

# The Impact of the Institutional Learning Environments on the Development of Self-Attitude In Pupils With Vision Deficiency

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## Abstract

In the context of inclusive attitudes of the modern educational policy, it is pertinent to study the impact of different institutional learning environments, in particular, on the formation of positive self-attitude as an important personal factor of social rehabilitation and integration in persons with vision deficiency. It becomes particularly urgent in relation to adolescents with visual impairment, because adolescence is a sensitive period for the development of self-attitude.

The study, the results of which are given in the present article, aims to fill, to some extent, the existing in psychological and pedagogical literature gap associated with the lack of system empirical data on the specifics of self-attitude in school-age adolescents with vision deficiency in general and, in particular, on the nature of influence on its development of such different institutional learning environments as studying at a special school, studying in a separate class of the ordinary school and studying inclusively.

The presented and analyzed research materials, received in support of the "Self-Attitude Test-questionnaire" (V.V. Stolin and S.R. Pantileev), "Self-Esteem Scale – Ladder" (E.V. Sidorenko), "Self-Esteem Scale" (M. Rosenberg) and Student's t-test, contain new information on the peculiarities of development of various components of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with impaired vision considered in cognitive, emotional-conative and conative-regulative aspects. The results of the conducted experiment highlighted the absence of the global influence of the institutional environments of schooling on the development of self-attitude in adolescents with vision deficiency that allows us to raise the question on the possibility of complementary interaction between different formats of educational integration and differentiation as applied to students with visual impairment.

**Keywords:** Pupils with vision deficiency, self-attitude, cognitive, emotional-conative and conative-regulative aspects of self-attitude, educational integration and differentiation, special education, inclusive education, social rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

## INTRODUCTION

In modern society, experiencing the intense and dynamic processes of modernization, a need for independent, active and creative personalities, who are able to identify and implement prospects for their development effectively, is observed more and more clearly. Meanwhile, one of the most important conditions for the formation of such a personality is a person with a lasting, positive and consistent self-attitude, for the self-attitude as a holistic system, which includes self-esteem and emotional-value subsystems, serves as the mechanism to maintain a positive "I" image [1-10, *et al.*].

Forming a positive self-attitude acquires particular importance with regard to persons with disabilities, in particular – people with vision deficiency: the specific difficulties in the implementation of different activities leading to different kinds of failures often cause a sense of "inferiority" in persons with profound visual impairments. It has an adverse effect on his/her self-attitude; in turn, the negative, contradictory self-attitude, affecting both the person's behavior and own activity and his/her interrelationship with other people, complicates the process of social rehabilitation and integration [11; 12 *et al.*]. Therefore, forming an adequate self-attitude in individuals with visual impairments acts clearly as a fundamentally important psychological and pedagogical problem, highly relevant in the context of inclusive goals of social policy related

to the implementation of basic principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to ensure their full and effective participation and inclusion in society [13].

Meanwhile, the sensitive period for the formation of self-attitude is adolescence [1, 2, 14, *et al.*]. This fully applies to individuals with impaired vision, because the development of a personality in conditions of visual deprivation occurs generally in accordance with the same regularities as in the norm [15, 16, *et al.*].

To date, however, there are no system ideas about the specifics of self-attitude in adolescents with vision deficiency in typhology. Only the particular implementation of the functions of self-attitude in adolescents with different characters and depth of visual disturbances was, in an individual case, a subject of the special empirical studies [17]. In general, certain aspects of the self-attitude formation in conditions of visual deprivation were touched upon only in an indirect manner [12, 18, 19, *et al.*].

In the light of this, the targeted reception and making sense of experimental data on the self-attitude in adolescents with visual impairments are of increasing importance. In terms of diversification of the education of persons with disabilities, when along with their differential training the inclusive educational format is becoming more popular [23 *et al.*], the research perspective, associated with studying the influence of the institutional learning environments on the formation of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency, is of

particular relevance. The conducted ascertaining experiment had the necessary objectives.

