STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TO MEET DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS

ESTRATÉGIAS E MELHORES PRÁTICAS PARA PROMOVER UMA EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA QUE RESPONDA ÀS DIVERSAS NECESSIDADES DE APRENDIZAGEM

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**Abstract**

The article deals with an important aspect of implementing inclusive education strategies. The purpose of the article is to highlight the issue of implementing inclusive education in the modern educational environment. The authors reveal the main aspects and benefits of inclusive education for persons with special needs. One of the key topics of the article is the consideration of strategies aimed at rethinking the attitude of society and the state to this problem. Today, society recognises the equal rights of person with special needs and provides them with equal opportunities in all areas of life, including education. The authors analyse the essence of inclusive education, which is the creation of conditions for the education and upbringing of children with special needs in joint groups. An important aspect of inclusive education is an individual approach to each child, regardless of their physiological, mental, social or other characteristics. Inclusive education creates an opportunity for a child to become an equal member of society and reduces the risks of isolation and segregation. Further research should be aimed at finding optimal strategies for implementing inclusive education to meet the tension between the needs of integration of persons with disabilities and the demand of society for quality education.

**Keywords**: inclusive education, inclusion, person with special needs, educational process, universal design for learning, educational equity, diversity in education, socialisation.

**Introduction**

The relevance of the article is stipulated by the need for comprehensive integration of persons with special needs into the social environment through the principle of inclusion. Inclusion is a long-term strategy that should not be considered in isolation, but as a transdisciplinary approach to the organisation of
educational activities within the entire education system. Inclusion affects all actors in the educational process, including children with disabilities and their parents, students with normal development and their families, teachers and other professionals in the educational space, administration, and additional education structures.

The inclusive approach to education is a global trend that is causing significant changes in education systems, educational environments and relationships between participants in the educational process (United Nations (UN), 1989). According to UNESCO’s 2020 and 2021 reports, inclusive education promotes practices that aim to educate all children together, including those with different types of disabilities and disabilities (DCD) (UNESCO, 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

Implementation of this strategy requires establishing vertical structures within the educational system, as well as promoting the development of horizontal structures. This will allow for the inclusion of children with disabilities, including those with severe disabilities, who were previously considered uneducable. Inclusion starts with early intervention and covers a wide range of social services throughout the educational process. Inclusion in education is only a precondition for inclusion in society. The effectiveness of inclusion depends on the effectiveness of cooperation between educational organisations and social centres.

It is important to note that the introduction of inclusion in the education system should not lead to the reduction or elimination of inclusive education as such. Inclusive education is one of the options for providing educational services to a child with a disability. All children with special needs independence, well-being and participation in society, while each child needs an accessible and developmentally appropriate model of education. The effectiveness of educational inclusion depends on the suitability of the shared learning environment for the child concerned, with the provision of social and life skills being of paramount importance.

It should be noted that the most important condition for the introduction of inclusive education is the transition to variable forms of organising the educational process (primarily in inclusive schools):
- individual approach and individual educational programme for person with special needs;
- ensuring the implementation of a inclusive educational programme for person with special needs;
- ensuring certification inclusive educational environments in educational institutions that implement inclusive programmes;
- ensuring the implementation of a inclusive educational programme for person with special needs.
- creation of opportunities for further education for persons with special needs at the vocational level and higher;
- willingness of educational institutions to provide services to persons with special needs in higher education;
- ensuring future professional integration and jobs for people with special needs after completing their studies.

The end result of inclusive education, its qualitative effectiveness, depends on many variables, including the state’s social policy, the maturity of society, and the awareness of the need to introduce technical innovations to optimise the full (equal) integration of persons with disabilities into the system of modern social relations and processes, with guaranteed opportunities for their full participation. Awareness of the need for and importance of educational inclusion is one of the aspects of society's inclusion, its harmonious development, and the humanisation of social relations.

The focus of this article is to highlight and understand the main strategies for implementing inclusive education. Specifically, the study aims to analyse the problem of the discrepancy between the need to ensure a high level of educational services in line with the needs of society and the lack of sufficient research that would reveal the specifics of implementing inclusive education in the context of individual educational trajectories that would ensure a balance between inclusion and the demand of society.

The purpose of the study is to comprehensively examine the implementation and functioning of various inclusive education strategies and analyse the
contradictions that arise in the context of a heterogeneous educational environment.

**Literature review**

The study of previous research is of great importance for assessing the degree of coverage of the issue under study in industry-specific scientific publications. This allows us to identify the main trends and methodological approaches, which helps to avoid duplication of work and direct the research approach to fill gaps and address those aspects of particular interest. Previous research provides context and background knowledge that helps to better understand and analyse the topic of inclusive education for preschool children.

