

Learning Difficulties: Diagnosis, Prevention, Overcoming

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Analysis of the theory and practices of overcoming learning difficulties has shown that the existing pedagogical and psychological approaches are not effective enough. They do not take into account the connection between learning and development processes. More productive is the approach of cultural-historical psychology, which considers education as a developmental process. This approach can be used to create an effective system of diagnostics, prevention and correction of learning difficulties. The model of such pedagogical activity includes three levels of individualization of learning: from individual planning of lessons to individual lessons for correction of psychological problems, and it was presented in this study.

Keywords: learning difficulties; diagnostics; zone of proximal development; prevention; overcoming learning difficulties; model of individualization of pedagogical activity.

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Трудности в обучении: диагностика, профилактика, преодоление

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Проведен анализ теории и практики работы с трудностями в обучении в отечественном образовании. Выявлена ограниченность односторонних педагогических и психологических подходов к пониманию природы трудностей в обучении, их диагностики, профилактики, преодоления. Делается вывод, что в основе параллелизма данных подходов к проблеме обнаруживается сохраняющаяся в сознании профессионалов-практиков модель образовательного процесса как независимость процессов обучения и развития. Обосновывается продуктивность положений культурно-исторической психологии о развивающем образовании и конструкта «зона ближайшего развития» в построении теории и практики диагностики, профилактики и коррекции трудностей в обучении. Анализируется корпус исследований, непосредственно рассматривающий понятие зоны ближайшего развития в отношении диагностики и преодоления трудностей в обучении. Представлена модель педагогической деятельности при работе с трудностями в обучении, предполагающая использование трех постепенно углубляющихся этапов индивидуализации обучения: индивидуальное планирование в рамках основных занятий, дополнительные занятия в малых группах, индивидуальные занятия по коррекции выявленных психологических дефицитов.

Ключевые слова: трудности в обучении; диагностика; зона ближайшего развития; профилактика; преодоление трудностей в обучении; модель индивидуализации педагогической деятельности.

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Introduction

In mass pedagogical practice, students' learning difficulties are defined as non-compliance with the requirements for the development of educational programs. They are fixed through the failure of students to achieve certain set parameters for completing tasks (test papers, tests, exams). In this variant, the diagnosis of difficulties acts as a

pedagogical diagnosis aimed at identifying the level of formation of certain knowledge, skills, and abilities. Depending on the ideas of researchers about the structure of the learning process used at a particular stage of the development of education, difficulties are differentiated and classified. N.I. Murachkovsky based the classification on the correlation of two main groups of personality

traits of schoolchildren: 1) features of mental activity related to learning ability; 2) the orientation of the student's personality, which determines his attitude to learning. Based on the combination of these personality traits, they identified three types of underachieving schoolchildren [17].

The well-known teacher Yu.K. Babansky proposed to study the educational opportunities of underachieving schoolchildren, combining in this concept two main factors of academic performance (underachievement): internal and external. The researcher attributed to internal conditions the features of the student's body and the features of his personality. The reasons for the internal plan included violations of children's health, deficits in their development, insufficient knowledge, skills and abilities. The external factor included a wide range of conditions: the household, hygienic conditions at school, the features of upbringing in the family, the features of education and upbringing at school. The reasons for learning difficulties could be deficits in both internal and external conditions for the development and training of schoolchildren [4].

The problems of the causes of difficulties in this approach, of course, are touched upon, but the approaches to their identification are rather limited, and are more interpretative/analytical than objectively diagnostic. The predictive ability of this approach in relation to specific schoolchildren is limited. The approach opens up certain opportunities for prevention, attracting the attention of teachers to the collection of data on internal and external risk factors of failure, but due to a wide range of reasons, it practically does not prevent the manifestation of primary learning difficulties. In turn, the ways of correcting and overcoming difficulties are actually associated with working out certain deficits in the knowledge and skills of students through additional classes with underachieving schoolchildren, providing for the implementation of exercises related to the area of identified deficits, first of all, the repetition of the covered material.

Psychological science has proposed an approach for overcoming the limitations of pedagogical diagnostics through the use of psychological diagnostic methods. The original and preserved approach provided for the diagnosis of abilities, primarily mental: standardized intelligence tests (first of all, IQ). This approach fixed a certain level of mental development. The low level made it possible to explain already observed learning difficulties (considered as their cause) or predict their occurrence.

