



Evaluating The Effectiveness Of Recently Introduced Tools In Enhancing Pedagogical And Psychological Support For Students With Intellectual Disabilities

Lilit Saratikyan^{1*}, Marianna Harutyunyan², Gohar Hovyan, PhD³, Susanna Muradyan, PhD⁴, Vera Marukyan, PhD⁵

¹PhD, Associate professor, Faculty of Special and Inclusive Education, Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University, Armenia

²PhD, Associate professor, Faculty of Special and Inclusive Education, Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University, Armenia

³Associate professor, Faculty of Special and Inclusive Education, Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University, Armenia

⁴Associate professor, Faculty of Special and Inclusive Education, Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University, Armenia

⁵Associate professor, Faculty of Special and Inclusive Education, Khachatur Abovian Armenian State Pedagogical University, Armenia

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ABSTRACT

This article takes a scientific and educational approach to examining manuals designed to improve the quality of support for students with intellectual disabilities. By analyzing these manuals, the article aims to identify challenges in applying them within the context of adapting educational processes. Additionally, it will explore factors that can influence how effectively teachers can use these manuals to improve learning outcomes.

Researches have shown that in the last 5 years in the Republic of Armenia, the processes of creating a supporting toolkit developed for the purpose of improving the pedagogical and psychological support system have been activated. The reason for this is, in particular, the changes in the order of services provided and the challenges of modernizing the pedagogical conditions arising from the requirement to adapt the learning process of students with special educational needs (SEN).

The Scientific and Methodological Council of the Faculty of Special and Inclusive Education of the Pedagogical University, having participated in these processes, has revealed that the effectiveness of educational manuals and guidelines developed with the aim of improving the pedagogical conditions of students with intellectual disabilities and introduced into the methodological support process is controversial. According to them, this calls for serious scientific and pedagogical research.

The expert analysis of about 52 methodological manuals (39 out of them visual-methodological, and 13 – practice applied) showed that all the presented manuals are actual, but however, in almost 50-70% of them the following issues are found: completeness and adequacy of content; professional-linguistic essay, including scientifically accessible and accurate application of professional concepts; scientifically incomplete justification of the presented material; the low level of independence and creativity in the development of the methodological tasks presented; in interdisciplinary processes related to insufficient accounting of the content of tasks and exercises and the possibility of multi-disciplinary circulation of communicated knowledge, abilities and skills; inadequate processing of methodological instructions for the purpose of implementation of presented tasks, exercises and motivation.

Key words: visual-methodological manual, practice oriented manual, the system of pedagogical and psychological support, pedagogical conditions, students with intellectual disabilities, adaptation of the learning process, and functionality of educational processes.

Intruduction

The issue of improving pedagogical conditions in the modern education system has come to the fore in connection with the new educational reforms operating in Armenia and the demand for so called universal inclusion. In order to increase the functionality of educational processes, the issues of creating, maintaining and improving pedagogical conditions are considered a fundamental requirement in modern psycho-pedagogical literature (Filatova, 2016; Uvarov, 2003). It is the most vulnerable problem in terms of effective organization of education, socialization and inclusion processes of students with intellectual disabilities (Lizunova & Taskina, 2020).

Experimental studies prove that in the conditions of universal inclusion, the educational questions of children with intellectual disabilities are often assimilated to the questions of other students with SEN. Meanwhile, the ideological model of modern education, based on universal inclusion and equal rights, requires taking into account the specifics and difficulties of individual development of each learner. This requirement is most visible in the context of improving the pedagogical conditions of children with intellectual disabilities. That is the reason why in our country, in the last 5 years, modernized issues of development of methodical manuals, guidelines and other supporting tools have been introduced into the psycho-pedagogical support system. The psycho-pedagogical support system of these persons was and remains the driving force of inclusive processes from the beginning (Lizunova, Taskina, Kudimerkova, Chertolis & Kasheeva, 2019; Lizunova, 2014; Mamaychuk, 2007). Based on the mentioned above, this research is considered as extremely demanded in the sense that in order to justify the effectiveness of the development of the tools introduced into this system, their experimental analysis and the development of experimental directions for overcoming the obstacles of implementation are important in the scientific and educational system.