#### METHODS

In total, 67 teenage pupils with vision deficiency took part in the carried-out experiment as respondents – partially sighted pupils, children with amblyopia and strabismus studying in educational institutions of Saint Petersburg (comprehensive school No. 592 and school No. 1 for blind and visually impaired pupils named after K.K. Grot) in different institutional environments, namely:

- studying at a special school – 22 persons,
- studying in a separate class of the ordinary school (partial educational integration) – 23 persons,
- studying inclusively – 22 persons.

The content and program of the experiment were conceptually determined by the conclusions of E.N. Andreeva who defined three structural aspects of self-attitude – cognitive, emotional-conative and conative-regulative ones, and components, by the state of which the available developmental level of self-attitude in the particular aspect can be estimated. These are:

- with regard to the **cognitive** aspect – *global self-esteem*, *"reflected self-esteem"*, *self-confidence*, *self-understanding*;
- with regard to the **emotional-conative** aspect – *self-acceptance*, *self-accusation*, *self-interest*, *expectation for the attitude of others*;
- with regard to the **conative-regulative** aspect – *self-consistency* [14].

In this context, the program for the conducted ascertaining experiment on studying the influence of the institutional learning environments on the development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with visual impairments involved the implementation of three relevant research series, providing for "measurements" at the level of each structural component of self-attitude characterizing it in the particular aspect.

A diagnostic and methodological basis of the experiment was formed by the "Self-Attitude Test-Questionnaire" (V.V. Stolin and S.R. Pantileev) [20], methodology for identifying levels of self-esteem (E.V.

Fedoseenko) [21], "Self-Esteem Scale" (M. Rosenberg) [22].

The empirical data, obtained using these diagnostic methods, were subjected to mathematical-statistical processing: to assess the significance of differences in the developmental level of various components of self-attitude Student's t-test was used for the dependent and independent samples (level of significance  $P = 0.05$ ).

#### RESEARCH RESULTS

##### 1. The impact of the institutional learning environments on the development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency: cognitive aspect

The first research series, implemented within the framework of the ascertaining experiment, involved understanding of the influence of institutional learning environments on the developmental level of structural elements (components) of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency characterizing its cognitive aspect.

As for the *global self-esteem* of school-age adolescents with vision deficiency, the resulting empirical data (see Table 1) indicate the following: if among the respondents studying at a special school, a high level of global self-esteem is recorded in the vast majority of them (72.7%), among the pupils in the format of partial educational integration – only in 43.5%, then among the pupils studying inclusively – only in 36.4%.

Moreover, according to the results of mathematical-statistical processing, the differences seen here between the sample of respondents in the special learning environment ( $x = 2.73$ ) and the other two samples are significant:  $t = 2.73$  at  $P < 0.009$  – with regard to the respondents studying inclusively ( $x = 2.27$ ), and  $t = 2.38$  at  $P < 0.02$  – with regard to the adolescents studying in a separate class of the ordinary school ( $x = 2.30$ ). At the same time, there are no statistically significant differences in the developmental level of global self-esteem among the respondents studying inclusively and in the format of the partial integration.

Table 1. The development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency in different institutional learning environments: cognitive aspect

Self-attitude component and the level of its development	Pupils studying at a special school (%)	Pupils studying in a separate class of the ordinary school (%)	Pupils studying inclusively (%)	
Global self-esteem	high level	72.7	43.5	36.4
	average level	27.3	43.5	54.5
	low level	0	13.0	9.1
"Reflected" self-esteem	high level	63.6	43.5	36.5
	average level	27.3	43.5	45.5
	low level	9.1	13.0	18.0
Self-confidence	high level	9.0	8.7	4.5
	average level	45.5	34.8	59.1
	low level	45.5	56.5	36.4
Self-understanding	high level	22.7	21.7	22.7
	average level	59.1	60.9	77.3
	low level	18.2	17.4	0

Thus, the adolescent pupils with visual impairments studying at a special school have the most favorable status in terms of the development of global self-esteem as a component characterizing the cognitive component of self-attitude, and the adolescent pupils with visual impairments studying inclusively – the least favorable one.

Meanwhile, concerning the impact of the institutional learning environments on the developmental level of "reflected self-esteem" in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency, the situation is not so unequivocal, as evidenced by the appropriate experimental data (see Table 1) and the results of its mathematical-statistical analysis.

