

**EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN RUSSIA:  
ON THE WAY TO INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION**

**Maria Oreshkina**  
*University of Scranton*

*This paper presents an overview of the current situation with integration and inclusion in Russia. It explores the challenges of special education and legislation. It provides some examples of integration and inclusion initiatives and discusses them as examples of social transformations in post-Soviet Russia. The study concludes that the world trend towards inclusive schools has impacted the post-Soviet Russia and an attempt to narrow the gap between special and regular education has been made by non-governmental organizations, individual schools, and the formal system. More decisive and synergetic effort is required from the state as well as individuals to develop and implement a well defined policy that supports inclusion and equity education for all.*

The socio-political reforms of the 1990s in Russia gave the impetus to the integration and inclusion movement. The spirit of pluralism quickly spread throughout the post-soviet society, as more and more marginalized groups became vocal about their difficult conditions and violations of their human rights. Among these groups were parents of children with disabilities supported by progressive educators and human rights activists who sought solutions to the problem of segregated or no education for this group of children, especially children with severe or multiple disabilities. Russia's signing of international agreements supporting the rights of children with disabilities, along with the developing cooperation of the research and educational community abroad were among the other factors that contributed to further development of the movement.

Special education international discourse lacks information about inclusion and integration in Russia. Some studies dealt with the history and trends of special education in the late 1990s (Grigorenko, 1998; Korkunov, Nigayev, Reynolds, & Lerner, 1998; Malofeev, 1998). More recently, studies addressed the perception (Agran & Boykov, 2003) and training of special education teachers (Judge & Oreshkina, 2004). The latest information is virtually unavailable to English-speaking audience. It is the intent of this paper to fill this gap and to examine the development of integration and inclusion practices within the context of contemporary Russia. The examination of these practices is based on the analysis of Russian educational literature, legal documents, and World Wide Web resources.

In the beginning, few terms require clarification. In international literature, many authors distinguish between integration and inclusion (Ainscow, 1998; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Sebba & Ainscow, 1996). Integration is described as *an 'assimilationist' process, when the placement of the child depends on his/her ability to fit a largely unchanged schools environment* (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p. 131). The practice of integration implies a continuum of children's participation in regular schools *to the extent that is appropriate to their particular needs and circumstances* (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p. 131). Inclusion involves *a restructuring of mainstream schooling that every school can accommodate every child irrespective of disability* (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002, p. 131). The inclusion movement has gained its impetus with the passing of The Salamanca statement and framework for action (UNESCO, 1994) which stated that *those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs* (p. viii). It is important to note that the practice of inclusion implies changes and alterations for *all* children, not only for children with disabilities.

In Russia, the term integration entered public and pedagogical discourse in the early 1990s and until recently this term has been more familiar and widely used. Nazarova (1998) defined integration as *a process, result and condition when invalids [a term for individuals with severe disabilities] and other*

*individuals with disabilities are not socially desegregated or isolated but participate in all spheres and forms of social life together (equally) with others* (p. 262). The term inclusion is also gaining acceptance and discussions about the differences between the two have emerged in scholarly literature (Furyaeva, 2006; Groznaya, 2006). These discussions are largely based on North American and European literature and repeat similar themes. In the paper, the term integration or inclusion will be used depending on which term was used in a corresponding source. In the discussion of education in less segregated environments in general, the expression integration and inclusion practices or initiatives will be used.

Children with disabilities are another term that requires clarification. State legislation distinguishes between children with disabilities and children with severe disabilities or *invalids*. The law On Social Protection of the Disabled (Invalids) in Russian Federation (1995) states that a person with a severe disability is the one who has health problems with stable dysfunction of the body as a result of illnesses, injuries, and disabilities that result in limited life activity and require his/her social protection (article 1). The statistics on children with severe disabilities is often reported separately and the law On Social Protection of the Disabled outlines additional services for the severely disabled. In this paper, the term children with disabilities will be used to describe all children who are qualified for special education services and the term children with severe disabilities will be used to describe children who are qualified as children-invalids.

The first section of the paper will describe the context of integration and inclusion including current characteristics of Russian education, special education, and special education legislation. The second section will provide examples of integration and inclusion. The third section will discuss integration and inclusion as examples of social transformations in the post-Soviet Russia. The conclusion will summarize the findings of the study and formulate its implications for policy and practice.

#### *Context of Integration and Inclusion in Russia Current Characteristics of Russian Education*

As of 2009, Russia has population of approximately 140 million people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009). As of January 1, 2005, there were 29 million children in Russia age 0 – 18; 20 million of them lived in urban areas and 9 million - in rural areas (Federation Council, 2006). The literacy rate, according to the 2002 Census data, is 99.4% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009).