Literature review

The analysis of the professional literature related to the researched issue showed that the new demand for improving the pedagogical conditions of students with intellectual disabilities is the basis of educational reforms. Andreev (2006) and Bortico (2006) characterize the concept of "pedagogical conditions" as "a system of measures aimed at increasing the effectiveness of pedagogical activities" (Filatova, 2016). In another definition, Andreev (2005) considers it as the result of the purposeful selection of methods development and their implementation techniques. It is from this point of view that the issue behind us is consider to be a problem, because it is this link in the educational processes of students with intellectual disabilities that acquires a decisive importance for their learning, school adaptation and establishing an independent life. Meanwhile, it is no secret that the phenomena of insufficiently developed curricula, work plans, and inadequate development of methodological tools including professional support make educational processes uninteresting, difficult, and ineffective.

According to Zvereva (1987), the didactic conditions of learning are disrupted, which ultimately affects even pedagogical ethics. In the school life of students with intellectual disabilities, it becomes a serious psychological problem that drives a wedge into the teacher-student relationship (Krasavina, 2015; Zvereva, 1987). In practice, quite real facts are recorded about how students with intellectual disabilities (especially those with mental retardation) refuse to be included in educational processes, because they complain about being neglected, disliked by friends or the teacher, or unsuccessful. They often don't like their teachers; they even show verbal aggression towards the teacher, they can't stand the wooden-like teaching aids, the red pen, etc. These and similar psychological problems are based on the facts of inadequate pedagogical conditions and incomplete development of the methodological system (Mamaychuk, 2007; Bouck, 2004).

Thus, based on the above, it can be confirmed that the problem of introducing ways and means of organizing the learning of students with intellectual disabilities in the conditions of joint learning acquires a decisive importance for the entire motivational aspect of their intellectual activity.

In the context of educational reforms and universal inclusion, the issue of studying methodological manuals introduced into educational processes has been brought to the fore, because, according to us, the socio-educational success of students with mental development disorders depends on their improvement (Black-Hawkins, Florian & Martyn, 2007). The study of the literature devoted to the pedagogical conditions of students with intellectual disabilities showed that the intensive period of development of curricula, manuals and work programs for these students covers the 1980s-1990s (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 2002; Conley, 2002).

That is the reason why the authors face some difficulties in the search of professional literature. During the last ten years, in connection with universal inclusion processes, the toolkit introduced in the pedagogical and psychological support system of these schools has acquired a very general character. The above-mentioned two circumstances allowed to look at ways of improving the methodological manuals created in the Republic of Armenia pedagogical and psychological support system as a subject of research.

Methodology

The method of analysis of professional literature was chosen for the research aimed at the problem of the effectiveness of the tools introduced into the pedagogical and psychological support system of students with intellectual disabilities. A study of the theoretical setting of the problem was carried out, during which the cornerstone points of view and provisions related to the problem were analyzed.

The research question of the study included the following aspects: the pedagogical conditions of students with intellectual disabilities; the theory of universal educational formation; the setting and obstacles of inclusive education; and the analysis of the role and significance of methodological tools.

Taking into account the issues of improving the pedagogical conditions in the current requirements for the enhancement of the pedagogical and psychological support system for students with intellectual disabilities, the ways of improving the means of increasing the effectiveness of the tools implemented in it as the subject of research were considered (Saratikyan & Harutyunyan, 2024; Banks, Shevellar & Narayanan, 2023; Saratikyan & Harutyunyan, 2023; Abdrazakova & Salamova, 2023).

For this, 52 methodological manuals developed by the Republican Pedagogical and Psychological Center for the purpose of being introduced into the field of general education were subjected to expert analysis using the document analysis method. Among the manuals developed by this system, those that had a methodological orientation were specifically selected, which were conventionally divided into two groups, called visual-methodological and practice applied manuals.

Visual-methodological tools and manuals analyzed within the frame of current research are: “Students with multiple developmental disabilities. Content, organizational features and strategies of support activities. The methodical guide. Handbook for educators”; “About sensory integration. The methodical guide. Handbook for educators”; “Inclusion of children with behavioral disorders in the educational process. The methodical guide. Handbook for educators”; “Process and tools for assessment of the need for special conditions of education and development” methodical guide (3-5 age group); “Process and tools for assessment of the need for special conditions of education and development” methodical guide (6-10 age group); “Process and tools for assessment of the need for special conditions of education and development” methodical guide (11-14 age group); “Process and tools for assessment of the need for special conditions of education and development” methodical guide (15-19 age group); “Individual learning plan. The methodical guide”, etc.

