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**PARENTAL ATTITUDE TO THE PROCESS OF FORMATION
OF READING SKILLS IN JUNIOR SCHOOLCHILDREN
WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES**

Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of problems confronted by parents of children with multiple disabilities in reinforcement of reading skills at home in conditions of family education. It defines the parental needs in the process of formation of reading skills in junior schoolchildren with multiple disabilities, characterizes families having schoolchildren with multiple disabilities, and describes the peculiarities of parental attitude to the process of formation of reading skills in junior schoolchildren with multiple disabilities.

The author substantiates the necessity of monitoring the process of parents' inclusion into the corrective-educational activities, in particular, into the process of formation of reading skills in schoolchildren with multiple disabilities. The article stresses the necessity of working out methods materials, which would provide special recommendations for parents in actualization and reinforcement of the child's knowledge and skills acquired at school.

Key words: children with multiple disabilities, parents of children with multiple disabilities, reading skills, psycho-pedagogical family support.

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According to Russian defectological science a multiple defect comprising two or more primary impairments presents considerable difficulties for children both in acquisition of learning material and in development of cognitions about the surrounding world. The category of children with multiple disabilities includes children with a bisensory defect, intellectually disabled children with sensor and motor disorders and intellectually disabled children with autism spectrum disorders.

In recent years, the number of groups for children with multiple de-

velopmental disabilities at special educational institutions of type VIII is growing. On the average, children of this nosological group make up about 40% of the pupils of special educational institutions [16]. According to monitoring undertaken by Yu. A. Afanas'eva, O. V. Titova, I. M. Yakovleva, the number of pupils with mild intellectual disability declines, whereas the number of pupils with marked and severe intellectual disability considerably grows. The number of classes for children with a complex structure of defect also grows. Thus, in 2007/08

school year the average number of these classes in Moscow schools having such classes was 31.4%; in 2011/12 school year this number grew to 39.5% [3].

“Multiple (combined) disabilities include those, which are represented by several primary defects each of which, taken separately, would define the character and structure of non-typical development. All disabilities influence each other in a specific way and are reciprocally reinforced” [9, p. 15]. In the course of the child’s development a number of deviations appear alongside with the intellectual disability and thus make up the whole picture of non-typical abnormal development. Deviations of development of a child with intellectual disability whose analyzer or function has suffered to a certain degree differ both in quality and in quantity from deviations which develop in children of the same age whose analyzers function well. The effectiveness of teaching children with multiple disabilities depends on the interaction between the parents and the specialists of the educational institution and actually between all participants of the education process.

Responsibility for the formation of any learning skill fully rests upon the pedagogues of special educational institutions but psychological research shows that the family is one of the most important factors of psychological and personal development of the child [12].

Teaching children to read has a tremendous social significance (A. K. Aksenova, V. V. Voronkova, G. M. Guseva, M. F. Gnezdilov, M. I.

Shishkova, etc.); it is especially important for children with multiple disabilities. If typically developing children are capable of overcoming the difficulties they come across in learning how to read, children with multiple disabilities including intellectual disability cannot make such volitional efforts and get lost when they face a difficulty. This peculiarity of pupils learning in groups for children with multiple disabilities at special educational institutions of type VIII demands inclusion of classroom skills reinforcement exercises at home under the guidance of the parents.

The family of a child with multiple disabilities as a concrete category in need of socio-psychological support has not been properly studied yet in practical psychology and social work. But the family functions as a powerful source of compensation and rehabilitation of the psychological development of the child. That is why the educational and rehabilitation role of the family dramatically grows in the process of actualization and consolidation of the formed skills in children with multiple disabilities, which defines the urgency of the study of this problem in special psychology [12; 14].

The aim of our research was to reveal the parents’ needs and the peculiarities of parental attitude to the process of formation of the reading skill in junior schoolchildren with multiple disabilities, as well as the difficulties the parents come across when consolidating at home the habits acquired in the classroom.

Reading is not only an academic subject but also a means of learning

other school subjects even for a child with multiple disabilities. At lessons in this subject, the pupil does not only recognize letters and groups them into syllables, but also learns to listen and comprehend, to answer questions and to think. Getting acquainted with the letter, the child enters the world of sign systems mastering which develops his thinking and gives him a possibility to get to know the achievements of the world culture and the experience of other people.

