

Peculiarities of Comprehensive Examination in Russia for Foreign Citizens with Visual Impairments and Musculoskeletal System Disorders

A.V. Dolzhikova¹, T. V. Volosovets^{1,2}, E. N. Kutepova^{1,3}, R. A. Arslanov¹, M. N. Moseykina¹,
L. A. Bukalerova¹ and O. A. Kuznetsova¹

¹Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (PFUR), Russia

²Institute for the Study of Childhood, Family and Education, Russian Academy of Education, Russia

³Institute of Problems of Inclusive Education, Moscow Municipal Psychological and Pedagogical University, Russia

Abstract

The article deals with the conditions for a comprehensive examination for the right of employment for foreign citizens with visual impairments and musculoskeletal system disorders. The psychophysical characteristics of persons with disabilities are described; the technique required for the successful execution of test tasks in the Russian language, Russian history and the basics of Russian legislation has been proposed.

Keywords: Comprehensive Exam, Foreign Residents, Migrant Workers, Musculoskeletal System Disorders (MSDs), Persons with Disabilities, Special Conditions, Test Tasks, Visual Impairment

1. Problem Formulation

In modern Russia, migration processes affecting the socio-economic, cultural and demographic development of the country are becoming increasingly important. Naturally, the adaptation of migrants has become one of the key problems for the Russian society and the state. Seamless integration of foreign nationals in a multinational and multi-confessional society can occur only in case of their knowledge and compliance with laws and regulations and the rules of conduct adopted in Russia, respect for the state language of the country and the culture of its people. In order to overcome the ethno cultural isolationism of foreign citizens arriving in Russia so as to work and to obtain a temporary residence permit and a permanent residence permit, to minimize the problems of adaptation, it was decided to introduce a comprehensive exam in the Russian language, the History of Russia and in the Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation.

Monitoring and Test Materials (MTM) of modules on History of Russia and Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation for the exam were developed in accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, federal laws and other normative legal acts of the Russian Federation in conjunction with the Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025, approved by Presidential Decree of 19.12.2012 No. 1666¹, the Concept of the state migration policy of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025 year², Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025³, the Concept of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation until 2020, the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020 year⁴ and other documents of state planning. Their development was carried out with consideration of the generally recognized principles and norms of international law and Russia's obligations under international treaties in the field of migration.

*Author for correspondence

Special difficulties in the way of adaptation are faced by foreign citizens with visual impairments and musculoskeletal system disorders. That is why the method of preparation and organization of this examination for this category of foreign citizens deserve special consideration. It should be borne in mind that the organization of the exam for this category of people demonstrates not only the degree of efficiency and professionalism of all the participants of the comprehensive exam in the country, but also the educational system of the state.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the methods of preparation and the conditions of holding a complex examination for foreign citizens with visual impairment and musculoskeletal disorder in the light of amendments to the Russian Federation migration legislation and changing public attitudes. The urgency to solve this issue has been stipulated by special requirements to the methodology of preparation to and holding of the complex examination, taking into account the psychophysical specifics of the category of persons suffering from developmental disabilities.

The obtained knowledge is meant to facilitate not only adaptation, but actual integration of the foreign citizens intending to live in Russia. Therefore, the State Duma (the lower house of the Russian Parliament) has passed Federal Law No. 74-FZ (dated April, 20, 2014) "On Amending the Federal Law On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation", which made it obligatory for foreign citizens (highly qualified experts excluding) to pass the examinations in the Russian Language, in the History of Russia and in Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation⁵.

2. Methods and Materials

To study the issue under investigation the general scientific and specific principles and methods were deployed, including systematic approach which implies considering the preparation to and holding the complex examination for foreign citizens with developmental disabilities as an integral evolutionary system. In this study the achievements of modern testology, a part of psychology⁶⁻¹⁰, were used. The problem of developing the methodology for training and testing foreign citizens in the History of Russia and in the Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation has been studied by such Russian scientists as A.V. Dolzhikova, V.M. Kozmenko, M.N. Moseykina, R.A. Arslanov, L.A. Bukalerovala, E.V. Kiselyova and others¹¹⁻¹⁵.

Over the recent years the examination tests have been developed and the Requirements and Typical Tests for the foreign citizens passing the complex examination in the Russian language as a foreign language, in the History of Russia and in Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation were published^{16,17}.