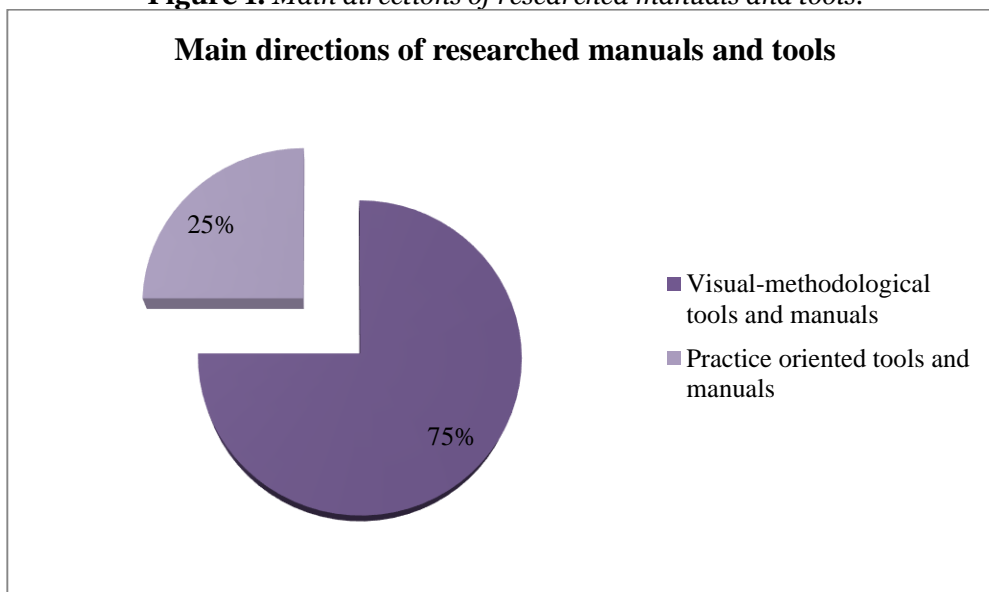
Practice oriented tools and manuals are: “Native language 1. Reding, Workbook for first graders”; “Mathematics 2. First semester. Workbook for students of the second grade”; “Mathematics 2. First semester. Workbook: methodical guide for teacher”; “Fine Art 2. Workbook-notebook. The methodical guide”; “Fine Art 2. Workbook-Notebook for students of the second grade of general educational institutions”; “The surrounding world and me 2. Work book-notebook. For students of the second grade of general educational institutions”; “Adaptations of educational materials. The surrounding world and me 2. Workbook-notebook. The methodical guide for the teacher”, etc.

The performed analyzes allowed to record the gaps, methodical inaccuracies, the main directions of improvement.

Results and discussion

Between the period 2022 and 2024, a total of 52 or more methodological manuals were developed with the aim of enhancing pedagogical-psychological support processes. These manuals were developed by departmental bodies within the system and were presented to the Scientific and Methodological Council of the Faculty of Special and Inclusive Education in Armenian State Pedagogical University. Thirteen of these manuals are visual, while thirty-nine are practical and oriented (Figure 1). The expert analysis conducted by the research team focused on the following main areas:

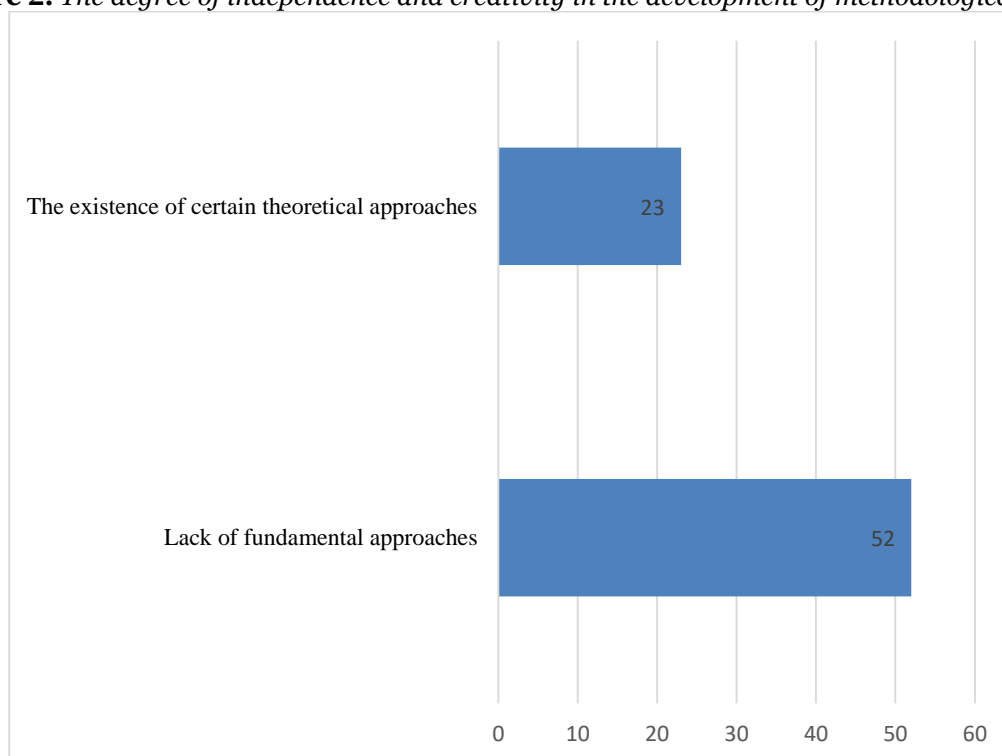
1. demands and relevance of manuals;
2. studying the completeness and adequacy of their content from the point of view of the educational needs of students with intellectual disabilities;
3. compliance with the requirement of the professional-linguistic essay, including the scientifically accessible and accurate application of professional concepts;
4. adequate and sufficient references to the scientificity and validity of the presented material;
5. degree of independence and creativity in the development of methodological tasks presented by the authors;
6. accounting for the content of tasks, exercises, and providing the opportunity for multi-disciplinary circulation of communicated knowledge, abilities and skills in interdisciplinary processes;
7. availability of the presented tasks, methodical instructions for the use of exercises, their saturation and, ensuring their broad application possibilities in the context of universal inclusion;
8. providing opportunities to support educators and motivate students.

Figure 1. *Main directions of researched manuals and tools.*

The results of the research showed that all the presented manuals corresponded to the modern requirements for the improvement of pedagogic-psychological support, but almost 75% of them lacked the content issues of adapting the educational processes of students with intellectual disabilities. Only in 25% cases there were almost no deficiencies in the completeness and adequacy of the content, in the other 75% there were circumstances of poor content, presented material and insufficient development of adequacy in relation to educational needs. According to us, the existing gaps refer to the effectiveness of methodical support of all students with SEN in general. And for the methodical support of students with intellectual disabilities, adequate content development was almost absent. In 37 out of 52 manuals (72%) there were errors related to the professional-linguistic composition, including failures to comply with the requirement of scientifically accessible and accurate application of professional concepts, which made the content of the presented material difficult and inaccessible. This summary did not give an opportunity to fully understand the content of the presented tasks, exercises, assignments, the execution process, etc. The studies conducted from the point of view of the scientificity and justification of the presented material showed that out of 52 educational manuals, there were only manuals with mainly theoretical and few practical content (for example: "Inclusion of children with behavioral disorders in the educational process. Methodical guide. Handbook for educators", "Technology 2". Workbook-notebook. The methodical guide for the teachers", etc.) that include adequate and sufficient references (33%). Meanwhile, 67% of methodological guides, manuals containing practical tasks (for example, "Adaptations of educational materials. The surrounding world and me 2. Workbook-notebook. The methodical guide for the teacher") necessary justifications were not included, which allowed us to think that the latter were only author's elaborations based on personal experience.

According to the researchers, such an approach contradicts the pedagogical principle and requirement that the presented methodical literature is scientifically based. In addition, it addresses the issue of adaptability of support measures. This phenomenon has a negative impact not only on the requirement of accessibility and adaptation of tasks, exercises, and assignments for students with SEN, but also for all other special educational conditions. By the way, the above also reflects the results of the analysis carried out in the next direction, which reflects the degree of independence and creativity in the development of methodological tasks presented by the authors. It was found that almost 52% of the practical oriented methodological manuals contained pictures taken from different Internet sources, ready-made pictorial tasks, samples and schemes. The other 23% contained pictures, diagrams, and other figures containing some author's approach. In general, in almost 75% of cases, there were deficiencies in the observational aspect of the development of methodological manuals (Figure 2).