The article by Lindner, Schwab, Emara & Avramidis (2023) examines the specifics of implementing inclusive education strategies in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. According to the researchers, the main goal of inclusive education is to integrate children with special needs into the environment of healthy peers. For children with behavioural problems, special programmes are implemented to prevent expulsion from school or temporary placement in inclusive educational institutions that provide specialised behavioural correction programmes. After that, the child returns to the general education school.

Mendoza & Heymann (2024) examine the features of inclusive education in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland. According to the authors, in these countries, inclusive education successfully supports all children at risk. The majority of children with special needs are included in the learning process in public secondary schools. In addition, the author proposed conditions to reduce the risks of inclusive education and discredit inclusive education. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that those involved in the implementation of inclusive processes have the necessary inclusive pedagogical, psychological and methodological competence. In addition, it is necessary to ensure certification of the inclusive educational environment in educational institutions implementing inclusive programmes.
Almalky & Alwahbi (2023) analyse inclusion in Saudi Arabia in their article. The literature on inclusive education provides a clear set of practices that teachers should implement to achieve successful inclusive education. This study sought to contribute to the development of inclusive education in Saudi Arabia by conducting an initial investigation of the extent to which teachers have the knowledge and skills to use these practices. The results of the study highlight the importance of incorporating the concept of inclusion into teacher education programmes and offer several practical implications and directions for future research.

The article by Abdulatif, Qizi, & Qizi (2023) provides information on the goals and objectives of inclusive education. It also outlines the legal basis for inclusive education and the achievements in the educational process based on this education. The results of the article provide the reader with a number of questions that will be relevant in the coming years and may be of interest to future researchers.

Normamatovna, H. N. (2023) highlights the issues of improving the content of inclusive education, innovative practices and the introduction of technology are urgent. According to the author, the problems of inclusive education, upbringing and life of children with special needs should be solved through the introduction of inclusion.

Existing research in the field of inclusive education has a number of unexplored aspects and gaps that need to be further updated. One of these gaps is the limited number of studies that examine the impact of different forms of inclusive education on the psychosocial development of preschoolers with special needs and individual capabilities. Another insufficiently covered aspect is the lack of research on effective methods of preparing teachers to work in inclusive preschool classes and developing their competencies in this context. It is extremely important to pay attention to the pedagogical training and practical experience of teachers involved in the implementation of the principles of inclusive education.

The issue of creating opportunities for further education for persons with special needs at the vocational and higher education level should be investigated. Also, it is necessary to pay attention to the readiness of educational institutions to provide services to persons with special needs in higher education and to ensure
future professional integration and jobs for persons with special needs after completion of studies.

Methodology

The paper uses general scientific methods for theoretical research, which are widely used in the humanities and social sciences. The analysis of documents and scientific papers related to the research topic allowed us to collect and systematise information to highlight the specifics of implementing inclusive education strategies. This approach served as the basis for the results and conclusions presented in this paper.

The analysis of previous studies and the legal framework contributed to the consideration of different approaches and methods related to inclusive education. This allowed us to explore a number of issues, including the social development of inclusive classes, the need for didactic and methodological support for this category of students, and to explore potential ways and strategies for integrating inclusion into the educational environment.

Results

Inclusive education - is an organisation of the educational process in which all children, regardless of their physical, mental, intellectual, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and other characteristics, are included in the general education system and study at the place of residence together with their peers who do not have disabilities in the same general education institutions (Lazareva, Myroshnychenko, Sanakuiev & Gontarenko, 2023, p. 21). Table 1 shows the main features of the inclusive educational model.
Table 1 – Features of the inclusive learning model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features of inclusion implementation</th>
<th>Description.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personalised approach to learning</td>
<td>Providing training tailored to the individual needs and abilities of each student.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating an inclusive environment</td>
<td>Creating a physical, social and psychological atmosphere that promotes active participation of all students in the learning process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support for individual student needs</td>
<td>Providing the necessary resources, services and support for students with different educational needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooperation between teachers, parents and professionals</td>
<td>Ensuring effective communication and cooperation between all participants in the learning process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing a culture of acceptance and diversity</td>
<td>Creating a tolerant and open environment where every student feels accepted and respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuum of support for students with special needs</td>
<td>Providing support and adaptation of the learning environment to ensure the success of all students at different stages of learning.</td>
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Source: Created by the authors, based on Graham (2020)

The concept of inclusive education is based on the postulate that education is a fundamental human right and that it creates the basis for a more just society. Everyone has the right to education. Everyone, regardless of their individual qualities and health problems (Hurzhyi, Popliuiko, Vasylyuk-Zaitseva & Kobets, 2023, p. 19).