Besides, the authors of this study referred to the materials, which not only made the basis for training persons with developmental disabilities, but which also elucidated the specific features of developing such materials in Russia. First of all, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is worthwhile noting, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December, 13, 2006 and intended to protect and to encourage the rights and dignity of disabled persons¹⁸. This exceptionally important legislative document resulted in conceptual change of the attitude toward the people with developmental disorders. It marked the new historical stage in the international law development: from the statement about the right to education for each person in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)¹⁹ up to the obligation of all United Nation Member States to ensure realization of this right for disabled people by means of inclusive education among other methods.

The studies emerged now, elucidating the specific features of training the disabled persons in Russia^{20,21}. However, the issue of preparing foreign citizens suffering from developmental disorders for passing the complex examination in the Russian language, in the History of Russia and in Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation for the purposes of obtaining the residence permit or employment, has not yet gained its special consideration, thus rendering urgency to attending this problem.

3. Research

By 2011 the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been signed by 147 UN Member States. The Russian Federation ratified the Convention on May, 3, 2012²².

The ratification of the Convention was stipulated by a number of factors, including that of propagating the "minority concept", suggested by H. Hahn, an American teacher and disability rights movement activist in 1994. According to him, the persons with reduced capabilities come forth as a social minority, whose rights and freedoms are infringed upon through the external restrictions.

Hahn assumed that solving the issues of disability should, first of all, be "...not a medical task, but a political one, targeted at propagating the normative standards of equality and freedom"²³.

This thesis has been proved by the long-term observations, undertaken on the methodological basis of studying individual and group relations, character traits, mental states, psycho-pathological syndromes, functional state of organism, conceptual thinking of the persons with musculoskeletal system disorders, who study at Moscow Boarding Institute. The scientific novelty of the obtained results rests in describing the upper extremities motility disturbance with persons suffering from musculoskeletal system disorders, special characteristics of their writing and personal computer operating techniques²⁴. This study determines the necessity of creating special conditions for the abovementioned persons while conducting training and examining activities, which would make it possible to overcome the social stereotypes as regards the dependency of the disabled persons and of their low social status^{25,26}.

As the State Duma had passed the law stipulating complex examination for foreign citizens coming to Russia with the intention to obtain employment or the residence permit²⁷, the training programs and the requirements for the courses in the Russian language, in the History of Russia and in Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation were developed. At that, for different groups of foreign citizens the tests were developed with relevant parameters and level of sophistication, though not going beyond the framework of the State Standard Requirements. While developing the methodological basis of the complex examination modules the main objective was the task of establishing the unified (uniform), standardized control method to estimate the level of accomplishing communicative, socio-cultural and legal competences necessary for foreign citizens. The requirements include the statement, according to which in the course of testing a foreign citizen has a right to use the dictionary of historical, culturological and legal terms and concepts translated in 8 languages of the world up to now.

Now there is a differentiation in tests for three categories of foreign citizens. So far, in historical and legislative modules it is about the number of questions only: 10 – for labor migrants, 20 – for those intending to obtain either the residence permit or sojourn permit. However, taking into account the propositions of the Federal Migration Service of Russia, a new specification

has been developed, envisaging the differentiation in the control and evaluation materials for the foreign workers applying for the residence permit.

Given the contemporary challenges and the suggestions of the experts, a decision was made to make the examination procedure more complex for the category of foreign citizens who apply for the residence permit²⁸⁻³⁰. Thus, now the test in the History of Russia (as well as in Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation) consists of two sub-tests. The first one includes 20 multi-choice tasks (one right answer among the three given answers); the second sub-test includes five tasks with freely constructed answers on chronology, historical events and facts, historical personalities, monuments of Russian and Soviet culture, fundamental legislation. For example, the examinees are proposed to answer a question: which monument is the symbol of Saint-Petersburg, or what is the name of the holiday which is celebrated in modern Russia on November, 4, or who implemented the policy of perestroika (restructuring) in USSR, and also which State document was adopted in Russia on December, 12, 1993. New obligatory dates and personalities of Russian science, culture and sports are being additionally included into the requirements to the minimum scope of knowledge in Russian history.

Alongside with proficiency in Russian the module History of Russia aims at contributing to the formation of foreign citizens' certain spiritual factors that help their socio-cultural integration, tolerant, social and interpersonal interaction in accordance with the cultural and historical traditions and customs of the Russian society, which is especially important for people with physical impairments development.

In turn, the module Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation is designed to help foreigners get an idea of the state and law in Russia, to direct them to comply with existing regulations. Special attention in the monitoring and test materials of the course is paid to the study of key terms and concepts, the acquisition of which in present conditions is not so much of monitoring and estimating value but rather applied and practical significance for foreign citizens.