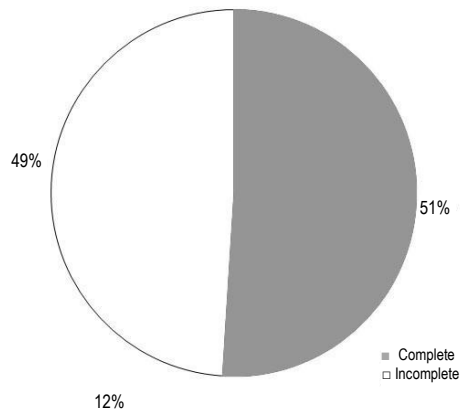
Even the slightest success at the reading lesson is consolidated at other lessons. Teaching reading at school is a systemic process. It is important that the child should not lose the skill acquired here when he is out of school, for example, during vacations or illness. Practical experience shows that many parents do not fully realize the importance of formation of the reading skill and, burdened by the negative manifestations of the child's multiple disabilities, refuse to realize the necessity of for-

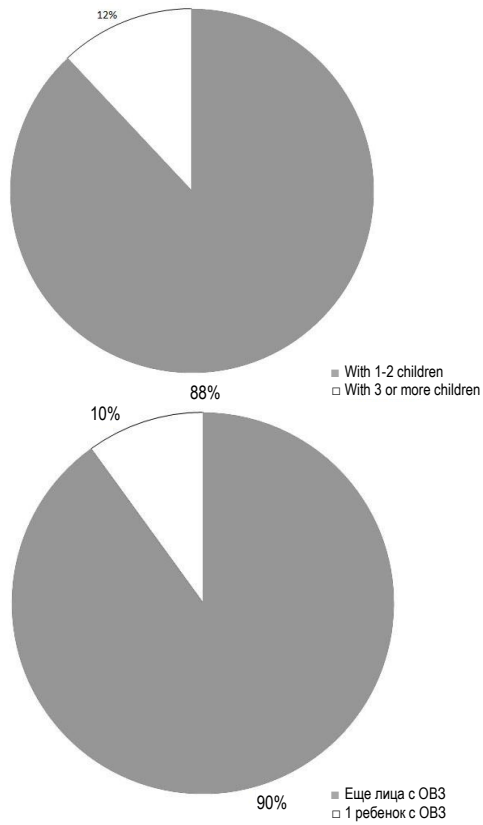
mation of this skill in their child.

What should the parents of a child with multiple disabilities do? The problem is made more difficult by the fact that there are children who underuse speech in communication. "The vocabulary of a child with intellectual disability turns out to be especially underdeveloped; the associations which a word might call forth are rather poor and concrete; the function of abstraction and generalization develops very slowly" [11, p. 9-10].

We interviewed the parents of 68 children learning in classes for children with multiple disabilities at Moscow special educational institutions of type VIII (№ 35, 81, 105, 482, 895) and Ryazan Regional special general education boarding school № 3 "Vera".

The families had the following composition. 51% of children (35 people) are from complete families and 49% (33 people) are from incomplete families. 12% of families (8 families) have 3 or more children.





Diagrams 1-3. Composition of families bringing up children with multiple disabilities

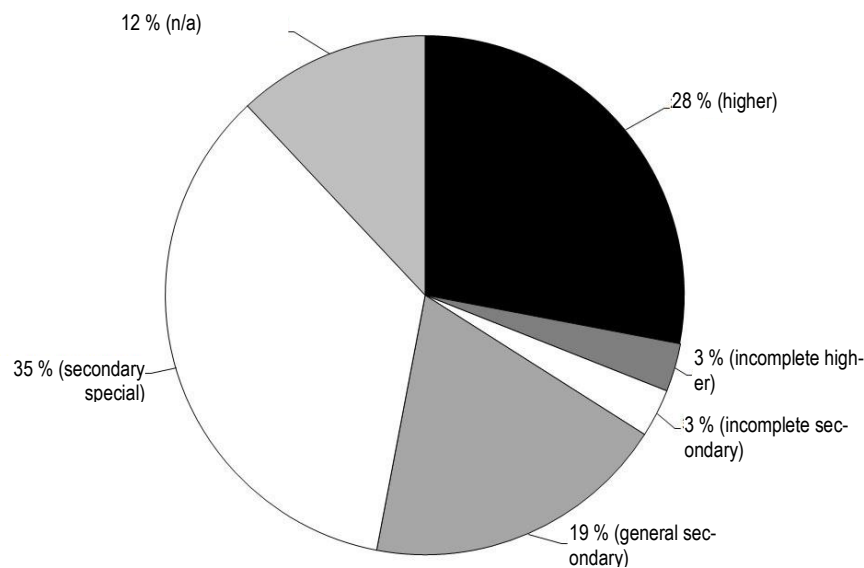


Diagram 4. Socio-cultural level of families bringing up children with multiple disabilities

10% of families (7 families) include other people with special needs in addition to the child with multiple disabilities.

28% of respondents (19 people) have higher education, 3% (2 people) have incomplete higher education, 3% (2 people) have incomplete secondary education, 19% (13 people) have general secondary education and 35% (24 people) have secondary special education. 12% of respondents (8 people) gave no information about their education.

It is also necessary to note that even parents of children whose communicative skills and speech habits at the time of review were characterized by a very low level of development (separate sounds, gestures, low level of communication needs) agreed to take part in the interview. What is more, not less than 85% of the parents expressed the need to develop the reading skill in their child.

The results of the interview allowed us to single out three groups of parents:

1 — parents whose children can use speech (keep the conversation going, ask and answer questions, their speech is eligible enough) – 44% (30 children);

2 — parents whose children use only separate words and gestures for communication – 37% (25 children);

3 — parents whose children use only separate sounds and gestures for communication – 19% (13 children).