Nowadays, the terms “integrated learning”, “inclusive learning”, and “cooperative learning” are often used interchangeably. However, they are not equivalent. Each of them has its own meaning, and they are in a relationship of co-subordination with each other. The most general term is 'cooperative learning', which includes the other two. After all, a situation of joint learning is achieved not only when a school (class) brings together pupils who differ in their psychophysical, speech, sensory, intellectual capabilities (and even in a regular classroom, we can hardly speak of an absolutely homogeneous composition of children), but also when, under certain socio-cultural conditions, children who differ in language, nationality,
Race, religion, gender, class, age or other characteristics are brought together in the educational process in one school (class).

Thus, teaching children with psychophysical disabilities together with children with normative development is one of the many options for possible coeducation (Iastremska, Tryfonova, Mantaliuk & Baranets, 2023, p. 120).

Historically and semantically, integrated learning is more related to the problem of joint education of children with disabilities and regular children. Here we can talk about a variety of organisational options for joint learning:
- a separate (specialised) group in a mass inclusive educational institution (PEI) or a separate (specialised) class in a mass general education school where only children with disabilities (of the same nosological group, for example, children with hearing impairments) study;
- special (correctional) educational institutions (SECI), where regular children study (are brought up) together with children with SEN. In this case, the educational programmes for children with SEN are of a reduced nature and are implemented in extended terms (i.e., they are based on adapted educational programmes - levels 2 and 3) (Lysetskyi, Kobyletskyi, Shchybovyk, Zubova & Litvin, 2024, p. 51).

In the modern sense, inclusive education is understood as the organisation of integrated learning (thus, inclusive education is a narrower concept), in which children with disabilities, individually or in a small group, are directly involved in the educational process together with regular children on equal terms of participation. For this purpose, the learning process must be transformed in such a way as to simultaneously meet the educational needs of each participant, but most importantly, to provide them with quality knowledge, skills and abilities.

Important elements of this transformation include teaching students with disabilities according to adapted educational programmes developed for them and creating an inclusive educational environment in an inclusive classroom. For regular students, educational integration or inclusion means the freedom to choose between an inclusive and a regular classroom, with the quality and pace of learning provided for by the educational standard (Yukhymenko, Borysova, Bazyl, Hubal & Barkar, 2024, p. 186).
In the process of planning inclusive education, it is necessary not only to define its general concept, but also to draw up a realistic action plan. To date, four main strategies for working with people with disabilities have been developed as part of international experience in organising an inclusive education management system. These strategies include:

1. Widening participation. The idea of this area is based on the principle of expanding access to the educational environment. As part of the practical experience of managing inclusive education, this model has become widespread in European countries, especially in the UK. This model is implemented by improving financial incentives for educational institutions and organising strategic planning within them.

2. Mainstreaming. This strategy reflects the key principle of inclusive education, which is designed to create an environment in educational institutions that allows people with disabilities not only to receive education in a public environment, but also to spend leisure time with their physically healthy peers.

3. Integration. The Integration strategy is also widely used in European schools, where conditions are created for the direct inclusion of students with disabilities in the educational process (Diachenko, Kalishchuk, Zhylin, Kyyko & Volkova, 2022).

4. Inclusion. This strategy is now widespread in the US education system, where the idea of inclusive education has reached the most serious scale of development. Thanks to the implementation of this strategy in the US educational system, the process of creating new educational institutions and updating former schools and universities to meet the needs of students with disabilities has begun. During this process, completely new technologies were used, which were aimed at creating optimal and comfortable conditions for the implementation of educational programmes, which also began to be optimised in accordance with the new pedagogical task (Politova, Putovoichenko, Hrechanyk, Yaroshchuk & Nenko, 2022, p. 390).

At present, most schools and universities are carrying out large-scale work aimed at training not only the teaching staff, but also students and parents who do not have special needs. The educational environment and society should work
within the framework of a single common strategy - the creation of a single space in which children and adults, regardless of their developmental characteristics, could feel like full-fledged members of society with equal access to all the information and technical opportunities provided by the educational system today (Shostak, Nikolenko, Sereda, Pushkarova & Potapiuk, 2023, p. 290).

In order to ensure that the special needs of persons with disabilities are taken into account in all areas of activity at the European Union level, the European Strategy on Disability for the period 2010-2020 was adopted in November 2010. The main principle underlying the development of this strategy was the principle of renewed commitment to the slogan “Europe without Barriers”. The key objectives of this strategy include:

1. Enabling people with disabilities to fully exercise their rights, including the right to secondary and higher education.
2. Development of social infrastructure in European cities that would be optimised for use by people with disabilities.