Particular attention in the development of an integrated strategy for the exam was given to foreign citizens with visual impairments and musculoskeletal system disorders. The program developers, given the characteristics of this category of persons, sought to provide everything necessary for the preparation and successful conduct of the examination. Only taking into account the

physical and psychological condition of people with disabilities, one can ensure the realization of their right to work and integrate into society, the possibility of the formation of new approaches to life and practical skills.

Thus, one of the most important issues of modern state policy is to create equal conditions for the realization of the rights of foreign citizens in career, regardless of their place of residence, ethnicity and health.

The research of needs of foreign citizens with a visual impairment and musculoskeletal system disorders in preparation for the comprehensive examination revealed that, first of all, they want to know how the procedure of examination in the testing center is going to pass; what form sheets they receive and how they have to fill them out; where the testing center is; which documents they should have; what is the guarantee of objectivity of assessments; in which cases you can appeal against the assessment and what is the procedure for resolving conflicts that can arise during the comprehensive examination; where and under what procedure the received document can be sent.

It is noteworthy that the tests themselves do not prompt any questions in this group of foreign citizens. There were no complaints about the complexity of their content, and no proposals have been received to provide examinees with any simplified versions of tasks. Basically all problems were concerned with the organization of the test. It appears that the waiver of any preferences indicates high moral potential of foreign citizens with developmental disabilities.

The research has shown that this category of persons has the following difficulties during the procedure of holding the comprehensive exam because of the problems associated with the perception and filling out tests:

1) Most people with visual impairments have difficulty filling out form sheets or answer sheets independently; those filled out by visually impaired persons independently, cannot be subjected to machining, as the filling procedure requires the recording of symbols in certain cells and the uniqueness of their recognition (reading). It is difficult to make the necessary notes in the conventional format by the visually impaired and these notes cannot be processed; 2) the speed of reading and writing of the visually impaired people, as a rule, is lower than of sighted ones. Based on the findings of the carried out study, we can say that in order to successfully pass the comprehensive exam for persons with visual impairment it is necessary to create special conditions, including architectural planning, taking into account the views of local specialists³¹.

Testing centers must be provided with the following things: a contrasting color of the bottom and top of the stairs (stair steps, porch at the entrance, curbs and projections on the surrounding area should be highlighted in accordance with the requirements of the establishment for the visually impaired; solid handrails on both sides of staircases; corridors and surrounding area of the building equipped with orienting relief-contrast coating; visual guidance for stairs, corridors, on walls and doors.

To organize the comprehensive test procedure all the necessary conditions should be created and, above all, printing test form sheets in the required amount in A3 format (16–18 pt font) or scaling of the required number of test form sheets in A3 format (16–18 pt font) should be provided; magnifying lens should be used; the time of the exam has to be increased by one hour.

The need to provide additional time for foreign nationals with visual impairment at the comprehensive examination is due to the fact that visual continuous load should be no more than 30–45 minutes for all kinds of eye diseases, then needed a break is necessary to give some rest for the eyes and the body. In cases of severe eye diseases (glaucoma, cataract, tumor diseases, partial atrophy of the optic nerve, retinitis pigmentosa) the duration of the visual load is reduced individually depending on the disease and the ergonomic features of the eye. In addition, prolonged, intense visual work at a close range causes fatigue of the oculomotor system and may contribute to the progression of eye diseases, especially in bad hygienic conditions.

In general, the test runs according to the standard procedure developed by special requirements³². The establishment of optimal conditions for holding a comprehensive examination by persons with visual impairment is necessary to observe a number of hygienic requirements preventing eye fatigue. In this respect the light in the room and at the examinee's workplace is of great importance, namely: an adequate level of illumination, approved by the appropriate Russian standards (not less than 300 lux); uniform distribution of brightness in the field of view; no glare from the light and harsh shadows in sight. Daytime light must penetrate unhindered to the room, thus avoiding gloss painted surfaces, they should be opaque; with insufficient natural light it is necessary to use a special mixed lighting (general and individual). The texts, pictures, graphs, charts should have enough contrast with the background against which they are shown. The paper on which the tests are printed should not be glossy.

The development of the procedure of conducting the comprehensive examination is needed to ensure persons with disabilities equal rights with all applicants in obtaining the certificate. In this connection the test procedure consists of the following steps: 1) prior acquaintance with the tasks of the test to determine the strategy for its implementation; 2) the assimilation of a specific task conditions; 3) the fulfillment of this task and recording the results; 4) general inspection of results.

