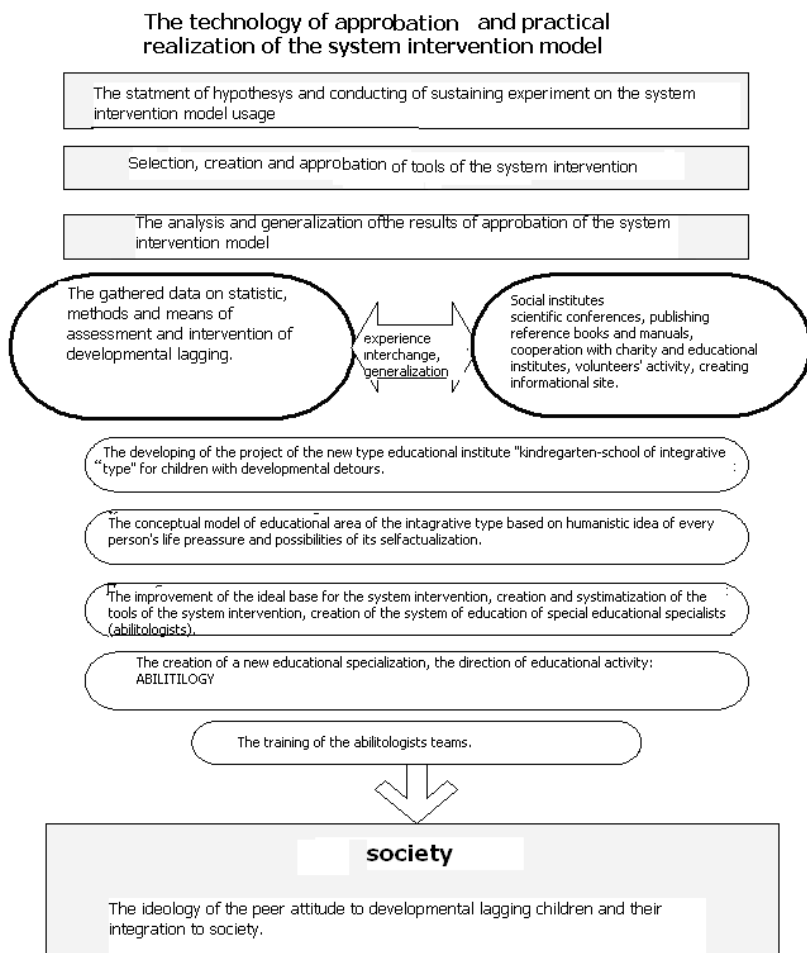
- the assumption that including child's close surrounding in interventional process and early intervention is the essential condition of optimization of mental development in dysontogenesis was proved;
- the acquisition of essential knowledge for retarded children of preschool age and forming their mental systems is possible only in the context of age-related activity and subject-to-subject interrelations in child-adult society which provide emotionally favorable environment;
- the system work with educational specialists and parents is necessary for forming subject-to-subject interrelations;
- the results of longitude research showed that children who received early psychoeducational support in specific groups integrated in general education kindergarten behaved themselves adaptively without revealing secondary defects;
- the integration of mentally retarded children in general education institutes where they could both interact with nondisabled peers and be included in specific intervention is essential condition for overcoming their defects.

We gathered the data of 1992-2005 years about specific integrated groups activity which shows that 62% of retarded children who attended these groups entered general



education schools; part of them could be penetrated in general education kindergarten groups; 20% children with severe mental retardation could be entered special education school classes. Further retarded children's adaptation in school and their experience of toddler age show the stability of interventional effects.

Some directions of further scientific research on the system intervention are represented in the scheme:





The aims of further research we can claim as widening the categories of children who could be helped and changing the attitude of our society to disabled children. The positive results of intervention mentally retarded children of preschool age allows us to suppose that timely psychoeducational support could be provided to children with different defects and disorders by founding integrated educational institutes such as "kindergarten-school". We also claim that the groups of specially prepared educational specialists should be organized to support the system intervention process in integrated educational institutes.

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