The proportion of school-age adolescents with visual impairments, exhibiting a high developmental level of "reflected self-esteem", is much more significant in the sample of the respondents studying at a special school – 63.6% - compared to 43.5% in the sample of the respondents studying in a separate class of the ordinary school and to 36.5% in the sample of the respondents studying inclusively. As for the environment of integrated education, there is a high developmental level of "reflected self-esteem" – 43.5%, and in the environment of general education this level is in 36.5% of pupils. Only in 9.1% of the respondents in the environment of special education the developmental level of "reflected self-esteem" is low, whereas in the other two samples it equals to 13% and 18%, accordingly.

However, the mathematical-statistical analysis of the averages obtained by the developmental level of "reflected self-esteem" in different groups of the respondents, does not fix significant differences. Therefore, there are no reasonable grounds for raising the issue of a decisive influence of the institutional learning environments on the developmental level of "reflected self-esteem" in school-age adolescents with vision deficiency.

A similar situation exists with regard to the impact of this environment on the development of *self-confidence* in school-age adolescents with vision deficiency.

According to the obtained empirical data (see Table 1), the majority of the respondents, regardless of the learning environment, finds only average and low developmental levels of self-confidence, and only 9% of the respondents, studying at a special school, demonstrate high level – there are 8.7% of pupils studying in the environment of partial educational integration and 4.5% of pupils studying inclusively.

But according to the results of the mathematical-statistical analysis of average values obtained by the developmental level of self-confidence in school-age adolescents with vision deficiency, being in different institutional learning environments, there are no significant differences. Thus, with regard to self-confidence as a structural component characterizing the self-attitude of school-age adolescents with vision deficiency in the cognitive aspect, there is no determining impact of the institutional learning environment.

In its turn, it is missing also in relation to *self-understanding* of these adolescents.

The obtained experimental data (see Table 1) indicate that in all respondent groups, the school-age adolescents with visual impairments, who have an average developmental level of self-understanding, prevail. Moreover, the proportion of those who have a high level of its development is practically the same, no matter in what institutional environment the adolescents study – 22.7% in the samples of the respondents studying at a special school and studying inclusively, and 21.7% – in the sample of the respondents studying in a separate class of the ordinary school. Although in none of the respondents, being in the environment of inclusive education, a low developmental level of self-understanding – unlike the respondents from other samples – is fixed; in general, it is quite natural that the statistically significant differences are not detected by the results of the mathematical-statistical processing of empirical data.

**Table 2. The development of self-attitude of adolescent pupils with vision deficiency in different institutional learning environments: emotional-conative aspect**

Self-attitude component and the level of its development		Pupils studying at a special school (%)	Pupils studying in a separate class of the ordinary school (%)	Pupils studying inclusively (%)
Self-acceptance	high level	22.7	21.7	13.6
	average level	36.4	34.8	31.8
	low level	40.9	43.5	54.6
Self-accusation	high level	18.1	21.7	31.8
	average level	36.4	52.2	31.8
	low level	45.5	26.1	36.4
Self-interest	high level	0	8.7	9.0
	average level	77.3	73.9	77.3
	low level	22.7	17.4	13.7
Expectation for the attitude of others	high level	9.0	8.7	13.6
	average level	54.6	56.5	54.6
	low level	36.4	34.8	31.8

## 2. The impact of the institutional learning environments on the development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency: emotional-conative aspect.

The second research series, implemented within the framework of the conducted ascertaining experiment, involved an evaluation of the impact of the institutional learning environments on the developmental level of structural elements of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency characterizing its emotional-conative aspect.

As for *self-acceptance* of adolescents with vision deficiency, as evidenced by the respective empirical data (see Table 2), in all respondent groups the pupils having a low level of its development characterized by the lack of self-credibility, self-approval and self-consent dominate. If among the pupils, studying at a special school, there are 40.9%, among the pupils studying in the partial educational integration – 43.5%, and among the pupils studying inclusively – 54.6%. In turn, the respondents with a high developmental level of self-acceptance have the largest proportion in the sample of pupils with visual impairments studying at a special school – 22.7% - compared to 21.7% and 13.6% in the samples of pupils studying in the partial educational integration and inclusion, respectively.