This result negatively affects the adaptation of tasks, the formation of creative ideas of students with intellectual disabilities and other students, the sufficient understanding of the educational material, as well as the students' learning interests and activity motivations. According to us, these approaches violate educational requirements arising from pedagogical principles, especially the principles of accessibility, transparency, and encouragement, which makes the learning process uninteresting and formal, especially for students with intellectual disabilities.

Figure 2. *The degree of independence and creativity in the development of methodological tasks.*

Based on the characteristics of the psychophysical development and educational activity of students with intellectual disabilities, the possibilities of multi-functional application of the presented materials have been emphasized. That's why they were dissolved (a) accounting of the content of tasks and exercises given in interdisciplinary processes, (b) opportunities for multi-disciplinary circulation of imparted knowledge, abilities and skills. It was found that in almost 79% of the practice oriented methodological manuals, there is a lack of content agreement between each other (deficiencies of interdisciplinary mutual agreement) and it is not clear what concepts, knowledge and abilities are considered fundamental for a given age group. In 15% of cases the certain approaches towards the maintenance of opportunities for the multi-profile circulation of knowledge, abilities and skills are observed, but they are presented in a fragmented and uncoordinated manner (Figure 3). And so, because they seem to be "independent of each other" in nature, they do not provide an opportunity to implement the learning achievements of students with intellectual disabilities. According to us, this fact does not provide an opportunity to preserve a number of important pedagogical principles for them, such as repetition, "Intermediate learning", practical application of knowledge and abilities (application of abilities and skills in changing situations, etc.), individual approach, strengths accounting principles. These and similar omissions make the learning process of students with intellectual disabilities inert, passive and ineffective.

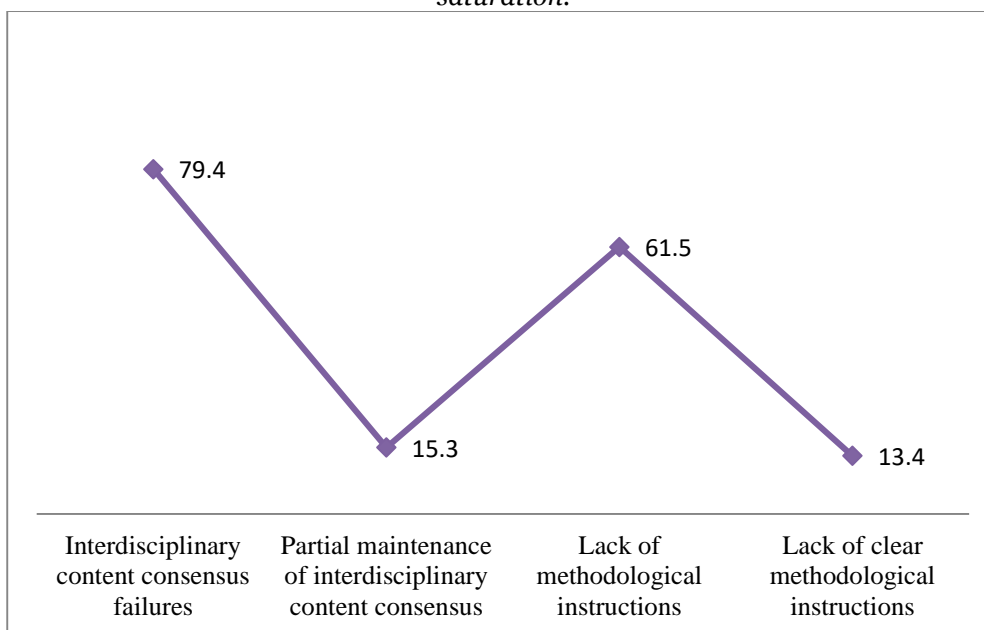
The analysis revealed a critical issue: a lack of proper methodological instructions in the provided tasks and exercises. These instructions are essential for educators, especially when working with students who have intellectual disabilities in inclusive settings. This omission presents a significant obstacle to successful adaptation of the educational process for these students.