With the development of psychodiagnostics, the variety in the classifications of difficulties increase with the explanation of their causes and the proposal of related correction methods. Psychologists A.F. Anufriev and S.N. Kostromina conducted an empirical study of the difficulties of teaching primary school children. The results of the study on the diagnosis of typical difficulties in teaching and raising children were summarized and presented in a psychodiagnostic table. The table includes the description of the phenomenology of difficulties, their possible psychological causes, psychodiagnostic techniques, the recommendations for eliminating difficulties. As typical difficulties, researchers identify erroneous actions of schoolchildren in written works on the Russian language (an omission of letters, spelling errors), difficulties in solving mathematical problems, as well as difficulties in retelling the text, absent-mindedness, inattention, restlessness, etc. [1]. We didn't conduct experimental studies of the effectiveness of the methods. At the same time, the psychocorrective approach, in a certain sense, repeated the logic of pedagogical correction: methods of psychological correction "trained" individual mental functions without affecting the educational and cognitive activity of the student and without solving the problems of learning difficulties.

The greatest degree of validity and depth in this direction is demonstrated by the neuropsychological approach, which connects the causes of difficulties with the features of the development of higher mental functions (thinking, memory, atten-

tion) and offers the appropriate methods for diagnosing their development. At the same time, neuropsychological diagnostics allows not only to state the “underdevelopment” of a certain mental function, but also to give a qualitative description of the problem. This approach opens up good opportunities both for the prevention (through regular screenings or early diagnosis of developmental abnormalities) and opportunities for individual correctional and developmental work with timely changes in individual support plans. It is significant that such opportunities arise when additional specialists are often absent from the school, which limits the possibilities of its implementation in mass practice. [2; 3].

Another important circumstance: traditional psychodiagnostics, including neuropsychological, searches for and finds the causes of learning difficulties in the peculiarities of individual development. With such a “deficit” approach, the actual learning process does not become the subject of analysis and diagnosis. The social, socio-psychological context of the learning process (communication and interaction of its subjects) is not included in the field of study and diagnosis.

It can be stated that pedagogical and psychological diagnostics of learning difficulties are developing as parallel lines. For pedagogical diagnostics, the processes of the development of mental functions are in the shadow. For psychological and pedagogical components of the learning process: the interaction and the communication of the teacher with the students and the students themselves, the features of educational and pedagogical activities, team educational activities. Behind this, the model of the relationship between learning and development, rejected by modern psychology, but preserved in the minds of professional practitioners, is easily revealed.

The efforts of the teacher are focused on achieving subject learning outcomes, and the features of development act as a support or barrier to their achievement, virtually independent of the nature and re-

sults of the educational process. The psychologist determines the level or, at best, the structural and dynamic characteristics of development in isolation from what the child does and achieves in the learning process. He does not actually see the connection between learning and development, he is focused on development as an autonomous process, and learning for him is actually the same as for a teacher — something that “falls on the soil” of development; and if development is normal, then learning is successful. The maximum that is possible with this understanding: the psychologist discusses aspects of an individual approach and can use separate techniques that take into account the features of behavior, attention, etc. In practice, this is reflected in the approaches to the interaction of teachers and support specialists, which most often represent a “transfer” of responsibility rather than cooperation with a distributed responsibility and continuity.

The Zone of Proximal Development as the Subject of Diagnosis of Learning Difficulties

From our point of view, approaches to the problem of learning difficulties, their diagnosis and the construction of preventive and correctional work suggest a return to the fundamental issues of the relationship between learning and development. The solution to this problem was proposed by L.S. Vygotsky in the 1930s. L.S. Vygotsky criticizes the approach to the problem of Jean Piaget, who asserted the independence of the processes of learning and development, and the one-sided dependence between development and learning. In the words of L.S. Vygotsky, in this theory, learning is always at the tail end of development. Learning reaps the fruits of childhood maturation, but learning itself remains indifferent to development. “Piaget,” writes L.S. Vygotsky, “detaches the learning process from the development process, they turn out to be disproportionate, and this means that the child experiences two independent processes at school: development and

learning. The fact that a child is learning and that he is developing has nothing to do with each other" [8, p. 485].

