

## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: CHALLENGES, CONDITIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

### *EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA NA UCRÂNIA: DESAFIOS, CONDIÇÕES E ESTRATÉGIAS DE IMPLEMENTAÇÃO*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Since 2017, Ukraine has intensified the processes of reforming and developing inclusive education and creating a learning environment that meets European standards in all educational institutions. At the same time, some challenges and barriers arise while implementing the strategy and conceptual framework of inclusion, which require in-depth study and argumentation. The article aims to study the challenges, conditions, and strategies for implementing inclusive education in Ukraine. The research methodology is based on a legal analysis of international and national legislative acts that contain legal, organizational, financial, personnel, and other conditions for the implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine. The results of a survey of 304 educators at the Inclusive Resource Center of Ternopil National Pedagogical University, named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk, were used to understand the prospects for implementing inclusion in Ukraine. The results prove that Ukraine has prerequisites for the development of inclusive education. The authors have identified the following key conditions that are formed for implementing a multidisciplinary model of inclusion: legal, strategic, financial, organizational, institutional, personnel, social, and sanitary and hygienic conditions for inclusive education. The international and national legal framework regulates a wide range of issues related to the organization and implementation of inclusion in the educational environment of all types of educational institutions. However, some of them, especially those associated with the provision of correctional and rehabilitation services, require amendments and approval. For Ukraine, information, mental, institutional, and physical barriers to the development of inclusive education are typical.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, Strategies for inclusive education, Conditions for implementing inclusion, Attitudes towards inclusion, Accessibility of education.

### **RESUMO**

Desde 2017, a Ucrânia intensificou os processos de reforma e desenvolvimento da educação inclusiva e de criação de um ambiente de aprendizagem que cumpra os padrões europeus em todas as instituições de ensino. Ao mesmo tempo, surgem alguns desafios e barreiras durante a implementação da estratégia e do quadro conceptual de inclusão, que requerem estudo e argumentação aprofundados. O artigo visa estudar os desafios, condições e estratégias para a implementação da educação inclusiva na Ucrânia. A metodologia de investigação baseia-se numa análise jurídica de atos legislativos internacionais e nacionais que contêm condições jurídicas, organizacionais, financeiras, de pessoal e outras condições para a implementação da educação inclusiva na Ucrânia. Os resultados de um inquérito a 304 educadores do Centro de Recursos Inclusivos da Universidade Pedagógica Nacional de Ternopil, em homenagem a Volodymyr Hnatiuk, foram utilizados para compreender as perspectivas de implementação da inclusão na Ucrânia. Os resultados provam que a Ucrânia tem pré-requisitos para o desenvolvimento da educação inclusiva. Os autores identificaram as seguintes condições-chave que são formadas para a implementação de um modelo multidisciplinar de inclusão: condições legais, estratégicas, financeiras, organizacionais, institucionais, de pessoal, sociais e sanitárias e higiénicas para a educação inclusiva. O quadro jurídico internacional e nacional regula uma vasta gama de questões relacionadas com a organização e implementação da inclusão no ambiente educativo de todos os tipos de instituições educativas. No entanto, alguns deles, especialmente aqueles associados à prestação de serviços correcionais e de reabilitação, requerem alterações e aprovação. Para a Ucrânia, as barreiras informacionais, mentais, institucionais e físicas ao desenvolvimento da educação inclusiva são típicas.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação inclusiva, Estratégias para a educação inclusiva, Condições para implementar a inclusão, Atitudes face à inclusão, Acessibilidade à educação.

## Introduction

The fundamental right of every person to inclusive education is enshrined at the international level. It is based on the principles of social justice, child-centeredness, gender equality, egalitarianism, and non-discriminatory education (Shulha, 2019). This is related to the need to address the issue of social inequality in various societies. For many population segments, the right to education depends on its inclusiveness (Calderón-Almendros, I. & Echeita-Sarrionandia, 2022). In an inclusive society, an access to educational services is ensured for all categories of people, regardless of socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, race, abilities, religion, immigration status, and socio-economic status) (Lutfiyya & Bartlett, 2020). Despite established international legal standards promoting inclusivity in education, several nations encounter difficulties and obstacles in ensuring complete educational access for all students' demographics.

