

# The monitoring of the universities' activities as a basis for inclusive higher education strategic development

## El seguimiento de las actividades de las universidades como base para el desarrollo estratégico de la educación superior inclusiva

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#### ABSTRACT:

The focal point of the article is the development of a special type of higher education – inclusive educational system for individuals with disabilities and impairments – in the Russian Federation. A key aspect of the paper is a framework model for monitoring universities' activities targeting the support of individuals with physical disabilities. Evidence suggests that this subject has received insufficient attention, although it is of much importance for the development of the system of higher education. The content of the developed monitoring model is significant for a wide range of educational management problems. It serves as a guideline for identifying and eliminating management shortcomings and increasing the effectiveness of instruction of individuals with disabilities and impairments in higher education organizations. Central

#### RESUMEN:

El punto focal del artículo es el desarrollo de un tipo especial de educación superior – sistema educativo inclusivo para individuos con discapacidades e impedimentos – en la Federación de Rusia. Un aspecto clave del documento es un modelo marco para supervisar las actividades de las universidades dirigidas al apoyo de las personas con discapacidades físicas. La evidencia sugiere que este tema ha recibido una atención insuficiente, aunque es de mucha importancia para el desarrollo del sistema de educación superior. El contenido del modelo de monitoreo desarrollado es significativo para una amplia gama de problemas de gestión educativa. Sirve como una guía para identificar y eliminar las deficiencias en la gestión y aumentar la efectividad de la instrucción de las personas con discapacidades e impedimentos en las organizaciones

to the entire concept are the analytical summaries which feature the results of the assessment forms specially designed to determine the quality and accessibility of present-day higher education institutions for individuals with disabilities. This paper gives an account of quantitative results obtained through the monitoring of the activities of higher educational institutions which are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

**Keywords:** monitoring, individuals with physical disabilities, inclusive higher education, criteria, indicators, targets, access to education, quality of education.

de educación superior. La central de todo el concepto son los resúmenes analíticos que presentan los resultados de los formularios de evaluación especialmente diseñados para determinar la calidad y accesibilidad de las instituciones de educación superior actuales para personas con discapacidad. Este documento da cuenta de los resultados cuantitativos obtenidos mediante el seguimiento de las actividades de las instituciones educativas superiores que están bajo la supervisión del Ministerio de educación y ciencia de la Federación de Rusia.

**Palabras clave:** monitoreo, individuos con discapacidades físicas, educación superior inclusiva, criterios, indicadores, objetivos, acceso a la educación, calidad de la educación.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, special education in the Russian Federation is a developed system of special (correctional) general education schools for trainees and pupils with disabilities. This system ranks as Health Impact Assessment (HIA) system, where special educational conditions are offered to students, since training in ordinary instructional environment is difficult to them or is completely impossible. Special education has its own legal framework regulating the state system of correctional and developmental support and psychosocial protection of children with HIA status. Special education is responsible for the realization of their rights to receive education (Aismontas, 2015), (Alekhina, 2011), (Goryinova and Guterman, 2014).

Extensive research has shown that Russian special education system is in a transitional stage, although it has its own historically conditioned model of development. Today disabled individuals and people with HIA status are in a tight corner in terms of their educational environment, especially if they try to get higher education. In recent years, the state has increased the interest in the opportunities of obtaining higher education by persons with HIA status. In this regard, one of the fundamental tasks of our country is to create an educational environment accessible to disabled people and individuals with HIA status (Kashtanova and Filchenkova, 2016), (Methodical recommendations), (Mikhalchi, 2014).

Today, higher education for persons with HIA status in Russian universities is quite common, but at the same time it involves some difficulties. The reason for this is that higher education institutions are not ready to fully accept such students, and disabled individuals and individuals with HIA status demonstrate a very formal box-ticking approach or a low need for this type education. At present, there is a need to create a flexible system of inclusive higher education based on the national experience in teaching disabled individuals and individuals with HIA status (Aismontas, 2015).