Russian system of education includes four levels: preschool education, general education, vocational education, and higher education. Preschool education (further referred to as preschools) consists of nursery schools and kindergartens for children of age 2 through ages six or seven and is not compulsory. It includes more than 50,000 institutions and has an enrollment of almost 4.5 million children or approximately 56% of all children population of this age (Statistics of Russian Education, 2009a). General education is represented by elementary education (age six or seven – 10), basic secondary education (10 – 15), and upper secondary education (15 – 17or18). Secondary education is compulsory for all citizens of Russia. There are about 67, 000 institutions of general education with approximately 20 million students, age six-seven through 17-18. About 81% of children of the school age population attend schools (Statistics of Russian Education, 2009b). The formal statistics identify 1.6 million children who require special education (Volosovets, 2003).

The reforms of the 1980s and 1990s had a multifarious impact on education. On the one hand, they initiated democratization of school life and brought positive changes in educational governance, curriculum, and instruction. As a result, regional educational authorities and school administrations gained more power in decision-making that allowed them to promote integration and inclusion on regional, municipal, and school levels. On the other hand, these reforms led to a dramatic economic and social stratification of the society. Funding of schools - except the institutions with a federal status – became the responsibility of local authorities and/or subjects of federation. Different degrees of economic prosperity of the regions and the commitment of local authorities to education are responsible for unequal expenditures on education, special education, and the development and implementation of innovations. On the level of individual families, households with higher incomes can afford better health care for pay and additional educational opportunities through private teachers, tutors, and professionals. Maintaining quality education for all, regardless of families' income or place of residence, has become one of the biggest challenges of the post-Soviet Russia.

*Special Education in Transition*

The formal organization of special education has changed little since the fall of the Soviet Union and is represented by eight types of schools: special preschools, schools, and boarding schools, as well as special groups and classes in regular preschools and schools (Government of Russian Federation, 1997). These institutions enroll children with eight types of disabilities: deafness, hearing impaired and late onset deafness, blindness, partial blindness and late onset blindness, speech impaired, physically disabled, temporary delay in mental development, and mental retardation. The term *a temporary delay in mental development* refers to a group of children who do not perform to the level of their peers but can eventually catch up if appropriate remedial education is provided (Grigorenko, 1998). The formal system does not distinguish *learning disability* as a separate category. Children with multiple disabilities are also not distinguished as a separate category and one has to be diagnosed with one of the eight disabilities to be qualified for special education services.

The composition of the special education system is well demonstrated by data available from 1998-99 academic year (UNESCO, 2000). On a preschool level, it was mainly represented by special preschools or special groups in regular preschools for children with speech impairments (Table 1). I

**Table 1**  
**Institutions for Children with Disabilities on Preschool Level**

Types of institutions/group	Number of schools
For speech impairments	6,024
For tubercular intoxication	831
For visual impairments	531
For physical disabilities	382
For mental disabilities	259
For hearing disabilities	107
Other profiles	336
Total number of institutions	8,470
Total number of students	~352,000

According to the same data, on a general school level, most institutions were for children with mental retardation and a temporary delay in mental development and placement in boarding schools (internats) significantly prevailed placement in schools (Table 2).

**Table 2.**  
**Institutions for Children with Disabilities on General School Level**

Types of institutions	Total number of schools	Schools	Boarding schools (internats)
For the mentally retarded	1,408	349	1,059
For the deaf	86	8	78
For the hearing impaired and late onset deafness	83	10	73
For the blind	17	2	15
For the seeing impaired and late onset blindness	71	17	54
For the speech impaired	60	9	51
For the physically disabled	65	11	44
For the temporary delayed in mental development	101	50	51
All types of institutions	1,905	456	1,425
All types of students	281,218		201,514

A comparison of Tables 1 and 2 shows a significant decrease in institutions for children with speech impairments and an increase in institutions for children with mental retardation and a temporary delay as children finish preschool and enter general education level. The first trend suggests that most children with speech impairments receive efficient intervention during preschool years and become successfully integrated in regular schools. The second trend demonstrates that most children with mental retardation and a delay in mental development are identified at the start of formal schooling.

Until now, special education institutions on both the preschool and general educational levels have had the most qualified special education teachers. Education in these schools is based on specialized

programs developed for each category of students; it is highly individualized and many schools enjoy low teacher-student ratio (Kulagina, 2007; Malofeev & Shmatko, 2008). Despite these attainments, the availability and quality of special education remains its most pressing problems (Kulagina, 2007).

According to the most recent data, 1.6 million children in the Russian Federation, or 4.5%, require special education (Volosovets, 2003). The same author reported that on the preschool level, 352,900 children attend special education groups and preschools and 63.6% of them regularly interact with their peers. On the general educational level, 277,700 children attend special education institutions; 203,000 children are educated in special education classes in regular schools; 34,000 children receive education at home; 2,500 children attend regular classes; and 2,500 children, who require long-term medical supervision, receive education in sanatoriums, special long-term stay schools with medical supervision. Volosovets also stated that overall, 38% of all children with disabilities are integrated in regular settings. To summarize, out of the 1.6 million children who require special education, 872,600 receive education either in special or regular settings. It is not clear what education the remaining 727,400 children receive. It is possible that this figure includes children of preschool age who do not attend any educational institutions, as well as children who are labeled *uneducable*. Separate statistics on children with severe disabilities show that there were 554,867 children with severe disabilities of ages 0 – 15, according to the 2000 year data, and only a half of them, 236,000 children, received education in regular and special education or home settings (Statistics of Russian Education, 2009b).