Let us analyze the challenges and possible solutions for the testee with visual impairment at each of these stages. As the test demonstrated, the visually impaired are faced with the inability to independently read the text on test standard forms at the first and second stages. In solving this problem, the following methods can be used: a) a foreign citizen with impairment of vision uses the assistant's help who reads the text to the testee; b) independent familiarization with the materials if they are presented in an accessible format (in the form of a record, bigger font size or electronic document). In all cases, a visually impaired testee spends more time to get acquainted with the tasks of the test than that with vision. However, independent reading of materials for the visually impaired person is more preferable because the testee will not spend time on noting task descriptions according to oral information provided by an assistant.

A promising form of a test in the future, in our opinion, can be a test run on a computer equipped with a screen reader, which represents the necessary information in the form of voice messages. In addition, in this embodiment, the visually impaired person can independently carry out almost all the work of registration of results that helps to avoid errors when resorting to an assistant's help. But, unfortunately, this option is not provided by regulations governing the conduct of comprehensive examination yet.

It should be mentioned that in all these ways and at all stages the testee with visual impairment may have difficulties in performing tasks the formulation of which contains illustrations in the form of graphic images (pictures, maps, etc.). That is why specific tests within a single program which do not include any graphics were designed for this group of persons.

At the third stage the testee does the job quite independently relying on his/her own knowledge and skills. There may be a problem of intermediate records (drafts) which may play a role in determining the test results for separate sub-tests and modules.

The results of the test tasks performance are presented both in formalized (multiple choice) and non-formalized (paraphrase) form.

The analysis of the test held in local test centers demonstrated that the visually impaired, compared with the sighted, spend more time at almost all stages of testing. Therefore, in order to create conditions conducive to compensate this inequality, it is necessary to add the time allotted to the testee for the test completion. The amount of extra time has been determined in the course of scientific and experimental research and practice. The analysis of existing experience has shown that there are cases where the impaired are fully fit into the standard time of the exam. But such people are rather exceptions. According to foreign experience, the time increases in one and a half or two times. The experience of Germany may also be taken into account where the some points are added to the testees' obtained results without increasing testing time.

The possibility of organizing a comprehensive exam for foreign citizens with musculoskeletal system disorders is determined by the characteristics of their psychophysical evolution and individual capabilities. According to I.Yu. Levchenko, O.G. Prikhodko, E.N. Kutepova and others, persons with musculoskeletal system disorders can be divided into three groups depending on the severity of musculoskeletal disorders and the degree of formedness of motor skills³³: those with severe impairments manifested with non-formedness of gait, gripping and holding objects; those with moderate degree of impairments of motor disorders with the possibility of independent movement; those with slight motor impairment.

It should be emphasized that there is no correspondence between the intensity of motor impairments and the degree of failure of other functions. For example, upon severe motor disabilities the intelligence can correspond to the norm. Movement disorders can be manifested in the defeat of the upper and lower limbs (disturbance of muscle tone, abnormal reflexes, the presence of violent movements, non-formedness of acts of equilibrium and coordination, fine motor skills deficiencies). For example, with the defeat of the right limb, a person uses his/her left hand as a master one.

The study revealed that individuals with mobility impairments have various violations of speech. Typical manifestations of speech disorders are various disorders of speech articulation. In some cases, individual sounds are not pronounced at all or are perversely pronounced.

Some people with MSDs have a variety of violent movements in the vocal apparatus, which are particularly evident in oral responses, and may cause an unnatural smile, grimace, involuntary opening of the mouth, tongue throwing forward. Sometimes these symptoms, combined with increased salivation, unintelligible speech, inappropriate facial expressions, violent laughter cause difficulties in assessing responses. Sometimes it is difficult to testees to immediately respond to a question, they need some time to prepare for a response. Another feature of the speech of persons with MSDs is the peculiarity of the lexical and grammatical aspects of speech. Their vocabulary is limited; there is insufficient understanding of the meanings of many words and concepts. These features must be considered when developing the content of the comprehensive exam.

Based on the findings of the study, we can say that in order to pass the comprehensive exam for people with musculoskeletal disorders it is necessary to create special conditions, including the architectural and planning ones³⁴.