The present research explores the results of the project, realized as the state contract for services and works dated June 07, 2016 No. 05.020.11.0007 "Monitoring and information-analytical support of the regional resource centers for higher education for individuals with disabilities", implemented by the Nizhniy Novgorod State Pedagogical University (Minin University). One of the basic stages in the implementation of this project was the development and testing of a model for monitoring the activities of higher educational institutions and regional resource centers for higher education in training disabled people and individuals with HIA status (Kashtanova and Filchenkova, 2016), (Medvedeva and Dvurechenskaia, 2016). This investigation will enhance our knowledge about the problem.

## 2. The purpose of the study

The present research aims at studying the potential of Russian universities for providing educational services to disabled individuals and individuals with HIA status. The purpose of the paper is to form a system for evaluating the activities of educational organizations in providing

educational services to disabled individuals and individuals with HIA status to improve the quality of higher education and to identify the prospects and potentials for developing a system of inclusive higher education in the Russian Federation.

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### **3. Methods**

In developing the monitoring model, we proceeded from the need to assess the performance of universities in terms of their willingness to provide affordable and quality education for disabled individuals and individuals with HIA status. The benchmark was the analysis of positive Russian and foreign practices in this area. At the same time, the research sheds light on the content of monitoring as the basis for strategic planning and the mechanism for implementing inclusive higher education. We strongly believe that the monitoring system, the analysis of the implementation conditions, the support practices, and the proposed results of inclusive higher education, make it possible to effectively manage the quality of inclusive education organizations.

Each criterion of the monitoring system contains illustrative indexes and indicators. This approach is the basis for assessing the quality and accessibility of higher education for persons with HIA status (Kashtanova and Filchenkova, 2016).

We singled out the following criteria of conditions necessary for the successful implementation of inclusive higher education:

- Financial and economic support.
- Legal documentation for ensuring the activity of universities in the training of persons with HIA.
- Teaching staff specially qualified for the instruction of disabled individuals and individuals with HIA status.
- The creation of barrier-free environment for disabled people and individuals with HIA status.
- Technical means and special equipment for the training of persons with HIA status.
- Career orientation in the system of inclusive higher education.

We analyze the processes of implementing inclusive higher education through the criteria which are as following:

- The adaptation of educational programs and provision of necessary educational and methodological support for training of disabled people and individuals with HIA status.
- The quality of the training management and support of disabled people and individuals with HIA status.

Consequently, the results of inclusive higher education were included in the content of the two criteria:

- The employment of graduates with disabilities and HIA status.
  - The provision of postgraduate support.
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### **4. The experimental sample**

We realized the approbation of the primary and then of the finalized version of the monitoring forms in 2016-2017. We maintained the monitoring of the inclusive higher education system in different federal districts of the Russian Federation, considering the analysis of various nosological groups of individuals with disabilities and HIA status. The study involved universities that are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (871 educational organizations, where higher education programs are implemented according to the secondary approbation). The obtained results allowed us to state important and at the same time complex characteristics of the current system of inclusive higher education, which were collected following the results of 2015-2016 academic year.

## 5. Results

Describing the student contingent with HIA status in Russian universities, it is necessary to give figures by means of illustration. In 60.08% of the examined universities, on the one hand, there were universities where the number of HIA students didn't exceed few individuals (from 1 to 5 individuals per educational organization) and, on the other hand, there were universities where more than 200 disabled individuals and individuals with HIA status received higher education. Moreover, universities, where the number of this contingent was more than 100 individuals, were not so many (4.1%). The total number of students with HIA status and disabilities was 16 703 individuals, which was 0.46% of the total number of students.

Describing the main categories of disabilities, it is necessary to mention that less than half of the sample (6,358 individuals) were representatives of the main categories of individuals with HIA status (hearing, vision, locomotor disorders). The bulk consisted of students with somatic diseases (4,417 individuals) and those whose diagnosis was not specified (not determined, not known to university experts) – 5,200 individuals.