The success of implementing inclusive education strategies depends on the economic, social, and political conditions in a specific country (Stepaniuk, 2019; Calderón-Almendros & Echeita-Sarrionandia, 2022). It is crucial to understand the key challenges that exist in the country for the development of opportunities for students with special educational needs to create the necessary conditions for an inclusive education system and its reform (Stepaniuk, 2019). The creation of an inclusive learning system involves extensive reforms at the national, regional, and local levels (Schwab, 2020). The implementation of inclusive education in the school system requires changes in the working conditions of all professionals. It involves reconsidering the duties and obligations of both general education instructors and special education experts. Pedagogical training in inclusive environments must be revamped to equip specialists for the challenges of a changing workplace (Werning & Hummel, 2020). The approaches to establishing an inclusive educational atmosphere in advanced nations require a phased shift towards guaranteeing the availability of educational services for individuals with disabilities.

The article aimed to study the challenges, conditions, and strategies for implementing inclusive education in Ukraine.

## Literature review

### *The essence of inclusion and inclusive education*

Inclusion is defined as an approach to ensuring equality in society and integrating people with developmental disabilities into social activities. Inclusion involves creating conditions to accommodate the needs and individuality of each person, expanding access and opportunities for various social strata. Educational inclusion entails forming conditions in the learning environment where different students learn, develop, and communicate together, regardless of their developmental level and abilities (Udych, 2023a, p. 305).

Inclusive education ensures the ability of all students, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, origin, abilities, or sexual orientation, to attend local public schools and be in classes with peers of the same age (Sider, 2020). It is an innovative teaching model that provides equal access to quality educational services for all students regardless of the characteristics of their psychophysical development (Udych, 2023b, p. 85).

An environmental approach is used to implement inclusive education. It involves implementing general pedagogical, inclusive, and specific principles of including students in the educational process regardless of their specifics (Udych, 2023c). Among the inclusive principles, the following are highlighted:

- 1) Accessibility of education regardless of psychophysical disorders or student status.
- 2) Consideration and recognition of students' needs.
- 3) Organization of learning through a team approach and involvement of specialists from various fields (social workers, medical professionals, rehabilitation specialists, speech therapists).
- 4) Parents are considered equal partners in inclusion.

5) Providing information, consultations, and educational tools for students considering their sensory capabilities.

6) Additional rehabilitation assistance.

7) Utilization of cultural objects in teaching.

8) Meaningful orderliness (Udych, 2023b, p. 89).

Let us note that the team approach should consider interpersonal compatibility and collaboration among members of the psychological and pedagogical support team working with students with special educational needs (SEN) (Udych, 2023d). The key principles of effective collaboration among team members and their interpersonal compatibility include mutual support, interaction, focus on results, trust, respect, flexibility, equality, shared responsibility, professional competence, and emotional resilience (Udych, 2023d). Inclusive education highlights the importance of the "inclusive competence of the teacher." It involves their psycho-pedagogical, corrective, and rehabilitation readiness (worldview-theoretical preparation). It also includes the ability (motivation formation and practical experience availability) to organize an inclusive environment in a classroom where students with special needs study (Udych, 2023e). The competency theory approach focuses on identifying and acquiring specific competencies by educators working in the inclusive education system (Werning & Hummel, 2020).

The experience of Italy shows that for the effective implementation of inclusive education, it is crucial to develop a theoretical structure of pedagogical and educational practice and to transform the concept of inclusion. It is essential to transition from an individualized medical model to a biopsychosocial model, involving all stakeholders in this process. Continuous professional development of educators is also crucial. It influences a shift in views and perceptions of inclusion and the promotion of inclusive practices. In the context of professional development, it is necessary to review professional competencies (pedagogical knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills) to provide the opportunity to use effective teaching methods and strategies that contribute to inclusion (Aiello & Pace, 2020). Horishna et al. (2020) argue that in Ukraine, the implementation of an inclusive

approach in education is oriented toward developing a multi-profile model. It foresees a reduction in the number of particular educational institutions and an increase in inclusive classes in educational institutions. This approach and model involve the full or partial deinstitutionalization of educational institutions and the integration of students into general education schools (Shulha, 2021).

The implementation of inclusion principles in the environment of educational institutions involves conducting an audit and drawing up a development strategy (Udych, 2023b, p. 89). For the successful implementation of the inclusive education concept, it is essential to provide sufficient funding, education, and training for teachers, as well as provide them with the necessary tools and resources (Sider, 2020). As mentioned earlier, it is also essential to introduce a team approach to the implementation of inclusive education and to involve various specialists in the processes of integrating pupils and students into educational institutions (Shulha, 2021).