Between 1980 and 2003, 393 new schools opened, while the population of students decreased by 12,700, reflecting the country's decreasing population and low birth rate (Kulagina, 2007). Despite the increasing number of special education schools and a decreasing number of students, the system still fails to meet the demands of those who require its services. In addition, not all types of special education institutions are available in children's places of residence. Volosovets noted that only 20 out of 83 subjects of the Russian Federation have all eight types of special institutions (as cited in Kulagina, 2007). As a result, many children have no access to those institutions or have to leave their families in order to attend schools located away from their homes. When parents do not want to send their children far away and keep them at home, these children are often turned away from their local schools or attend them without the provision of special education services.

New institutions have been established disproportionately. From 1980 through 2003 the number of institutions for children with a temporary delay in mental development increased 33 percent (Kulagina, 2007). During the same period, the number of schools for children with physical, visual, and auditory disabilities has grown slowly or even decreased. The need for substantial investment in school construction, equipment, and maintenance accounts for the slow growth of these schools, affecting their availability to those who require their services.

The lack of qualified teachers undermines the quality of special education. Only 10% of teachers in special schools have a degree in special education. The situation in regular schools is even more challenging (Kulagina, 2007). The number of students in special classes of regular schools have increased 3.8 times, from 53,000 in 1990 to 205,600 in 2003 (Kulagina, 2007) and most of these students have a temporary delay in mental development (84%) or mental retardation (12.9%). The majority of teachers do not have necessary qualifications to work with these students (Kulagina, 2007). The lack of individual educational plans, special materials, and high teacher student ratio exacerbates the problem. While some regions have found strategies of successful integration of special classes in regular schools, the mechanism of providing quality education in the system as a whole does not exist yet. Kulagina (2007) sadly described such situations as a *seeming* integration which results in an increased number of students with disabilities in regular schools accompanied by a close-down of special education institutions.

Problems of quality and availability of special education schools have been aggravated by the atmosphere of loneliness and isolation that prevails there. In those conditions, students develop secondary problems that they initially did not have. For example, Racheotes (1997) cited research suppressed by the Soviet regime, which indicates that *85 percent of the visually impaired students [from boarding schools] were made neurotic by their education* (Section one, para 3). Special education settings are often characterized by *downward* rather than *upward* movement when children, once placed there, rarely move to more educationally advanced environments (Gerasimenko & Dimenstein, 2000).

The examination of the special education system reveals that the movement of integration and inclusion takes place in conditions when the system, especially on its general education level, has been experiencing serious problems. Access to special education services, quality of teachers' cadres, and atmosphere of exclusion and hopelessness are among the major challenges that the system has faced. The lack of supportive legislation presents another problem.

#### *Special Education Legislation*

Development of legislation regulating integration and inclusion has been a lengthy process that has not been finished yet. Russia adopted and ratified many international documents that protect rights of people with disabilities including *The Salamanca statement and framework for action* (UNESCO, 1994). The practices of integration and inclusion have also been addressed in the state national documents. For example, *The national doctrine on education in Russian Federation* (Government of Russian Federation, 2000), a major state document on the development of education till the year 2025, announces access to free general education and special education if necessary for children with disabilities one of the goals of the state policy. *The concept of modernization of Russian education till the year of 2010* (Ministry of Education of Russian Federation, 2002a) emphasizes the necessity to provide psychological, pedagogical, and medical support to children with disabilities. The document, *The main directions of the state social policy on improvement of situation of children in Russian Federation till the year of 2010* (Interdepartmental Commission, 2002) discusses in greater detail the measures to include children with disabilities into common educational space. Some of these measures include provision of medical-psychological support in regular settings; de-institutionalization of children with severe disabilities and conducting their rehabilitation at home; development of integration practices; development of education for children who have not received education in the past; restructuring of special boarding schools into consultation centers and short-term stay facilities; development of professional training and the system of post-boarding schools adaptation; and preparation of children with disabilities for family life and creation for them equal opportunities on the labor market.

The language of the state documents supports integration and inclusion. These documents, however, do not have the power of law. Human rights *have to be regulated by law and only law*, stated Smolin (2007, p.80), Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Education and Science of the lower chamber Russian parliament, State Duma, and an advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities. The two federal laws that regulate education of children with disabilities are the law On Education (1992) and the law On Social Protection of the Disabled in Russian Federation (1995).