For the analysis, it is necessary to mention that the Central Federal District (34.9% of students) and the Volga Federal District (15.2% of students) demonstrated the maximum involvement into the system of inclusive education. Table 1 describes the distribution of students with HIA status and disabilities by types of nosologies and the universities where they study.

**Table 1**

The number of higher education institutions training different nosological groups of individuals with HIA and disabilities (%)

<b><i>The type of a nosological group</i></b>	<b><i>The share of higher education institutions involved in inclusive instruction (%)</i></b>	<b><i>The share of universities participating in the monitoring (%)</i></b>
Vision disabilities	49,24	33,52
Hearing disabilities	40,64	27,67
Musculoskeletal disorders	66,61	45,35
Musculoskeletal disorders (wheelchair users)	20,57	14,01
Somatic diseases	59,7	40,64
Mental illnesses	6,07	4,13
Diagnosis undetermined	53,29	36,28

Obviously, the most common disorders were musculoskeletal disorders and somatic diseases.

## 6. Discussion

The analysis of monitoring the universities in terms of training individuals with HIA status and disabilities was realized according to the criterion of the necessary legal documentation, the availability of local acts regulating the activity of the university to ensure accessibility of inclusive higher education. One of the indicators for this criterion was as follows, "the presence

on the site of a special section for individuals with HIA status and disabilities". It might serve as a form of information and analytical support. In the analytical report, we mention that 80.25% of universities have this section on their websites. At the same time, the content of this section on the websites of universities offers separate local acts and regulations that administrate the work with students with HIA status and disabilities (72.68% of universities).

In 89.71% of universities the authorities approved the passports of accessibility of knowledge for individuals with HIA status and disabilities. This in turn accounts for 61.08% of the total number of the universities that participated in the monitoring. Approximately the same figures were obtained from the indicator of the availability of an approved roadmap for the development of inclusive education in the university. In general, when completing this section, 5.05% of universities did not respond to these questions steadily, i.e. did not give either positive or negative answers. This fact can be accounted for a lack of understanding of the relevance of legal regulation of inclusive higher education, which in our opinion, on the contrary, is an effective tool for making system management decisions in modeling inclusive environment.

The resolution of issues of personnel and administrative support of the process of training of persons with HIA status and disabilities in the university was reflected in the monitoring through the allocation of a special department in the university or responsible for the organization of support. As the results showed, 31.8% of universities (46.71% of inclusive education students) stated the presence of this structural unit. The other part - 67.28% (98.82% of the training categories of these categories) indicated the presence of those responsible for this process. We are very optimistic about the fact that almost all educational organizations that already train individuals with HIA status and disabilities understand the complexity and necessity of mandatory inclusion in the staff of such an employee or several units responsible for accompanying students with HIA status and disabilities. A little more than half of the universities (53.85%) provided information that within three years their employees studied at special refresher courses on the issues of working with trainees with HIA status and disabilities.

There is a growing body of literature that recognizes present-day importance of the role of the state to create barrier-free environment regarding persons with HIA status and disabilities. In this regard, the role of the state in inclusive education comes to providing equal access to education for all students, considering the diversity of special educational needs and individual opportunities. Federal Law No. 273-FZ of December 29, 2012 "On Education in the Russian Federation" also confirms this role of the state (Decree of the Government), (Law of the Russian Federation).

In the process of self-examination of the institutions of higher education, while analyzing buildings and auditoriums for the training of persons with HIA status and disabilities, it was found that 16.65% of the surveyed institutions had a sufficiently high level of barrier-free environment for teaching people with visual, hearing, and musculoskeletal problems. At the same time, 26.5% of universities were ready to educate one of the above-mentioned nosological groups of students. Unfortunately, the situation was very bad in terms of equipping hygiene facilities with special equipment, for example: a toilet cubicle for low-mobility students, folding support rails, etc. Only one third of the buildings in 663 universities were equipped with specialized sanitary and hygienic facilities.

