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## EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS: CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

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The aim of the study was to compare the experience of educational support for children with visual impairments from birth to adulthood in different types of institutions in Ukraine and Canada. Today, Ukraine is actively implementing a system of inclusive education for children with special needs based on which the Canadian model was chosen as one of the most effective.

It was found that the early intervention of visually impaired children in both countries starts with a medical diagnosis. However, once diagnosed in Canada, help and information support can be obtained from many early-stage rehabilitation centres. In Ukraine, early care is still a problem, as medical institutions do not provide such care, and early development centres for children with special needs are insufficient. Therefore, most children are left without help until 2–3 years old (the beginning of preschool education) and the most important time of development for them is lost. Currently, this situation is partially improving with the organization and expansion of the network of inclusive resource centres.

Preschool education for children with visual impairments in Ukraine is represented by a network of special preschool institutions for children with low vision, unfortunately, blind children have not access to these institutions. For the first time, most blind children receive help at school at the age of six.

The school in both Ukraine and Canada is divided into primary – secondary – high. In Canada, visually impaired children are successful in inclusive education because they are supported by the Alberta Society for the Visually Impaired (ASVI) and the Alberta Vision Education.

Reforming the education system in Ukraine based on Canadian experience provides normatively defined opportunities to choose an inclusive preschool or school education institution for each child at the place of residence. However, the difficulty of accompanying a blind child in inclusive environment leads to the fact that most of them continue to study in special boarding schools. These schools work according to typical educational and correctional programs, there are special classes on correction cognitive image, welfare facilities, orientation mobility locomotion, physical rehabilitation, ophthalmologic support. All schools have extracurricular activities – choir, amateur theatre, poetry studio, art (sculpture, mosaics, floristry), sports group. These schools provide education and development opportunities for children, but their significant disadvantage is the segregation of students.

It is concluded that despite the difficulties today, Ukraine is on the path of positive changes in the education system for children with visual impairments. Important steps in making inclusive education accessible to blind children should include the following: establish centres of early intervention, transform special schools into resource centres of inclusive education children with visual impairments, establish support services to visually impairment students.

**Key words:** children with visual impairments, educational technologies, educational environment, resource centres, support.

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