Summary

The monograph, based on the data from the Federal statistical observations, as well as on interviews with teachers, school directors and parents of children with disabilities, considers Russian educational policy concerning children with disabilities. It shows controversial aspects of the legislation in the sphere of education, inconsistency between different normative acts. There are analyzed statistical data: number of children with disabilities in the system of general education, structure of disabilities, forms of their education (in special schools, in special classes, in regular classes), structure of their distribution by types of special schools, education conditions, number of special institutions and their types. Differences in the accessibility of education between Moscow and average data for the Russian Federation are examined. The author shows specifics of the education process in special and inclusive schools, learning conditions in the education system and mechanisms of social protection of people in difficult situation, as well as resources of families for parenting children.

The book is intended for researchers, teachers, postgraduate students, employees of legislative and executive bodies, representatives of social organizations, wide readership.

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Transformation of the Russian education system in the direction of inclusion is carried out under the conditions of a weak legal regulation, decentralization of schools, and insufficient financial provision. The total expenditure on education in the country is lower than in developed countries making around 4% of GDP. The law on education does not specify the contents of inclusion. Statistical records in the system of special education include two categories. One category of children with disabilities (ICD) is identified on the basis of medical diagnoses according to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related health problems, WHO (ICD) in the institutions subordinate to the Ministry of Labor and Social protection of the Russian Federation. The other category of children with disabilities and special educational needs (SEND) is established in the institutions subordinate to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. Both categories are the objects of the educational policy. The reasons and principles of the division of children with disabilities into two categories are not stated in the Law on Education. According to the Law on Education, special conditions for education are provided to children with disabilities (SEND), while certain legal norms are also applied to children with disabilities (ICD). Both groups of children are distributed among 8 basis categories in the system of special education: Development Delay, Mental Retardation, Blind and partially Blind, Deaf and Hearing impaired, Orthopedic impairment, Speech and language impairment. Part of children with disabilities (ICD) – «other health impairment» – not included into any category are not allocated in a separate group of statistical observation.

Children with disabilities (SEND), that have main disorders including Development (39%) and Mental Retardation (42%), may be and not be considered as children with disabilities (ICD). According to 2012/2013 data, the national average number of children with disabilities (SEND) - 457.6 thousand (3.3% of the total number of schoolchildren) was twice the number of children with disabilities (ICD) – 221.2 thousand (1.6% of the total). Children with disabilities
(SEND) are more likely to study in special schools and classes. Children with disabilities (ICD) – in regular classes, but their distribution by forms of education is quite conventional due to their right to study at home. Comparison of the data for Moscow and the average data for Russia shows significant regional differences. In Moscow the number of children with disabilities (SEND) is lower, the learning conditions are better: children with disabilities (ICD) are less likely to study at home, children with disabilities (SEND) are less likely to study in regular classes and more likely in special schools, special classes are not formed. On the average across the country about one third of children with disabilities (ICD) study at home, about one third of children with disabilities (SEND), including those mentally retarded, are attending regular classes without adequate learning environment.

Around half of children with disabilities (SEND) in the country (46%) are attending special schools of 8 types, most of which are designed for mentally retarded schoolchildren (69% of the total). In schools for deaf and partially hearing, blind children and children with orthopedic impairments most of children with disabilities (SEND) are children with disabilities (ICD) and as a rule stay there round the clock with a complete state provision with food, clothes and footwear. Special schools for children with the above mentioned impairments, as well as for children with severe speech problems are few, they exist not in all RF subjects, and therefore, they may be at a distance of hundreds of kilometers from the place or residence of families. The most critical is the situation with the institutions for blind children, there are only 16 such institutions across the country. Special schools are located mainly in urban areas. In the system of compulsory education the share of institutions located in rural settlements makes 60%, but in the system of special education – 23%. Decentralization of education results in liquidation of schools, their division and amalgamation with other institutions. The law on education abolishes the breakdown of schools by types, education qualification and unified organization of educational activity with the account of disabilities: number of children per class, number of pupils per pedagogical and medical staff. According to statistical data for Moscow and average data for Russia, optimization of resources leads to reduction of personnel and a sharp deterioration of education environment. Special schools need capital repair more often than regular schools, they are less provided with barrier free environment, they do not participate in competitions and programs for professional development of pedagogical personnel.