The law On Education announces the principle of accessibility and adaptability of the educational system to students' levels of development and individual characteristics (article 2). It guarantees education regardless of one's state of health (article 5.1), access to all levels of education free of charge (article 5.3), partial or full coverage of educational expenses of those who require social support (article 5.5), and provision of the necessary special education to all citizens with disabilities (article 5.6). The law also protects non-discriminatory enrollment in educational institutions on all levels (article 16).

This law further describes students' rights to receive education within the state educational standards and in accordance with an individual educational plan, if such is required (article 50.4). Educational authorities are responsible for establishment of special education institutions (classes, groups) where students can be placed only upon agreement of their parents (caregivers) and upon the recommendations of a psycho-medical-pedagogical commission (PMPC) (article 50.10). Students can also transfer from one educational institution into another of a similar educational level upon agreement of such institution (article 50.19).

The law also clearly states that parents (caregivers) have the right to choose the educational institution for their children, protect children's educational rights and interests, and participate in governance of an educational institution (article 52). It also expresses commitment to a public atmosphere valuing diversity and an integrative character of education (article 14).

The law On Social Protection of the Disabled addresses such important issues as development of an individual plan of rehabilitation with recommendations mandatory for educational institutions (article 11), provision of a free access environment (article 15), and education of children with severe disabilities in regular education settings with provision of necessary assistive conditions (articles 18

and 19). Application of this law, however, is limited only to children with severe disabilities, not all children with disabilities. In addition, these provisions are rarely implemented in schools.

Describing current legislation, Kotova and Koloskov (2005) characterized it as *neither impeding nor facilitating inclusion*. Indeed, the examination of the law On Education shows that while it emphasizes the adaptability of the educational system to the needs of students and ensures provision of appropriate education to all citizens; it lacks emphasis and specifics about education in integrative and inclusive settings. The law On Social Protection of the Disabled *does* regulate important aspects of education in special and regular settings. This law, however, is limited to children with severe disabilities only. Many advocates of integration and inclusion believe that the two laws are not comprehensive enough to address all aspects of education of children with disabilities. Though limited these laws serve as foundation to protect educational rights of children with disabilities.

Well-defined legislation is certainly needed if the declared commitment to integration and inclusion is to be translated into practice. Yet, several attempts to pass the On Education of Children with Disabilities (Special Education) Bill failed. Despite the positive feedback on the bill from national and international experts and its passing by both houses of parliament twice, in 1996 and 1999, the bill was twice rejected by Russian government and removed from consideration in 2004 (Smolin, 2007). The Committee on Science and Education of the lower chamber of Russian parliament, State Duma, was charged with the task of developing amendments to the law On Education. Although the amendments received positive feedback, the possibility of passing them is not clear yet (Smolin, 2007).

The lack of clearly formulated legislation is exacerbated by the non-implementation of the existing law. According to Smolin, *the principal difficulty in Russia is not the formulation of the laws...but their enforcement (it is more accurately to say their non-implementation)* (as cited in Racheotes, 1997, Conclusion section, para 2). A similar idea was expressed by Human Rights Commissioner Lukin. In his 2006 report *On the observance of rights of children with severe disabilities in Russian Federation*, he pointed out that unsatisfactory implementation of the existing laws is the main cause of violations of children with severe disabilities right to live in a family, the right to education, and the right to rehabilitation.

Many non-governmental organizations provide legal assistance on how to navigate existing laws in order to gain access to educational resources of the parents' choosing. This assistance, however, is limited only to those who have knowledge of existing resources, a larger network of social support, and, not less important, stable access to communication facilities such as phone lines and the Internet. A single, not-working mother in the north of Russia who is battling to survive on a meager pension for a child's disability might face a tremendous challenge in fighting her way to send her child to a regular school (Regnum Information Agency, 2008). Therefore, the problems that the bill on special education was designed to address remain among the most pressing and essential problems in the educational landscape of Russia. Despite the challenges, a variety of practices has developed in an attempt to provide educational opportunities in less segregated settings.

#### *Integration and Inclusion in Practice*

Current integration and inclusion practices are diverse. Some of them represent top-down efforts to narrow the gap between special and regular education settings while others are examples of bottom-up initiatives. The top-down initiatives are evident in the establishment of preschools (nurseries and kindergartens) of the combined type. Such institutions enroll children of age two through seven and can offer a variety of educational settings, including: (1) self-contained special education groups, (2) mixed groups attended by regular and special education children; and (3) regular groups. Self-contained and mixed groups are based on a disability category, have a lower than regular groups teacher-student ratio, and have a special education teacher and other professionals on staff. The ratio of children with disabilities and their normally developing peers in mixed groups varies and depends on children's age and category. For example, it is 2:8 in a nursery and 3:8 in a kindergarten group attended by deaf children or 6:10 in a nursery and 6:12 in a kindergarten group for children with physical disabilities (Ministry of Education of Russian Federation, 2002b). Children in mixed groups are pulled out for special education group and individual work. They have individual educational plans and in the end of each year a psycho-pedagogical and medical evaluation determines the placement of the child for the next year. Children whose developmental level is close to the level of their normally developing peers can also attend regular groups and be pulled out for special education services. One preschool of the combined type can have groups serving children with different disabilities.