Vygotsky's approach is based on the distinction, but not the opposition of learning and development, on the recognition of their unity, but not identity. The fundamental formula of the relationship between learning and development is expressed by L.S. Vygotsky in the following form: "Learning is ... an intrinsically necessary and universal moment in the development process of a child, not natural, but historical human characteristics. All learning is a source of development that brings to life a number of such processes that cannot arise without it at all" [8, p. 388]. L.S. Vygotsky writes that learning and development do not coincide directly, but represent two processes that are in a very complex relationship. "Learning is only good when it goes ahead of development. Then it awakens and brings to life a number of functions that are in the stage of maturation, lying in the zone of proximal development. This is the main role of learning in development" [6, p. 252.].

L.S. Vygotsky considered the initial task of psychodiagnostics to be the determination of the real level of development of the child. He pointed out that determining the real level of development is the most urgent and necessary task in solving any practical issues of raising and educating a child, monitoring the normal course of its physical and mental development or establishing certain developmental disorders that disrupt its normal course. At the same time, the definition of the real (actual) level of development characterizes the already completed development cycles, which does not give a complete picture of the child's mental development.

Defining the aim and purpose of the diagnosis of development, L.S. Vygotsky writes that "the general principle of any scientific diagnosis of development is the transition from symptomatic diagnosis based on the study of symptom complexes of child development, i.e. its signs, to clinical diagnosis based on determining the internal course of the development pro-

cess itself" [7, p. 267]. Clinical diagnosis is based on knowledge of the age norms of child development at a certain stage of ontogenesis. Age-related objective norms of development form the basis of diagnostics: "Development schemes provide measures of development" [ibid.]. Clinical diagnosis is an age—related normative diagnosis. According to L.S. Vygotsky, "the task of normative age diagnostics is to clarify with the help of age norms, or standards, this state of development, characterized by both mature and immature process" [ibid.].

L.S. Vygotsky notes that clinical diagnosis, which includes the diagnosis of the dynamics of development, "should be based on a critical and careful interpretation of data obtained from various sources. It is based on all the manifestations and facts of maturation" [ibid.]. L.S. Vygotsky emphasizes the practical importance of the diagnosis of development: "The true ... diagnosis should give an explanation, prediction and scientifically based practical purpose" [ibid., p. 268].

L.S. Vygotsky pays special attention to the place of diagnostics in the processes of education and training. "It can be said without any exaggeration," writes L.S. Vygotsky, "that absolutely all practical measures to protect the development of a child, his upbringing and training, since they are associated with the features of a particular age, need to have a diagnosis of development. The application of developmental diagnostics to the solution of countless and infinitely diverse practical tasks is determined in each case by the degree of scientific development of the developmental diagnostics itself and by the requests that are presented to it when solving each specific practical problem" [7, p. 268].

L.S. Vygotsky's position on the unity of learning and development, his understanding of learning as the cooperation between an adult and a child, allows us to pose the problem of diagnosing mental development as identifying the developmental potential of a particular educational system. Psychodiagnostics of development is thereby associated with a specific educational practice.

The original ideas of L.S. Vygotsky were developed in the works of D.B. Elkonin. He believed that psychological and pedagogical diagnostics should solve two main tasks: the first is to control the dynamics of the mental development of children studying and being brought up in children's institutions, and the correction of development in order to create optimal opportunities and conditions for pulling weak and average students up to the level of strong students, as well as establishing the right direction of the development of children who show special abilities; the second is a comparative analysis of the developmental effect of various systems of education and training in order to develop recommendations for increasing the developmental potential of educational systems [23].

When solving the first task, a separate child is located in the diagnostic center — his level of development, difficulties, prognosis and correctional and pedagogical measures. Comparative diagnostic research reveals the effectiveness of new contents, organizational forms and teaching methods in terms of their developing capabilities. D.B. Elkonin emphasized that both types of diagnostics are inextricably linked with each other. He also noted the inextricable link between diagnostics in age psychology and diagnostics in educational psychology. Psychological and pedagogical diagnostics should be primarily age-related: there cannot be diagnostic systems that are the same for different age periods. The content of the diagnosed aspects of mental development in each individual age period should reflect the level of formation and forecast of further development of the leading type of activity and the level of formation and prognosis of the development of the main neoplasms of the child's psyche. Therefore, for each age period, its own special system of development criteria and diagnostic means of their control should be developed [ibid.].