At the same time, according to the results of the mathematical-statistical analysis of the average values of indicators related to the developmental level of self-acceptance in adolescents studying in different institutional environments, the significant differences between them are not fixed, and, therefore, there is no decisive influence of these environments in this case.

Meanwhile, a much more complicated situation is found with regard to the impact of institutional learning environments on the developmental level of *self-accusation* in school-age adolescents with impaired vision, as evidenced by the materials obtained in the course of ascertaining experiment (see Table 2).

Among the respondents, studying at a special school and inclusively, those who are distinguished for their low developmental level of self-accusation prevail, – 45.5% and 36.4%, accordingly; there are 26.1% among the pupils studying in the partial educational integration. On the contrary, the respondents with a high developmental level of self-accusation, characterized by the presence of negative emotions towards their own "I", have the largest proportion in the sample of pupils studying inclusively – 31.8%.

The mathematical-statistical analysis captures the significant differences between the sample of adolescents with visual impairments studying inclusively ( $x = 2.59$ ) and samples of the respondents studying both in the learning environment of special education ( $x = 1.73$ ) and in the one of partial educational integration ( $x = 1.96$ ):  $t = -4.18$  at  $P < 0.0001$  and  $t = 3.26$  at  $P < 0.01$ , accordingly.

Thus, in terms of development of self-accusation, the most problematic status is found in the school-age adolescents with visual impairments studying inclusively.

However, in relation to the development of *self-interest*, similar distinct differentiation of the respondents,

according to the results of the ascertaining experiment, is missing.

The obtained empirical data evidence that both in the learning environment at a special school and the learning environment in a separate class of the ordinary school, and, finally, in the context of inclusive education, the overwhelming majority of the respondents – 77.3%, 73.9% and 77.3%, accordingly – have an average developmental level of self-interest. Thus, none of the respondents, being in the learning environment of special education, showed a high developmental level of self-interest, whereas in the sample of pupils studying in the partial educational integration and the inclusion such, albeit with a slight proportion, are presented – 8.7% and 9.0%, accordingly.

At the same time, according to the mathematical-statistical analysis of the average values obtained by the developmental level of self-interest in school-age adolescents with impaired vision studying in different institutional learning environments, the significant differences were not detected. Therefore, the question of determining the influence of these environments cannot be raised in this case.

It cannot be put, according to the results of the ascertaining experiment, also in relation to the *expectation for the attitude of others*, namely the attitude of adolescents with vision deficiency.

Not only do (see Table 2) the respondents with an average developmental level of such expectation (54.6% each in the samples of pupils studying at a separate school and studying inclusively, and 56.5% of pupils studying in a separate class of the ordinary school) dominate in all three samples and almost with equal proportion, but also among the respondents in almost equal and, moreover, very substantial scale the pupils with a low developmental level of expectation for the attitude of others, characterized by the expectation of antipathy and negative self-attitude, are presented: 36.4% – among the respondents studying at a special school, 34.8% – among the respondents studying in a separate class of the ordinary school, and, finally, 31.8% – among the pupils studying inclusively. In this situation, the lack of significant differences in the average values of the indicators, which were obtained from different samples in relation to the developmental level of expectation for the attitude of others, fixed on the basis of mathematical-statistical processing, looks quite naturally. Therefore, there is no determining influence of the institutional learning environments on the developmental level of this component of self-attitude in school-age adolescents with vision deficiency.

## 3. The impact of the institutional learning environments on the development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency: conative-regulative aspect.

The third research series, implemented within the framework of the ascertaining experiment, was aimed at assessing the impact of the institutional learning environments on the developmental level of *self-consistency* in school-age adolescents with vision deficiency as an "indicator" of their self-attitude considered in the conative-regulative aspect.