Outcomes of interviews with heads and personnel of special schools in Moscow – the most favorable RF subject in terms of the state of the scientific-pedagogical base – show that it becomes much more difficult to prepare schoolchildren for independent living. Among the still existing conditions are: principles of individual approach; school schedule that allows combining
lessons, training with specialists and medical procedures; small classes; staff composition; extracurricular developing activities. However, the results of learning are affected by negative socio-economic factors. On the one hand, teachers note a downward trend in responsibility of parents, who are not interested in development of their children, or are not capable of cooperating with schools due to their low education level, poverty, social diseases: mental disorders, mental retardation, alcoholism. On the other part, there is an aggravating problem of organization of professional orientation, vocational training and job placement of school leavers. Schools have no resources for development of manufacturing basis, they cannot provide training in labor profile. School leavers with combinatorial disabilities, that have no working skills, are unclaimed, have problems with employment services, need special regimes of work and escort. There are no employment guarantees and support for school leavers who fall into the category of children with disabilities (SEND) but do not belong to the category of children with disabilities (ICD).

Inclusive education is a weak alternative to special schools as regards preparation to independent living. Inclusion, like special education, is developing under the conditions of underfunding, effective management, decentralization, optimization of resources, reduction of pedagogical and supporting personnel, increase in teaching load, control, reporting, low work payment. According to interviews with parents and teachers in Moscow and a number of RF regions, positive experience of inclusion is based on the active participation of parents, enthusiasm of teachers and minimum requirements for professional skills in teaching children with health and developmental disability. Practice of the inclusive form of education is based on selectivity. In admission to regular classes, preference is given to children with preserved intellectual potential, who do not need barrier-free environment, and the number of children with disabilities (SEND) is limited. Pedagogical personnel have no special skills for teaching such children. Programs for professional development that are prioritized by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation are limited to 36 hours, maximum 72 hours, they are mainly conducted in remote mode and therefore provide no necessary knowledge. Parents, schoolchildren, as well as teachers have to put up with a minimum level of social and financial support, and sometimes with lack of tutor, doctor, speech therapist, special-education paraprofessionals. Thus, according to the Moscow city standards, a school may have tutor’s post in teaching staff only on condition that it has no less than 6 children with disabilities (SEND). Teachers having no adequate additional support come to a psychological and emotional burnout. Family members have to be in wait for children at school during class time, to be ready to act as assistants, to arrange and pay for extracurricular lessons with specialists out of school. Besides,
they have to overcome resistance of parents’ community who oppose coeducation. If parents of children with disabilities are unable to perform their numerous functions due to illness or family circumstances and there is nobody to replace them, learning is terminated. In case, the learning is successfully going on, lack of consistency between inclusion, professional orientation, vocational training and employment significantly depreciates the efforts of parents and teachers.

The reforms in the social sphere accompanied with the transformation of inclusive education are not furthering extension of educational opportunities of children with disabilities (SEND) and children with disabilities (ICD). Low level of expenses on education, decentralization, optimization of resources have a negative impact of the education policy. The quality of education in regular classes remains low, while in special schools it comes down with a run. The current education policy will have negative consequences not only for the above categories of people but for the whole population. Reduction of the social obligations of the state creates a threat of decline in the quality of education of all schoolchildren, increase in the number of children psychically traumatized and dropping out of the educational system; growth in the number of school-leavers who are not prepared to independent life; reduction in the opportunities for integration and employment of people and children with disabilities (SEND). This will result in growth of the number of people depending on social benefits; deterioration of the socio-economic position of families with diseased children; deterioration of the social health of people.