From our point of view, little attention was paid to the line of the "individual child" in the future, and the approaches of cultural and

historical psychology to diagnosis did not become a solid basis for building a system of diagnosis, prevention and correction of learning difficulties in a general school. The second line has become dominant — the diagnostics of the formation of neoplasms of appropriate ages, including the leading type of activity. In the system of developing education D.B. Elkonin—V.V. Davydov's diagnosis was carried out along the line of assessing the formation of the main components of theoretical thinking — meaningful analysis, meaningful planning, meaningful reflection. Diagnostic methods were developed in relation to individual components of theoretical thinking [9, 10]. But we believe that this important line has not opened up opportunities for the systematic use of its methods for "solving countless and infinitely diverse practical tasks", for "monitoring and correcting the development of individual children" in general Soviet and post-Soviet schools. We see two reasons for this.

The first is that general education has not become a developmental one: the school in its ideas about educational results focuses on the subject, despite the consolidation of personal and meta-subject educational results in educational standards. In the currently implemented model of the organization of the educational process and pedagogical activity in general education, the entire subject of leading activities, theoretical thinking, etc. remains out of interest, is not a support for understanding the learning process and the actual difficulties in learning.

But, in turn, the existing methods of diagnosing thinking and activity offered in the tradition of developmental learning have visible limitations for working with an individual student and his difficulties. For this line (psychodiagnostics of developmental learning, diagnostics of age-normative development), the result of diagnostics is not so much individual differences and their causes but the organization of the educational process. Accordingly, it creates opportunities for the designing or redesigning of the educational process at the level of a certain class, community, level of education, but to a much

lesser extent — at the level of an individual child. What remains out of attention in traditional psychodiagnostics, including neuropsychological, here becomes the main subject of attention, and the line of individual development, the main one for them, in the psychodiagnostics of developmental learning becomes peripheral.

At the same time, L.S. Vygotsky's initial ideas about the correlation between learning, development and relevant diagnostics contain a concept that has significant potential for solving the problems of learning difficulties. This is the concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). For L.S. Vygotsky, the concept of the zone of proximal development fixes the law of child development, development through education: the child develops in a community with adults and peers; the formation of new mental qualities and abilities of the student takes place in the educational child-adult community. Today a child is able to do something new for him together with an adult, and tomorrow he will do it on his own. L.S. Vygotsky writes that "a child develops in collaboration through imitation, which is the source of all the specific human properties of consciousness, development from learning is the main fact... The main point of learning is that the child learns new things. Therefore, the zone of proximal development, which defines this area of transitions available to the child, turns out to be the most defining moment in terms of learning and development" [6, p. 250].

The value of the concept of the zone of proximal development in the context of interest to us lies in the fact that, fixing on "individual differences" in development, it considers them not only as already established (as traditional psychodiagnostics does), but as opportunities that open up in the process of interaction between a child and an adult in the educational process, including this in the subject of diagnosis. At the same time, unlike the psychodiagnostics of developmental learning (diagnostics of age-normative development), this concept retains the "individual", considers the

practice of interaction (educational practice) for each specific case, and not as a whole of a certain period of development or in a certain learning system.

In the works of domestic practice-oriented research, the possibilities of solving specific problems of education with a focus on a certain aspect, the meaning of this concept are thoroughly considered. V.V. Rubtsov in his research substantiates a system of joint educational actions related to the coordination, planning and organization of interactions between students and adults, students among themselves when solving an educational task through the processes of communication, reflection and mutual understanding [19; 20]. For G.A. Zuckerman, the zone of proximal development is a special form of interaction between a child and an adult, in which an adult's action is aimed at supporting the initiative, independent action of a child [21]. A.A. Margolis points out that the key position of L.S. Vygotsky's ZPD is the development of scientific concepts based on everyday ones: the cooperation of a child and an adult in the learning process is focused on mastering scientific concepts. The learning process is a process of the team activity of the student and the teacher on the formation of scientific concepts, generalized methods of action based on the development, transformation of spontaneous concepts available to the child [16].

