

Defectology

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Defectology

Primary Disciplinary Field(s): Psychology, Education, Medicine, Social Work

1. Core Definition

Defectology stands as a specialized branch within the broader field of Russian **psychology**, uniquely dedicated to the comprehensive study of children grappling with various forms of disabilities. This encompasses both **physical impairments**, which affect mobility, sensory perception, or bodily functions, and **mental disabilities**, primarily referring to intellectual disabilities. The scope of its inquiry is intentionally broad, addressing conditions such as significant **hearing impairment**, **visual impairment**, and a spectrum of other developmental challenges that impact a child's ability to learn, interact, and develop typically. At its heart, Defectology seeks not merely to categorize these conditions but to deeply understand the developmental pathways, specific challenges, and unique strengths inherent in these young individuals, forming the foundational knowledge base for specialized intervention strategies.

2. Etymology and Historical Development

The term "Defectology" itself carries historical weight, first gaining prominence within Russian academic and scientific discourse. Its formal recognition is underscored by its inclusion in authoritative texts such as *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, published in **1979**, which cemented its status as a distinct and recognized scientific discipline within the Soviet Union. However, the genesis of this field predates its Soviet codification, with evidence suggesting its conceptual framework and initial methodologies were introduced into Russia from **Germany** as early as **1912**. This cross-cultural transfer highlights an early international intellectual exchange concerning the understanding and treatment of developmental differences. This historical trajectory illustrates how the field evolved from initial foreign influences into a uniquely Russian and later Soviet-specific academic discipline, tailored to its own social, educational, and psychological contexts, ultimately becoming a cornerstone of their approach to special education and rehabilitative sciences.

3. Key Characteristics

A defining characteristic of Defectology is its inherently **integrated and multidisciplinary approach**. It operates not in isolation but as a confluence of several critical academic and practical disciplines, acknowledging that the challenges faced by children with disabilities are multifaceted and require a holistic response. Specifically, it draws heavily upon principles and methodologies from **psychology**, to understand cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development; **education**, to devise effective pedagogical strategies and curricula; **medicine**, to address the biological and physiological underpinnings of disabilities and their treatment; and **social work**, to consider the

environmental, familial, and societal factors influencing a child's development and integration. This interdisciplinary framework is not merely theoretical; it is applied in its core objective: to meticulously investigate the specific **characteristics** of young individuals with disabilities. This investigation is geared towards developing and implementing practical **training methods**. The overarching goal of these methods is either to **correct** developmental deviations where possible or, more commonly, to **lessen the gravity** and impact of their respective conditions, thereby enhancing the child's functional abilities and quality of life.

4. Significance and Impact

Defectology played a significant and foundational role in shaping the understanding and systematic approach to children with disabilities within the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence. By establishing a dedicated scientific branch focused on this population, it provided a structured framework for research, diagnosis, intervention, and educational provision. Its emphasis on understanding the specific characteristics of individuals, rather than merely labeling them, laid the groundwork for individualized support strategies. The integration of multiple disciplines ensured that interventions were comprehensive, addressing psychological, educational, medical, and social dimensions. This holistic view aimed to maximize the developmental potential of each child, fostering greater inclusion and participation within society, albeit within the specific ideological and practical constraints of the Soviet system. Its enduring legacy lies in its pioneering efforts to formalize the study of special needs and its contribution to the development of specialized pedagogical and therapeutic practices.

5. Debates and Criticisms

While the provided source content succinctly defines Defectology and outlines its scope and characteristics, it does not explicitly detail any internal debates or external criticisms directed at the field. The text primarily focuses on presenting Defectology as an established and integrated branch of Russian psychology, concerned with a specific area of study and intervention. Therefore, based strictly on the provided material, a comprehensive discussion of criticisms or ongoing academic debates within or about Defectology cannot be constructed. This absence suggests that the primary purpose of the source text is descriptive rather than critical or analytical of the field's controversies. Any attempt to introduce criticisms without external, authoritative sources would diverge from the strict instruction to ensure content is "factually aligned with the original" and to avoid adding information not present in the source.

Further Reading

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1979)