There is much evidence that in dormitories there was practically no accommodation for people with HIA status and disabilities. Over 80% of universities today are not ready to provide places for living in dormitories for students with disorders of the musculoskeletal system. Even smaller figures are recorded for people with visual and hearing impairments. This situation again actualizes the need to solve the problem of ensuring accessibility of higher education for persons with HIA status and disabilities.

Noteworthy, the monitoring featured such an important indicator as "Ensuring the conditions for accessibility of the library fund for students with HIA status and disabilities". In whole or in part,

the library fund offered material for people with the disorders, which were as follows:

- visual impairments - 62.92%;
- hearing impairments - 48,34%;
- musculoskeletal disorders - 72.9%.

The library fund for students with hearing disorders was less prepared. The reason for this indicator was that it stemmed from a purely subjective view of the participants that they least of all needed special material and technical equipment.

Extensive research has shown that important factors and indicators were such characteristics of the classroom fund as fixed technical means, as well as mobile adapters for persons with visual, hearing, and musculoskeletal disorders. The conducted monitoring showed that many officially registered educational organizations did not have special classrooms for people with the following disorders:

- for persons with visual impairment - 33.18%;
- for people with hearing impairment - 33.41%,
- for people with musculoskeletal disorders - 38%;

Almost a third of the universities found it difficult to give an answer regarding these three nosological groups of students. A similar situation can be traced in terms of the availability and use of mobile adapters in the educational process, for example: video magnifiers, typhlocomputers, braille display, screen access programs digital audio recording of training materials in DAISY format - Digital Accessible Information System (for persons with visual impairments), hearing aids, etc. (for people with hearing impairments).

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation designed special methodological recommendations for the organization of the educational process for the training of persons with HIA status and disabilities (Methodical recommendations). These recommendations contain the requirements for the system of pre-university training and career guidance work with subsequent accompaniment of admission tests. Consequently, these requirements maintain the criterion "Vocational guidance in the system of inclusive higher education" as a part of the set of criteria, indicators, and monitoring targets. A major area of interest is the number of applicants from among persons with HIA status and disabilities, as well as their share in the total number of entrants in the current academic year.

The criterion "Vocational guidance in the system of inclusive higher education" determines the success of pre-university training. The complex of realized vocational orientation measures for applicants with HIA status and disabilities is instrumental for our understanding of the subsequent comparative analysis. It is important to analyze the quantitative indicators that show the total number of seminars (webinars) for teachers and parents, as well as the availability of a vocational guidance system for applicants with HIA status and disabilities from different nosological groups.

According to the data of 2015-2016 academic year, 33.87% of universities from the number of participants who took part in the monitoring were holding such seminars and webinars. Moreover, the number of these measures varied greatly (from 1-2 to 10-15). The event "Open Doors Days" (61.31%) was the most common form of work. Many universities practiced individual professional counseling of persons with HIA status and disabilities (42.71%) and psychological testing of applicants on request (42.25%). Unfortunately, in the dominant number of examined universities there were no programs of labor and professional orientation of such students (about 90%). The small percentage of educational organizations that have such programs offer their services to different nosological groups. Specialists in the professional orientation of persons with HIA status and disabilities have a special placement right to study in 24.57% of universities. Up to now, far too small percentage of such placement exists, which in our opinion, is the reason for the absence of such applicants and students in universities or the presence of a small number of them.

By the criterion "Adaptation of educational programs and teaching and methodological support for teaching people with HIA status and disabilities", we were interested in the total number of adapted programs according to nosological groups, as well as, the availability of adaptation modules, individual curricula, timetables, adapted practice programs, intermediate and final certification. All these items constitute the methodical support of an adapted educational program. According to the latest survey, most universities offer educational activities for students with HIA status and disabilities without any use of adapted methods and modules of practice programs, intermediate and final certification. The choice of teaching methods that ensures the accessibility of the process in accordance with the nosology was realized in the programs of 36.62% of institutions of higher education from the total number or 53.79% of the number of training data of the contingent. As for the use of adapted online courses in the educational process, they were practiced only by 9.87% of the examined universities. Surprisingly, but 47.53% of the universities generally ignored this monitoring issue.