Of particular interest is the body of research that directly examines the concept of the zone of proximal development in relation to the diagnosis and overcoming of learning difficulties or opens up opportunities for such use. In the study of I.A. Kotlyar and M.A. Safronova, the methods of diagnosing learning ability as the main indicator of learning disability and scaffolding as a tool for assessing one of the components of the level of mental development are correlated [13]. In the diagnosis of learning ability, an adult helps a child in case of difficulties. The quantity and quality of care is considered as an indicator of the ZPD. It is argued that the method of dosed care is as

sociated with a deeper diagnosis of actual development, the study of mechanisms that provide the solution to intellectual tasks. This method shows that the current level of development is also heterogeneous, it has a certain internal structure. The help of an adult acts as a tool for studying this individual or age structure. Similarly, scaffolding is revealed as a process that enables a child or a beginner to solve a problem, complete a task or achieve goals that are beyond his individual efforts (capabilities). The focus of the diagnosis is on the actions of an adult towards a child, support during the task, the building up of the space of his or her ZPD. Assistance to a child has various types: showing, the verbal indication of an error, a direct verbal instruction. The authors link these two approaches, considering learning ability as a child's ability to advance in the space of the ZPD, manifested in special conditions; the main condition is a properly constructed scaffolding [13].

In the study of J.P. Shopina, the focus of attention is on positions in communication, where each position is interpreted and comprehended as the help of one participant (participants) of communication to another (others) in order to perform (solve) a task that he cannot do at the level of actual development, i.e. independently [22]. Thus, in all studies, the features of interaction between an adult and a child during the task allow us to identify the size of the individual zone of proximal development [14].

Once again, we emphasize that in this kind of approach to diagnosis, attention to individual differences is maintained and even intensified. In different children, not only is the level of actual development different, but also the size of the zone of proximal development. This suggests that learning that allows for the overcoming of difficulties is designed not as a one-size-fits-all, based on an age-normative model of development, but as individualized learning. It is significant that in all the considered works and a number of others, the importance of not only the operational side of the interaction between an adult and a child (the volume and the

type of assistance), but also its semantic, motivational, emotional side, relations (positions) in interaction are noted [5; 18].

Another important circumstance that opens up in the interpretation of the ZPD is the emphasis on independence in the performance of the task, which, as shown, is not reduced to the fact of mastering the subject content, but, as shown in the works of V.K. Zaretsky, is revealed through the fundamental characteristic of "subjectivity". The author distinguishes the student as a subject of mastering educational material and as a subject of overcoming their own difficulties. Accordingly, we can talk about two ZPD lying in different planes: the zone outlined by the possibilities of mastering educational material in cooperation with an adult, and the zone of developing the ability to overcome learning difficulties independently. Children with learning difficulties are defined as children who cannot complete certain tasks on their own. Hence, the necessary component of helping children with learning difficulties becomes the support of reflection, goal formation, etc. [11].

The Model of Individualization of Pedagogical Activity when Working with Learning Difficulties

The flexible modification of teacher—student interaction to overcome learning difficulties is the main idea of RTI (response to intervention), the dominant model of helping children with learning difficulties used in the USA, England, and a number of European countries, which has replaced the traditional diagnostic approach. RTI focuses on assessing the student's reactions to changing practices of working with him, the modification of forms of assistance. The lack of reaction to changes becomes a signal of the need to change the educational strategy in order to find optimal levels of effective teaching and learning. RTI turns out to be important in the context of the previous arguments, because, unlike traditional approaches to the identification and interpretation of learning difficulties, it focuses on how learning is organized, con-

nects the student's difficulties with ineffective learning practices [12].

Along with this, there is an increasing recognition in foreign pedagogy (including on an evidence-based basis) of various forms of feedback as an effective teaching method [25]. In the research and development in this area, different aspects of feedback are considered, related to both the subject content and the socio-emotional aspects of teacher-student interaction, the motivation of teaching. It seems promising to study the effectiveness of various types of feedback and ways to provide it. In particular, feedback is more effective in overcoming learning difficulties, in which the teacher helps students not only to understand what mistakes they have made, but also why they made these mistakes and what they can do to avoid them next time.