**Table 3. The development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency in different institutional learning environments: conative-regulative aspect.**

Self-attitude component and the level of its development	Pupils studying at a special school (%)	Pupils studying in a separate class of the ordinary school (%)	Pupils studying inclusively (%)	
Self-consistency	high level	31.8	34.8	31.8
	average level	50.0	52.2	54.5
	low level	18.2	13.0	13.7

The obtained empirical data (see Table 3) indicate that regardless of the institutional learning environment, among the adolescent pupils with visual impairments those who show the average developmental level of self-consistency predominate with a comparable proportion: in the sample of pupils studying at a special school there are 50.0%, in the sample of pupils studying in a separate class of the ordinary school – 52.2%, and in the sample of pupils studying inclusively – 54.5%. The high developmental level of self-consistency is marked – and also in almost the same percentage terms – in 31.8%, 34.8% and 31.8% of the respondents, respectively.

The mathematical-statistical analysis of the average values of indicators, characterizing the developmental level of self-consistency in adolescent pupils with visual impairments studying in different institutional environments, does not record significant differences between them naturally indicating the lack of the determining impact of these environments on the development of self-attitude of these pupils in its conative-regulative aspect.

#### DISCUSSION

The results of the conducted ascertaining experiment indicate that the institutional learning environments do not have comprehensive influence on the development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency.

Thus, in the conative-regulative aspect of self-attitude, any decisive influence of these environments on its development is not present at all.

As for the cognitive aspect of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with visual impairments, there are such components as "reflected self-esteem", self-confidence and self-understanding finding out relative independence from the institutional learning environments in their development. Only global self-esteem is sensitive to the institutional learning environments, and a kind of "risk group" in this respect is represented by the adolescents, studying inclusively.

Similar situation exists in relation to the emotional-conative aspect of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency: the institutional learning environments do not affect globally the development of such components as self-acceptance, self-interest and expectation for the attitude of others, and only at the level of self-accusation there is determining impact which defines the problematic status of teenage pupils with visual impairments, studying inclusively.

The totality of these circumstances, fixed empirically, allows us to make crucial conclusions.

First, in the light of these facts it becomes evident that from the standpoint of the development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency, different formats of educational integration and differentiation are not alternative to each other and especially mutually exclusive; on the contrary, their complementary coexistence, which will enable pupils with visual impairments to select the optimum educational path, adequate to their individual and personal characteristics to the maximum extent, is possible and appropriate.

Second, each of these formats, whether it is studying at a special school, studying in a separate class of the ordinary school or inclusive education, should involve the implementation of activities in psycho-pedagogical support of the development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with visual impairments, and such support is particularly necessary in the inclusive education at the present stage of its institutionalization.

We are talking about the fact that nowadays Russian education is actually only at the initial phase of formation of the inclusive education system, for which the emphasis on the priority implementation of, first of all, regulatory, organizational and management, logistical, etc. tasks is naturally typical. On the background of solving these tasks, not resolved yet, which is quite natural, there are still some specific-methodological issues, including the ones of psycho-pedagogical support of development of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with visual impairments. Thus, inclusion is in the relevant sense not quite prepared yet, which results in the special problematic status of teenage pupils with vision deficiency, studying inclusively, identified in the course of the ascertaining experiment.

#### CONCLUSION

The carried out experimental study focused on the extent and nature of influence of different institutional learning environments on the formation of self-attitude in adolescent pupils with vision deficiency.

The relevance of the targets of this study and its results are clearly revealed in two intersecting planes – the educational-political and psycho-pedagogical ones.

First, it is found in the educational-political plane – in the context of diversification of the education of persons with disabilities in Russia, including pupils with visual impairments – accompanied by significant intensification of inclusive processes.

Second, it is detected in the psycho-pedagogical plane, as the institutional learning environments are clearly

meaningful in terms of the social situation of development of pupils with visual impairments in general.

From these positions, it is crucial that, as it has been experimentally established, self-attitude of pupils with vision deficiency acts in adolescence as a fairly autonomous personal formation, globally and directly independent on the institutional learning environments in its development, and thus within any of the institutional formats of education of children with visual impairments, the formation of their positive self-attitude can be achieved.

At the same time, the implementation of this opportunity will be crucially dependent on the effectiveness of psycho-pedagogical support of development of self-attitude in school-age adolescents with visual impairments studying inclusively, and the basic reserve for improvement of inclusive schooling of children with vision deficiency is primarily connected with deployment of such support.

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