The number of preschools of the combined type has been growing. They comprise 16.4% of all preschool educational institutions and have enrollment of 25-30% of preschool population (Scherbakova, 2009). To compare, special preschools make up 3.7% of all preschool educational institutions and are attended by 3% of children (Scherbakova, 2009). It is not clear, however, how many children with disabilities attend preschools of the combined type and how many of them are placed in different types of integrative settings. Organization of education in these institutions is strongly influenced by a special education model when placement is determined by a disability category and the level of child's development. These institutions, however, increase access to special education services and provide some integration of children with disabilities, although the degree of integration varies.

The development of preschools of the combined type is supported by the position of the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy of the Russian Academy of Science. The experts of the institute defined the current period of special education as a transitional one (Malofeev, 2007). These experts believe that all children can benefit from integration but they do not support full inclusion. While educational institutions of the combined type are popular on the preschool level, the development of schools of the combined type is only in its beginning.

The bottom-up initiatives are diverse in their scope, organizational forms, educational practices, and underlying assumptions. There are many reports on implementation of integration or inclusion in individual schools; there are also some regional initiatives that effect larger population of children. An important role in the development of inclusive schools and the support of bottom-up initiatives belongs to non-governmental organizations. The 2006 report of the Human Rights Commissioner Lukin provided a list of 65 non-governmental organizations that offer pedagogical services to children with disabilities. One such organization is a non-governmental organization Perspektiva, a leader in inclusive schools movement. It has implemented over 50 projects to change public opinion about people with disabilities, raise awareness about disability issues, and promote inclusive education and full access to mainstream employment. For example, the goal of one of its projects, *The Protection of the Human and Legal Rights of Russians with Disabilities: Access to Education Project* (2003-2006) was to create a network of different entities - non-governmental organizations, local authorities, businesses, and educational institutions to promote equal access to education and, above all, inclusive education. One of the essential components of the project was a legal assistance for people with disabilities and their families to gain access to education. As a result, many parents became active advocates of their children's rights.

Another project *Inclusive Education Week*, gathered educators from all over the country to discuss the practices and challenges of inclusion. Perspektiva was the initiator of one of the first inclusive schools in Moscow that opened its doors to children with disabilities in 2005. The measures that transformed a regular school into an inclusive one included arranging conditions for free access environments, conducting disability awareness training, organizing teachers' professional development, and raising parents' awareness on educational rights of their children. Many activists of the organization are people with disabilities who have first hand experiences of overcoming physical, social, and psychological barriers on their ways to inclusion into society.

As a result of local initiatives and activities of NGOs, the movement towards inclusive schools has been steadily growing. In 2008 eleven regions had schools that were implementing inclusive education (Ivaylova, 2008). An important role in the inclusion movement is played by For Education for All, a national coalition of non-governmental organizations in twenty five regions formed as a result of several Perspektiva's projects. One of its initiatives called state authorities to accept the following measures to support inclusive schools: (1) development of legislation supportive of inclusive education; (2) preparation of qualified pedagogical cadres; (3) development of socio-psychological and environmental conditions for inclusion; and (4) development and adoption of the strategy on implementation of inclusive education. The last measure particularly emphasizes the need to develop a subprogram in inclusive education in the national program *Education* with clear stages and timelines of its implementation.

It is important to note that there is a diversity of views on what constitutes the best educational environment for children with disabilities among representatives of non-governmental organizations as well. For example, the pedagogues of the Center for Curative Pedagogics, one of the first non-governmental organizations to offer psychological and educational services to children with

disabilities, believe that the road to full inclusion may pass through several integrative settings (Gerasimenko & Dimenstein, 2000). Such environments should bring out children's strengths and create conditions for developing skills and competencies necessary for a further transition to environments of higher educational and social complexity. Many students of the Center have taken such a path and made progress from being labeled *uneducable* to students of regular schools. Dimenstein and Larikova (2008) agree with the proponents of full inclusion that each child has to develop in an environment of the high educational complexity. The requirement of high complexity, however, does not necessarily mean an environment of a regular school from the start.

The examination of the integration and inclusion initiatives reveals a diversity of approaches and demonstrates that the discussion about an appropriate educational environment for children with disabilities has become a part of the Russian educational discourse. The examination of the initiatives also shows that more teachers and educators get involved in implementation of integration and inclusion in their schools. The growing bottom-up movement is an example of the strengthened sense of self-determination and social activity of Russian people. Development of integration and inclusion initiatives, therefore, also reveals important social transformations in the Russian society.