It is especially interesting that, at present, more and more attention in this direction is paid to the problems of self-regulation, independence (subjectivity, agency) in providing feedback. Thus, in the study by Griffiths, Murdock-Perriera, Eberhardt, the concept of agent feedback is introduced, in which teachers provide students with the opportunity to independently review their work, making the student an active partner in the review process, and not a passive recipient of feedback [24]. Agency is understood as the sense of control and freedom that a student has when he responds to a teacher's comments. Agent feedback offers more choice and the expectation that those who received more agent-based feedback should have done more in response than those who received less agent-based feedback. It is noted that students' independent strategy and seeking help can mediate feedback effects [25].

Thus, cultural-historical theory, both in its basic provisions and in specific developments, has a serious potential for building modern approaches to diagnosis, prevention and overcoming learning difficulties. At the same time, this potential should not be opposed to either the neuropsychological tradition or the promising solutions being implemented today in foreign tradition

(scaffolding, formative assessment). On the contrary, as we tried to show, it is important and possible to see variants of the area in which synchronicity or complementarity (integration) is detected.

Guided by this vision, we have developed a model of working with children with learning difficulties based on domestic studies of this problem, as well as on foreign experience in the prevention and correction of learning difficulties. The model includes two blocks: 1) preemption, prevention of risks of difficulties, 2) elimination, correction of existing learning difficulties.

The proposed model of working with children with learning difficulties involves the use of three gradually deepening stages of the individualization of learning, including a number of mandatory forms of organizing such work: a) individual planning within the framework of main classes, b) additional classes in small groups, c) individual classes, the psychological correction of identified psychological deficits, the participation of correctional and social educators if necessary.

At all stages of the implementation of the model, parents or legal representatives of students are necessarily involved in the development of an individual curriculum and a correctional and developmental program, and starting from primary school, students themselves are involved. The transition to the next stage of individualization is carried out on the basis of the decision of the psychological and pedagogical council and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the complex of measures of the previous stage based on the monitoring of the educational results of the student and the data of the psychological and pedagogical examination based on the results of correctional work. The model assumes two stages of the deepening individualization of education carried out at school on the basis of decisions of the psychological and pedagogical council: the implementation of an individual curriculum within main classes (the first stage), the implementation of an individual plan within additional classes (the second stage), the third stage

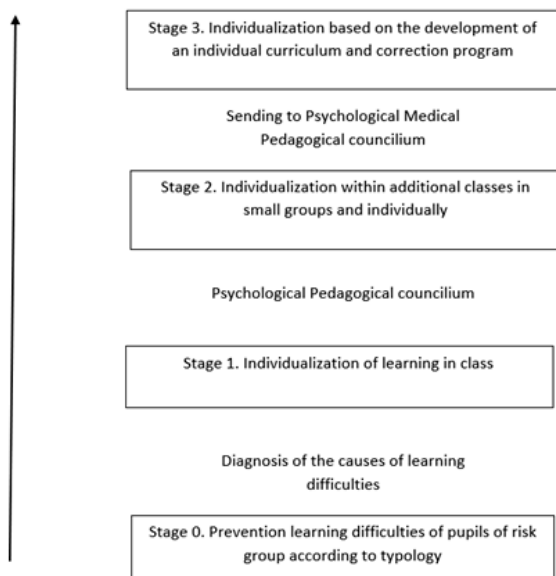


Fig. The Model of Individualization of Pedagogical Activity

is carried out on the basis of the decisions of the psychological, medical and pedagogical commission (PMPC). Let us present a detailed description of the stages of the individualization model.

The implementation of the target model of providing assistance to students who already have learning difficulties at the first stage involves a certain sequence of pedagogical actions and the use of the following mandatory forms of work:

- conducting psychological and pedagogical monitoring of students demonstrating low educational results, aimed at obtaining objective diagnostic examination data on possible causes of educational difficulties;

- conducting, on the basis of the obtained data, a psychological and pedagogical consultation aimed at the joint development by teachers (with the possible participation of a methodological association) and specialists of the psychological service of an individual curriculum and a program of psychological support for the student, taking into account the standard methodological recommendations for the individualization of learning;

- monitoring educational results and psychological and pedagogical examination at the end of the first stage.

The duration of the first stage is typically 3 months and assumes the possibility of implementing most of the planned corrective measures within the framework of the main classes with the class through individual variable planning (based on the recommendations of the council), the use of formative assessment. Psychological support using the programs recommended by the council is carried out within the current activities of the psychological service.