The analysis found that nearly 61% of the reviewed manuals lacked clear methodological instructions. In the 13% of manuals with a practical focus, the instructions were poorly integrated within the text, making them unclear and difficult to follow.

The analysis highlights the need for improvement in 75% of the reviewed teacher's manuals. These manuals lack the depth and clarity required to effectively support educators and motivate students. Specifically, they need more:

- Methodological guidance: Clear instructions on how to implement the tasks and exercises.
- Task clarity: Well-defined tasks that are easy for students to understand.
- Engaging activities: Activities that spark student interest and encourage participation.

Figure 3. The results of the manuals' analysis in terms of interdisciplinary content and methodological saturation.



In conclusion, improving the quality of pedagogical resources is crucial for enhancing the support system for students with intellectual disabilities. This includes prioritizing research focused on developing better teaching methods. These improvements will lead to:

- Increased efficiency: More effective learning experiences for students with intellectual disabilities.
- Reduced student disengagement: Strategies to prevent student boredom and low motivation.
- Improved teacher well-being: Reduced teacher workload and less risk of burnout.

Overall, investing in better pedagogical resources and methods benefits both students and teachers in inclusive classrooms.

Conclusion

As a result of an expert study aimed at the problem of the effectiveness of the tools and manuals introduced into the system of pedagogical and psychological support of students with intellectual disabilities, it was found that, within the framework of 52 examined manuals, only in 25% of the cases, there were almost no deficiencies in the completeness and adequacy of the content. It was found that almost 52% of the analyzed methodological manuals with a practical orientation contained pictures taken from Internet sources, ready-made pictorial tasks, samples and schemes. As for the observational aspect of the development of methodological manuals, in general, there were shortcomings in almost 75% of them, which was expressed in the fact that the presented tasks, exercises and assignments were very general, which is particularly important for the adaptation of the learning activities of students with intellectual development disorders. are inaccessible from the point of view. According to the results, based on the developmental characteristics and educational needs of students with intellectual disabilities, these findings can negatively affect the adaptation of tasks, the formation of creative ideas of students with intellectual disabilities and other students, the sufficient understanding of the educational material, as well as the students' learning interests and activity motivations.

These facts clearly violate educational requirements arising from pedagogical principles, especially the principles of accessibility, inspection, and encouragement, which makes the learning process uninteresting and formal, especially for students with intellectual disabilities. The presented tasks, exercises and assignments lack certain methodical guidance and the specific instructions, which can hinder the teacher's activity, features of the development of the students, the burdensome principle of accounting. Based on the above, it is possible to state that 75% of the methodological manuals need to be improved from the point of view of methodological saturation, specification of tasks, stimulation of students' interests and learning activities. The fact that in almost in 79% of the practical-oriented methodological manuals, there is a lack of content agreement between each other (deficiencies of interdisciplinary mutual agreement) and it is not clear what concepts, knowledge and skills are considered fundamental for a particular age group. Skills to be developed can negatively affect the ability of students with intellectual disabilities to apply their learning. It was found that only in 8% of cases the certain approaches were observed in the direction of maintaining opportunities for the multi-profile circulation

of reported knowledge, abilities and skills, which were presented in a fragmented and uncoordinated manner. This circumstance does not provide an opportunity to preserve a number of important pedagogical principles for them, such as repetition, "Intermediate learning", practical application of knowledge and abilities (application of abilities and skills in changing situations, etc.), individual approach, consideration of strengths. These and similar omissions make the learning process of students with intellectual disabilities inert, passive and ineffective. Content gaps, lack of methodological instructions, tricky wording, cause serious obstacles among educators, regional pedagogic-psychological support center specialists in using them effectively, adjusting educational processes and support service provision processes.

Thus, the identified gaps refer not only to intellectual development, but also to the effectiveness of providing full pedagogical conditions for all students with SEN, in particular to the effectiveness of methodical guidance. From what has been said, it follows that this problem needs serious experimental research not only in Armenia, but also in other countries where universal inclusive education has been implemented in the last 20 years, and it can pose new challenges to the scientific community, forming a new range of scientific research interests that will consider current needs of pedagogic-psychological support for students with intellectual disabilities as a prerequisite for educational reforms.

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