Analysis of obtained results revealed the following peculiarities of the attitude of the parents of junior schoolchildren with multiple disabilities to the process of formation of the reading skill.

84% of parents (25 people) of group 1 make attempts to improve their child's reading skill. But 4 parents (13% out of 30 people) of group

1 do not practice additional reading though they believe that it is necessary to form the child's reading skill. One grown up person (3%) works with the child at home but does not believe it necessary to form the child's reading skill.

All parents of group 2 consider it necessary to form the reading skill, but two of them (8%) do not make attempts to improve their child's reading skill or do it unsystematically.

Two parents (15%) of group 3 do not think it necessary to form the reading skill of their child, and three parents (23%) do not make attempts to improve their child's reading skill. While explaining this fact many of them anchored their hopes on the school or just said: "Let him first learn to speak"; many parents complained about lack of time.

The parents who devote enough time to their child told us with pleasure about their learning activity: they read together, look at pictures, try to answer questions, read syllables, etc. Of course, such learning together bring grown up people and children together, stimulate and fill with new content rare and joyful minutes of spiritual communication and educate positive properties in the child.

The parents spoke of urgent need of qualified help by specialists (logopedist, psychologist and defectologist) for children with multiple disabilities, but, with rare exceptions, did not indicate precisely what kind of help they would like to get, for example:

–with the help of a defectologist

the child will learn "to repeat correctly ... not to be in a hurry to develop the skill to express his thoughts in the right way ... to write correctly ... to develop motor skills ... to enrich vocabulary ... to develop memory and attention";

–a logopedist may help the child "to read quietly and attentively ... to pronounce all sounds and improve pronunciation";

–the following help is expected from a psychologist: "communication, behavior in the collective, diligence, overcoming hysterics ... so that the child behave himself properly at home ... so that he could get rid of the fear to begin conversation".

All parents believe it necessary to follow the instructions of the pedagogues. But the parents also say that less than one third of them receive recommendations from specialists about the formation of learning skills and reading special methods literature. Thus, 9 parents (30%) of group 1 get recommendations from specialists about the formation of learning and reading skills and 6 (20%) of parents – about reading special methods literature. In the second group 7 (28%) parents get recommendations from specialists about the formation of learning and reading skills and 4 (16%) parents – about reading special methods literature; in the third group 2 (15%) parents get recommendations from specialists about the formation of learning and reading skills and the same number of parents – about reading special methods literature.

Table 1

The results of interviewing the parents of pupils learning in classes for children with multiple disabilities at special general education schools and special educational institutions of type VIII about the formation of the reading skill, %

Categories of parents/ interview parameters	Number of people, (%)	Recommendations of specialists about the formation of learning and reading skills			Recommendations of specialists about reading special methods literature			Necessity to form the child's reading skill			Attempts to improve the child's reading skill		
		+	-	?	+	-	?	+	-	?	+	-	?
Parents whose children use speech for communication	30 (44%)	30	50	20	20	67	13	94	3	3	84	13	3
Parents whose children use separate words for communication	25 (37%)	28	56	16	16	52	32	100	-	-	92	8	-
Parents whose children use separate sounds and gestures for communication	13 (19%)	15	46	39	15	46	39	85	15	-	77	23	-
Total number of respondents	68 people, (100%)	18 people, (26%)			12 people, (17%)								

- + positive answer
- negative answer
- ? difficult to answer

The general results of interviewing show that 26% of parents (18 people) of children with multiple disabilities get recommendations from specialist about the formation of learning and reading skills, and in only 17% (12 people) of cases specialists consult the parents about reading special literature.

The parents name the following difficulties in acquiring the reading skill by their children:

- do not read the syllables to the end, mix up the letters and syllables;
- cannot organize letters into syllables;

- read syllables from right to left;
- have pronunciation problems;
- skip syllables, cannot remember letters;
- replace one vowel by two vowels, replace letters and endings;
- are in a hurry, inattentive, do not show interest in reading, do not try to understand, cannot retell.

Thus, the answers of the parents of children with multiple disabilities showed that a considerable part of the parents (38 people, 57%) are not motivated to take part in the process of

developing rehabilitation work aimed at formation of the reading skill with their own children. Such situation is explained by the parents by lack of time, by the belief that this work should be carried out by specialists, by deficiency of methods literature about the provision of psychopedagogical conditions of teaching children in classes for pupils with multiple disabilities and by absence of special literature for the parents.

So the process of preparation of parents to their participation in teaching the child at school is a complex is a complex multi-aspect phenomenon; it is a most important line of socio-pedagogical activity of a teacher-defectologist at an educational institution. Organization of work with parents at a special educational institution guarantees the formation of the family's psycho-pedagogical potential necessary for successful integration of the child and the parents in the educational environment of the school.

In this connection it seems necessary to organize work with parents aimed at their inclusion in the educational rehabilitation process and, in particular, in developing the reading skill in children with multiple disabilities; it is also absolutely necessary to work out manuals for parents in actualization and consolidation of the reading skill acquired in the classroom at home.

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