To enable the testee with musculoskeletal system disorders to get to the territory of the testing center a ramp at the entrance to the building is to be installed. The ramp should be sufficiently sloping (10-12°) at a width not less than 90 cm. The necessary attributes of the ramp are a side barrier (with the height not less than 5 cm) and handrails (with the height of 50-90 cm), the length of which must exceed the length of the ramp by 30 cm on each side. The side barrier prevents sliding wheelchairs. If the architecture of the building does not allow building an appropriate ramp (for example, narrow staircase) thus, folding ramp can be made. In this case, the assistance is necessary. The doors of the building should be opened the other way round the ramp, otherwise the wheelchair may slide down. There should be handrails around the whole perimeter along the corridors to let a man with musculoskeletal disorder who walks poorly to hold them moving around the building. The width of the doorways should be at least 80-85 cm; otherwise the wheelchair will not pass through it.

At the comprehensive exam some features of the computer (for the MAC platform) can be used which should be configured to the examinee with severe motor and speech disorders: a decrease in the rate of movement of the cursor (if blurred vision, eye motility, fine motor skills); increasing the size of the cursor (upon blurred vision, eye motility, fine motor skills); Sticky Keys (with

severe impairment of motor skills); disable auto-repeat (with poor fine motor skills); display the virtual keyboard (with severe impairment of fine motor skills); reduction of the double-click speed (severe impairment of fine motor skills); an increase of the view area (with impairment of vision, tracking), taking into account the AUSS³⁵.

These functions can also be connected to the Windows platform as well.

To improve information input when filling out the test by examinees with mild motor disabilities plastic or metal plates can be used placed on top of a standard keyboard in order to prevent accidental keyboard actions, simultaneous pressing some buttons. In cases of severe disorders it is possible to use the alternative keyboard with fewer buttons and their increased size enabling to alleviate the choice and accuracy of movements or virtual keypads (the keypad is reproduced on the screen and can be controlled with a mouse or a Preview Technology).

In addition, the device designed to facilitate the manipulation of persons with movement disorders can be used: a trackball pointing device which causes a change in the position of the cursor movement on the screen; a joystick, a lever movement in various directions of which allows controlling the cursor on the screen; functions of system management with joystick can be different depending on the functional requirements of the user; touch screen that is touch-sensitive and performs all the functions of a mouse; particularly effective in the work with users having hand-eye coordination difficulties.

While holding the test with the use of special equipment, it is necessary to note that a person with severe movement disorders will work only with one hand and one or two fingers. The nature and strength of hyperkinetic disorders is necessary to be taken into consideration as well. If hyperkinetic disorders are significant, special equipment must be rigidly attached to the table, the possibility of fixing is provided with all models.

Among the simple technical means used to optimize the process of writing, a bigger pens and special linings to them can be used, which allow holding the handle and manipulating it with minimal effort, as well as extra heavy (with additional weight) pens that reduce tremor when writing.

In addition to the special equipment the presence of specialist assistants should be ensured, whose duties include rendering necessary assistance, including medical both to the examinees and to examiners to conduct a comprehensive exam, for example, to assist in fixing

the position of the body in the chair, to fix or adjust prostheses, etc.

One of the conditions for successful completion of a comprehensive examination is increasing the duration of the examinations for graduates with violation of the musculoskeletal system (mainly affecting the upper limbs) by 1.5 hours and for the rest by more than 1 hour. In addition, breaks for necessary medical procedures are given.

In exceptional cases, the examinee for a valid reason (for example, health problems) can leave the room without finishing the exam. In this case, the examiner should report about this situation to the head of the testing center. The head of the testing center should make an official note in no particular format with an explanation of what happened, and if possible to attach other documents confirming a valid reason (medical certificate or other documents submitted by other authorized persons) and inform the examiner that it is necessary to put down non-attendance in this examinee's answer sheets.

4. Conclusions

A content analysis of exam tasks on the History of Russia and the Fundamentals of the Legislation of the Russian Federation shows that the conduct of the test is designed not only to evaluate the knowledge obtained by foreign citizens, but also to encourage them to study courses, to help them master a historical and legal material with the use of the Russian language. The very structure of tests and the comprehension of their content play an important role in teaching, training, assisting to foreign citizens, who apply for a residence permit, to become full-fledged members of Russian society.

Visually impaired persons, compared with the sighted ones, and those with musculoskeletal disorders objectively spend more time at almost all stages of testing. Therefore, in order to create conditions conducive to compensate for this inequality, it is necessary to give to the testees some additional time allotted to complete the test and to provide specifically designed tasks. The amount of extra time is determined in the course of scientific and experimental research and practice. It is recommended to organize a non-automated verification of answer forms, if they are filled by persons with visual impairments and musculoskeletal disorders who have bad handwriting and to develop terms of reference for the production of stencils for filling tests by persons with visual impairment and musculoskeletal disorders.

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