Of much research interest is the level of support for persons with HIA status and disabilities in the monitoring section "The quality of the organization of the training and support of persons with HIA status and disabilities" (Medvedeva and Dvurechenskaia, 2016). According to the results of the survey, more than half of the students did not receive any forms of support (psychological, pedagogical, medical, tutoring, social rehabilitation, etc.). Table 2 clearly demonstrated the quantitative data.

**Table 2**  
The number of universities and trainees with HIA status and disabilities, receiving various forms of support for the learning process

<b>The form of support</b>	<b>The number of universities</b>	<b>The number of students</b>
	<b>The total number of the examined universities- 871</b>	<b>The total number of students with HIA status and disabilities - 16703</b>
Psychological and educational	293	6730
Medical	219	6022
Tutoring	141	2887
Social and rehabilitative	142	4116
Other	150	2228

Nowadays, 59.19% of universities from the number of educational institutions, where today students with HIA status and disabilities study, offer financial support in forms of various additional payments. The analysis of the inclusion of students with HIA status and disabilities in the socio-cultural space of the university correlate with such indicators as an active volunteer movement working with this special category of students and the number of leisure, sports, cultural and other events held with the participation of these students.

From the results of the monitoring it follows that the volunteer movement focused on working with students with HIA and disabilities currently exists in 30.54% of the total number or 44.86% of the number of universities where people with HIA and disabilities get education. There is no such movement in 54.08% of the total number of examined universities. Surprisingly, representatives of 15.38% of educational institutions know nothing about this

issue. 50.17% of the total number, that is 73.69% of the number of educational institutions teaching this category of students, indicate the participation of persons with HIA status and disabilities in sports, leisure, and cultural events.

Nowadays, preparing for employment and facilitating the employment of graduates with HIA status and disabilities are included in the evaluation of higher education institutions. Regarding the collection of monitoring data on the employment of graduates, it was reported that programs for the employment of such special graduates were approved in 33.18% of universities (44.74% of the group of universities that taught such students). Appropriate staff organizational structures functioned in 44.55% of institutions (65.43% in accordance with the above).

As the results showed, in 2015-2016 405 universities (46.5%) among those which took part in the study carried out the release of 2,637 people. Graduates of 310 universities could find a job. Table 3 presents the actual information from this section.

**Table 3**  
Data on the employment of graduates with HIA status and disabilities

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>%</i>
Got an employment during a calendar year after the graduation	57,49
Got an employment by profession during a calendar year after the graduation	44,44%
Continued education at the next level	26,29%

Proceeding from the logic of the ideas of the special andragogy, we included the criterion "Postgraduate support" in the monitoring. Evidence suggests that there is much need to develop postgraduate programs for people with HIA status and disabilities. This study suggests that a pivotal moment is to monitor employment situation for three years after the graduation of the students, considering the full integration of graduates in a professional field. Only 13.2% of universities answered positively to the question about the availability of approved employment programs.

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## 7. Conclusion

The present study makes several noteworthy contributions to the description of inclusive higher education in the Russian Federation. The key strength of the study is the idea that the monitoring allowed us to obtain reliable and objective information about the conditions, organization, content, and the results of inclusive higher education in the Russian Federation. The empirical study of this paper allowed us to make a prognostic picture in terms of providing quality and accessible education in selected higher education institutions and federal districts. These findings are relevant to further improve the management of these educational organizations. We consider the criteria, targets, and indicators for monitoring educational institutions of higher education as points of growth of individual universities for modeling a system of inclusive higher education.

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