As a result, the inclusive education system has less experience with inclusion and some principles are not in line with reality. One of the biggest difficulties is that this type of educational service is provided mostly in large cities, while in district centres or villages children with disabilities are often outside the education system. However, this problem has recently begun to be addressed. The number of schools and pre-school educational institutions with inclusive groups or classes is increasing (Byrko et al., 2022, p.120).

It is necessary to identify the main areas of assistance to civil society organisations in implementing inclusion:

- ensuring equal and non-discriminatory opportunities for education for children and young people with disabilities and their inclusion in public life;
- introducing innovative approaches to the activities of local authorities, which will allow the interests of children and young people with disabilities to be taken into account in urban policy;
- organising the process of gradual formation of an accessible urban environment based on the principles of universal design;
- formation of a tolerant attitude towards people with special needs in society (Dzhhym, Saienko, Pozdniakova, Zhadlenko & Kondratenko, 2023, p. 48).

Based on the above, the following conclusions can be drawn: inclusive education should not displace traditional forms of effective assistance to children with disabilities used in inclusive educational institutions. Thus, inclusive education should not oppose, but promote the interaction of two educational systems - general and special. Only in their interconnection and enrichment will a child with disabilities gain useful social experience, find his or her place in society and feel like an equal member of society.

Discussion

According to Graham (2020), the problem of introducing a person with special needs into the group of children in a general education school is still important. As our research shows, attitudes towards children with special needs have changed for the better, so in most cases they find common ground with all boys and girls without any difficulty. If students do not accept a child with a disability, according to Immordino-Yang, Darling-Hammond & Krone (2019), qualified educational staff can help to find out the reason for this behaviour and prevent it.

According to Resvani, Eleftherakis, Kalerante & Kaspiri (2020), the main problems of inclusive education include a shortage of qualified personnel, as well as insufficient training of psychologists, educators, speech and language pathologists, tutors and social workers. In our opinion, one of the most important factors in the successful adaptation of a child with disabilities in an educational setting is the competent and responsible attitude of the child’s teachers, who help him or her to “blend in” smoothly. After all, only by knowing the mental and physical characteristics of the student can one adequately cope with the task.

The study by Marie & Bailey (2023) mentions the lack of technical equipment that a child with disabilities needs to learn about the environment on an equal footing with their peers. To a greater extent, this is expressed in the physical inaccessibility of the environment, namely: lack of ramps and lifts at home and at
school, inaccessibility of transport between home and school, lack of sound traffic lights at the crossing on the way to school, etc. These problems are often caused by insufficient financial support.

The theoretical significance of the study is to expand the understanding of inclusive education and strategies for its implementation. It contributes to a deeper study of the essence of inclusion and consideration of pedagogical principles and practical aspects of its functioning. This allows teachers to better understand the requirements of inclusive education and improve their skills in working with children with special needs.

The practical significance is that the results of the study can be used to improve pedagogical practice in inclusive educational institutions. The results of the study provide teachers, administrators and parents with tools and approaches to create an inclusive learning environment in which every child can develop their potential regardless of their inclusive educational needs.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the number and sources used for the analysis are not exhaustive. Secondly, some aspects of inclusive education may remain under-researched due to the lack of access to a wide range of scientific literature and practical examples. In addition, the specific circumstances and requirements of different countries or regions may require separate studies to better understand the nuances of inclusion in these contexts.

Conclusions

Today, the problem of the strategy for implementing inclusion is one of the most acute and controversial issues in education. This education is the joint teaching and upbringing of children with disabilities and children without such disabilities. The international community defines inclusive education as the most effective and humane, contributing to the secondary socialisation of children with disabilities and the development of moral and ethical qualities of children without such disabilities. Its concepts and main strategies are based on the idea of children’s equal right to access to education.
The process of inclusive education involves the integration of children with psychophysical disabilities into classes of children without such disabilities, rather than the formation of specialised classes in educational institutions. The inclusion of person with special needs in the educational process in general education schools at the place of residence is a relatively new approach for Ukrainian education. This approach is terminologically related to the process called inclusion in education, and, accordingly, education in line with this approach is inclusive education.

Providing high-quality educational services to children with special needs is essential for their development and integration into society. Regardless of their physical, mental or emotional characteristics, every child has the right to unrestricted access to education. Above all, quality education allows children with special needs to expand their skills and potential. This gives them the opportunity to solve complex problems in the future, work in different professions and make a significant contribution to society. Education provides an opportunity to integrate into society. It enables children to learn how to communicate, work together and interact with others, which increases their sense of self-worth and identity. Children with special needs are less stigmatised in this way. When they receive sufficient support and are given the opportunity to learn together with other children, it helps to change their perceptions of their own capabilities.

Future research could focus on finding the most effective strategies for inclusive education to meet the widest possible range of needs of people with disabilities.

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