#### Integration and Inclusion as Examples of Social Transformations

Zaslavskaya (2006), a Russian sociologist, described the Soviet society on the eve of reforms of the 1980s and 1990s by a means of three societal characteristics - its institutional structure, group structure, and its human potential. In Zaslavskaya's opinion, it was the low level of the activity component of human potential that hindered further modernization of the Soviet state and finally led to its collapse. She described it,

*The roots of its [Soviet system] collapse lay in the inappropriately low rating of the role of the human factor...The disregard of, indifference toward, and even contempt for the 'little man'... fundamentally conflicted with trends in world development at the end of the second millennium. For this reason, one of the most important tasks of perestroika and the reforms that came in its wake was to create the conditions necessary for more effective use of the country's human potential and, most important to improve its cultural and activity components. It was the kind of task that could not be accomplished by technical or organizational means; the way to accomplish it had to be through changing the social structure of society, through liberating and activating the human personality, through creating conditions necessary for raising people's levels of education and qualifications and putting to use the creative strengths of the majority of citizens. And these things, in turn, would require the liberalization of the basic economic institutions and the democratization of social and political relations. (p. 13)*

The examples of the integration and inclusion movement discussed above demonstrate the creative strengths put into construction of new forms of education of children with disabilities. Needless to say, a lot needs to be done to ensure that all children have access to quality education of their parents' choosing nationwide. A growing number of schools and preschools that offer integrative and inclusive forms of education, however, prove that more educators and parents are taking responsibility for the future of their children.

The organization of new forms of education brings to attention another concern – the attitudes of the society towards individuals with disabilities. Many express an opinion that integration and inclusion are not possible until the larger society changes its perception of and the attitude towards people with disabilities. It is true that bringing a child with a disability into a regular classroom is a delicate process which requires tact and much work. Educational environments other than a regular classroom, as intermediate and more sensitive to child's needs, should also be considered in planning children's educational trajectories. Changes in attitudes, however, are not possible without lived experiences of integration and inclusion. The research of Yarskaya-Smirnova and Loshakova (2003) supports this position. In a study of social attitudes towards students with disabilities they found that children, who had personal experiences of interaction with a child or an adult with disabilities, were more positive about learning together with them.

The practices of integration and inclusion raise another important question - the attitudes of the society towards diversity. Russian education honors academic achievement and individual abilities. While such an attitude should be well respected, it is essential to remember that no truly democratic society can be created until the uniqueness of each individual is valued above one's place on an academic ladder. The



movement of integration and inclusion gives Russia a chance to re-evaluate its system of values and to learn to respect and to respond to the needs of each child or adult regardless of his/her achievement or status.

### Conclusion

There is a Russian expression *dorogy osilit idushiy*. Its literal translation would be *the one who tries will succeed in walking the road* or, shorter, *the one who tries succeeds*. Indeed, implementation of innovations can be compared to a journey. It starts with hopes and excitement but is also full of uncertainties and unexpected turns. More importantly, a journey may call for re-evaluation of one's values and one is not the same at the end as one was in the beginning.

The examination of educational and legal variables of the Russian context demonstrates that the integration and inclusion movement is influenced by different forces. On the one hand, the increased power of regional and school authorities, adoption of international documents, and the passing of national laws that acknowledge the right of children with disabilities on education in regular settings and support parents' rights are among the forces that support integration and inclusion. On the other hand, the lack of qualified teachers' cadres, scarce financial resources, the absence of respective legislation, and non-implementation of the existing laws are the forces that impede development of the initiatives. Despite the challenges more non-governmental organizations and individual schools are supporting inclusive practices and the formal system has started to change too. These innovations, however, are sporadic and changes take place in challenging conditions which impede integration and inclusion or, in some cases, lead to spontaneous practices and children's needs remain unmet even in inclusive settings. It is evident that the synergy between the state and individuals are necessary to work out and implement educational policies that guarantee access to quality education of parents' choosing for all children.

The study also revealed that the integration and inclusion movement had uncovered the human potential of Russian people and at the same time called for further re-evaluation of their belief system. Over time, one can evaluate the success of integration and inclusion in Russia not only by a number of children who receive education in regular schools, but by a societal appreciation of human diversity and schools' ability to respond to educational needs of *all* children. This is a change worth struggling for and this is a road worth walking.