If there is no progress in achieving the positive dynamics of the student's educational results in accordance with the previously drawn up individual plan and effective correction of the identified psychological deficits, the psychological and pedagogical council may decide to move to the second stage of the individualization of training with appropriate changes to the individual curriculum and the program of correctional and developmental classes for a period of 3—6 months. As part of the second stage of the in-depth individualization of training,

additional classes in a small group or in an individual form can be used in accordance with methodological recommendations that take into account the main causes of learning difficulties, as well as longer programs of correctional and developmental work. If necessary, by the decision of the council, other specialists may be involved in complex work with the student: a social pedagogue, a defectologist. The individualization of the student's education within the second stage should be the subject of regular consideration at meetings of the methodological association by jointly developing possible pedagogical solutions.

In the absence of positive dynamics in the process of implementing the second stage of the individualization of training, a psychological and pedagogical council may decide to send a student (with the consent of parents or legal representatives) to the PMPC for an in-depth diagnosis of the causes of learning difficulties (including on the basis of neuropsychological or special psychological examination data) and develop recommendations for further comprehensive work, aimed at eliminating learning difficulties. Based on the results of the review of the results of the two previous stages of the implementation of the model in a general education organization and the results of an in-depth psychological examination of the PMPC, a decision may be made on the need to create special conditions for the implementation of the individualization of education in an educational organization, as well as adjustments to the previously developed individual curricula and the program of correctional and developmental work. Ensuring the implementation of special conditions implies the need to allocate additional resources to the educational organization for the implementation of the individualization program, including the involvement of external specialists (if necessary) to participate in a comprehensive individualization training program. Following the completion of the third stage, the PMPC performs an independent assessment of the effectiveness of

the activities carried out by the educational organization and makes recommendations on the further educational route, taking into account data on the three previous stages of individualization of training.

The individualization model includes two essential components: the organization of evidence—based learning, and continuous assessment to track the progress or reaction of students — screening and monitoring. The latter allows teachers to guarantee that students will not participate in activities that do not help them achieve the expected level of assessment, but will receive the optimal type and amount of training, a set of support measures in accordance with their needs.

The individualization model is also an example of promoting a culture of the evidence-based approach in educational practice. It provides that the technologies used for training and support are based on scientific research that has shown their effectiveness. The model is aimed at the widest possible range of students who need support to improve their academic performance. It changes the paradigm of education for children with learning difficulties: it proceeds from the fact that many problems affecting students are not related to deficits in their development, but to ineffective learning, and is aimed at finding the causes of difficulties in the organization of the educational process itself.

Conclusion

Learning difficulties are an interdisciplinary problem that requires the combined efforts of different specialists to solve: teachers, educational psychologists, social educators, speech pathologists, neuropsychologists, etc. The unifying basis of such cooperation should be an understanding of the nature of difficulties, the means of their detection, evidence-based programs for their prevention and overcoming. The analysis has shown that the theoretical basis for solving the problem can be the cultural-historical psychology of L.S.Vygotsky: his views on the leading role of learning in the development process, the teaching of

the zone of proximal development as co-operation between a child and an adult in the learning process, on the diagnosis of the current level and the zone of proximal development as a psychological basis for individualization of learning. The ideas developed in modern foreign and domestic psychology about scaffolding as the dosed assistance of a teacher to a student in case of educational difficulties, about the RTI model as a model of deepening assistance to a child in the learning process confirm the productivity of the zone of proximal development construct introduced by L.S. Vy-gotsky and operationalize it.

The prospects for further studies of learning difficulties, their diagnosis, prevention and correction will be a wide range of research, design and practical work. The main ones, in our opinion, are as follows:

— development of programs of psychological and pedagogical monitoring (separately for each stage of education) of students with low educational results;

— substantiation of diagnostic programs and a bank of diagnostic techniques for in-depth individual analysis of possible causes of educational difficulties that manifest themselves at each stage of education, as well as at the transition from one level of education to another;

— creation of a library of preventive programs for students with a high level of risk of learning difficulties;

— creation of a library of correctional and developmental programs for the psychological support of students with learning difficulties aimed at eliminating the main identified psychological deficits;

— preparation of methodological recommendations on the individualization of training of students with the main types of learning difficulties;

— professional development of teachers and specialists of the psychological service of education in the field of the prevention and correction of learning difficulties.

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