### References:

- Agran, M., & Boykov, D. (2003). A preliminary survey of professional and student opinion of special education practice in contemporary Russia. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 28, 91 – 100.
- Ainscow, M. (1998). Exploring links between special needs and school improvement. *Support for Learning*, 13 (2), 70 – 75.
- Avramidis, E., & Norwich, B. (2002). Teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion: A review of the literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17, 129 – 147.
- Center for Curative Pedagogics. (2009). Center for Curative Pedagogics. Retrieved July 1, 2009, from <http://www.ccp.org.ru/en/>.
- Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). (2009). *The world factbook*. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>
- Dimenstein, R. & Larikova, I. (2008). *Integratsiya ili inkluziya? Spory o slovakh i nereshennyye problemy obrazovaniya osobykh detey*. [Integration or inclusion? Arguments about words and unresolved problems of educating children with disabilities]. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://www.osoboedetstvo.ru/rights/idprav-t/prt-001.html>
- Federation Council (2006). *Doklad Soveta Federatsii o polozhenii detey v Rossiyskoy Federatsii*. [Federation Council report on the situation of children in Russian Federation]. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from [http://www.council.gov.ru/inf\\_ps/chronicle/2006/06/item4666.html](http://www.council.gov.ru/inf_ps/chronicle/2006/06/item4666.html)
- Furyaeva, T.V. (2006). Integratsiya osobykh detey v obshchestvo. [Integration of children with special needs into society]. *Pedagogika*, 7, 29-38.
- Gerasimenko, O.A., & Dimenstein, R.P. (2000). Neskol'ko slov k voprosu ob integratsii. [Few words about integration]. *Osoby Rebenok: Issledovaniya i Opyt Pomoshchi*, 3, 5 – 21.
- Government of Russian Federation (1997). *Tipovoye polozheniye o spetsial'nom (korrektsionnom) obrazovatel'nom uchrezhdenii dl'a obuchayushchikhs'a, vospitannikov s otkloneniyami v razvitii*. [Model provision of the special (correctional) educational institutions for students with disabilities]. Retrieved August 12, 2008, from [http://bank.orenipk.ru/Text/t28\\_221.htm](http://bank.orenipk.ru/Text/t28_221.htm)

- Government of Russian Federation (2000). *Natsional'naya doctrina obrazovaniya v Rossiyskoy Federatsii*. [The national doctrine on education in Russian Federation]. Retrieved August 9, 2008, from <http://elementy.ru/Library9/Doctrina.htm>
- Grigorenko, E. (1998). Russian "Defectology": Anticipating *perestroika* in the field. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31, 193 – 207.
- Groznyaya, N.S. (2006). Vkluchayushcheye obrazovaniye. Istoriya and zarubezhny opyt. [Inclusive education. History and international experience]. *Voprosy Obrazovaniya: Yezhekvaral'ny Nauchno-obrazovatel'ny Zhurnal*, 2, 89-103.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>
- Human Rights Ombudsman in the Russian Federation Vladimir Lukin (May 31, 2006). *O sobludenii prav detey-invalidov v Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Doklad upolnomochennogo po pravam cheloveka v Rossiyskoy Federatsii*. [On the observance of the rights of children with severe disabilities in Russian Federation. A special report of the Human Rights Ombudsman in the Russian Federation]. Retrieved July 29, 2008, from <http://ombudsman.gov.ru/doc/spdoc/0206.shtml>
- Interdepartmental Commission on Coordination of Activities on the Fulfillment by Russian Federation the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child and World Declaration on Survival, Protection and Development of Children (2002). *Osnovnye napravleniya gosudarstvennoy sotsial'noy politiki po uluchsheniyu polozheniya detey v Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2010 goda (Natsiona'ny plan deystvey v intereskh detey)*. [The main directions of the state social policy on improvement of situation of children in Russian Federation till the year of 2010]. *Prava Detey v Rossiyskoy Federatsii: Zakonodatel'stvo i Praktika. Analiticheskiy Vestnik Soveta Federatsii FS RF*, 3 (196) Retrieved August 7, 2008, from <http://www.budgetrf.ru/Publications/Magazines/VestnikSF/2003/vestniksf196-03/vestniksf196-03140.htm#a25>
- Ivaylova, I. (2008). Uravneniye dl'a detey dozhdiya. [Equation for rain children]. *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. Retrieved June 23, 2009, from <http://www.rg.ru/2008/11/11/deti.html>
- Judge, S., & Oreshkina, M. (2004). Special education teacher preparation in Belgium, Russia, and the United States: A comparative study. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 27, (3), 240 – 250.
- Korkunov, V.V., Nigayev, A.S., Reynolds, L.D., & Lerner, J.W. (1998). Special Education in Russia: History, reality, and prospects. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31, 186 – 192.
- Kotova, S., & Koloskov, S. (2005, November). *Zakonodatel'nye initsiativy po obespechcheniyu dostupa detey-invalidov k obrazovaniyu*. [Legislative initiatives on provision access to education for children-invalids]. Tezisy dokladov mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii Razvitiye Inkluzivnykh Shkol v Rossii. Abstract retrieved July 19, 2008, from <http://obrazovanie.perspektiva-inva.ru/index.php?413>
- Kulagina, Y. (2007). *Aktual'nye voprosy modernizatsii spetsial'nogo obrazovaniya*. [Issues in modernization of special education]. Paper presented at the 2007 Sotspolitika.ru virtual conference. Retrieved August 19, 2008, from <http://www.socpolitika.ru/rus/conferences/3985/3986/3988/document4273.shtml>
- Malofeev, N.N. (1998). Special education in Russia: Historical aspects. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 31, 181 – 185.
- Malofeev, N.N. (2007). Strany Vostochnoy Yevropy: Modernizatsiya natsional'nykh system spetsial'nogo obrazovaniya – integrirovannoye obucheniyе. [Countries of Eastern Europe: Modernization of national systems of special education – integrative education]. In *Psichologo-pedagogicheskaya korrektsiya v usloviyakh integrirovannogo (inluzivnogo) obrazovaniya na osnove zarubezhnogo opyta* (pp. 5-15). Moscow: Institut Korrekzionnoy Pedagogiki, RAO.
- Malofeev, N.N., & Shmatko, N.D. (2008). Bazovye modeli integrirovannogo obucheniya. [Main models of integrative education]. *Defektologiya*, 1, 71-78.
- Ministry of Education of Russian Federation (2002a). *Kontseptsiya modernizatsii rossiyskogo obrazovaniya na period do 2010 goda*. [The concept of modernization of Russian education till the year of 2010]. Retrieved August 7, 2008, from [http://www.edu.ru/db/mo/Data/d\\_02/393.html](http://www.edu.ru/db/mo/Data/d_02/393.html)
- Ministry of Education of Russian Federation (2002b). *Ob integrirovannom vospitanii i obuchenii detey s otkloneniyami v razviti v doshkol'nykh obrazovatel'nykh uchrezhdeniyakh* [On integrative education of children with disabilities in preschools]. Retrieved June 23, 2009, from <http://almanah.ikprao.ru/books/a7p1/st04.htm>
- Nazarova, N.M. (1998). Poniatiye integratsii v spetsialnoy pedagogike. [The concept of integration in special pedagogy]. *Poniatiyniy Apparat Pedagogiki Obrazovaniya*, 3, 262 – 274. Yekaterinburg
- Perspektiva (2009). *Perspektiva*. Retrieved July 1, 2009, from <http://eng.perspektiva-inva.ru/>
- Racheotes, N.S. (1997). The education of blind and visually impaired children in post-Soviet Russia. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness*, 91, 502-506. Retrieved July 19, 2008, from Wilson Web.

- Regnum Information Agency (2008). My ne smozhem uluchshit' zhizn' invalidov, schitaya ikh bol'nymi: Interviyu s arkhangel'skim ekspertom. [We can not improve lives of invalids if we consider them people with disabilities: An interview with an expert from Archangel'sk]. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://obrazovanie.perspektiva-inva.ru/print.php?814>
- Scherbakova, Y. (2009). Rossiskiy demographicheskey barometer. [Russian demographic barometer]. *Demoscope Weekly*. Retrieved June 29, 2009, from <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2009/0375/barom04.php>
- Sebba, J., & Ainscow, M. (1996). International developments in inclusive schooling: Mapping the issues. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 26(1), 5 – 19.
- Smolin, O.N. (2007). Obrasovaniye lits s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdoroviya: Protsedura zakonodatelnogo obespecheniya. [Education of individuals with disabilities: Legislative provision procedure]. *Defectologiya*, 4, 77-86.
- Statistics of Russian Education. (2009a). Statistics of Russian Federation. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://stat.edu.ru/stat/dosk.shtml>
- Statistics of Russian Education. (2009b). Statistics of Russian Federation. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://stat.edu.ru/stat/obsh.shtml>
- The Law On Education. (1992). Retrieved July 7, 2008, from <http://mon.gov.ru/dok/fz/obr/3987>
- The Law On Social Protection of the Disabled (Invalids) in Russian Federation. (1995). Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://www.kodeks.ru/noframe/com-pus-FullLegRF?d&nd=9014513&nh=1>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2000). Education for All: An Estimation 2000, Russian Federation. *The EFA 2000 Assessment, Country Reports*. Retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/russia/contents.html>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (1994). *The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education*. Retrieved June 23, 2009, from [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF)
- Volosovets, T. (2003). Sostoyaniye i perspektivy razvitiya spetsial'nogo obrazovaniya v Rossii. [State and development of special education in Russia]. *Modernizatsiya Spetsial'nogo Obrazovaniya: Problemy Korrektsii, Reabilitatsii, Integratsii*. Materialy Vserossiyskoy Nauchno-practicheskoy Conferentsii s Mezhdunarodnym Uchastiem. [Proceedings of All Russia Research Practice Conference with International Participation], St. Petersburg, 2003, 4-11.
- Yarskaya-Smirnova, Y.R., & Loshakova, I.I. (2003). Sotsial'naya integratsiya detey-invalidov: K poniatiyu inkluzivnogo obrazovaniya. [Social integration of children-invalids: Inclusive education]. *Pravo i Obrazovaniye*, 3, 192-204.
- Zaslavskaya, T. I. (2006). Contemporary Russian society. *Sociological Research*, 45(4), 6-53.