Inclusive education and teaching of children with SEN should be based on a long-term strategy. It is considered as a systematic approach to the organization of the general education system in all areas in general (Bilavych et al., 2022).

### ***Challenges and obstacles for implementing inclusive education***

The growing number of students with SEN in regular classes is evidence of the development of inclusive education in Europe. At the same time, the share of students with SEN in segregated schools (in most European countries) is decreasing (Schwab, 2020). Thus, in different national educational systems of European countries, the level of inclusive education coverage is 97% or more (Table 1). In Ukraine, there are more than 1 million children with SEN. Only 10% of them study in inclusive classes, while the rest do not have access to general education schools (Oliynyk, 2020). According to Bilavych et al. (2022), in 2017-2022, the development of inclusive education in Ukraine is marked by a more than 6-fold increase in the number of students with SEN and a 7-fold increase in the number of inclusive classes in general education schools. Dichek (2021) asserts that the implementation of



inclusive education signifies Ukraine's humanitarian policy modernization, aiming to enhance the humane aspects of education.

Table 1 – The enrolment rate in inclusive education (%), 2019/2020

Country	ISCED 02 Total	ISCED 1 Total	ISCED 2 Total	ISCED 3 Total
Belgium (Fl)	99.12	94.54	87.55	98.83
Bulgaria	99.59	99.64	99.45	99.33
Cyprus	99.26	98.41	99.32	99.41
Denmark	100.00	95.12	92.18	100.00
Estonia	97.57	95.17	93.65	99.82
Finland	NC	94.92	92.96	NC
France	99.11	97.89	96.14	99.46
Germany	NC	96.97	96.85	99.95
Greece	99.42	99.23	98.16	99.45
Hungary	99.43	97.56	97.43	98.23
Iceland	85.68	98.95	98.12	NC
Italy	99.98	99.89	99.88	94.99
Latvia	96.27	96.53	95.56	99.82
Lithuania	98.17	98.62	98.43	98.42
Luxembourg	99.25	99.00	98.88	99.34
Malta	100.00	99.76	100.00	99.56
Netherlands	98.75	97.56	95.13	100.00
Norway	NC	99.35	98.38	NC
Poland	99.33	98.52	97.44	98.60
Serbia	NC	99.26	99.17	98.99
Slovenia	99.83	97.51	98.29	99.70
Spain	99.84	99.24	99.22	100.00
Sweden	100.00	93.30	90.87	NC
Switzerland	98.82	96.83	95.78	100.00
UK (ENG)	99.61	98.68	97.69	97.00
UK (NIR)	98.79	97.53	96.98	97.26
UK (SCT)	NC	98.42	97.48	98.34
UK (WLS)	NC	NC	NC	NC
Total average (no. of countries)	<b>99.40</b> <b>(22)</b>	<b>98.07</b> <b>(27)</b>	<b>97.13</b> <b>(27)</b>	<b>98.49</b> <b>(23)</b>

Source: European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (2022).

Despite significant progress towards inclusive education in the European Union, the practical results of its implementation in most countries remain limited. There are significant differences in efforts to implement inclusive education between countries and unique challenges specific to each country. For example, in

different countries, the decision to place a child with SEN in a special or inclusive school is made by different stakeholders. In some countries, this decision is made by parents. In others, specialists choose the most appropriate school for a student with SEN. Another important issue and challenge is the availability of resources to implement inclusive education (Schwab, 2020).

The most common challenges and issues in the development of inclusive societies include:

- 1) marginalization of indigenous languages;
- 2) denial of fundamental human rights to health care and education to migrants without documents
- 3) differences in providing in granting inclusive educational opportunities for people with disabilities. (Lutfiyya & Bartlett, 2020).

In Eastern Europe and Ukraine, there are specific barriers to the implementation of inclusive education. Table 2 summarizes the main barriers to inclusion according to the most common criteria: data, assessment and analysis, social attitudes and values of diversity and difference, concept and language, school organization, teacher practice, networks and support, access and accommodation, policy and governance, responsibilities, and the inclusive education system.



Table 2 – Obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine

Category	Obstacles
Barriers measurement, Data, and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of statistical data on the population of children with disabilities</li> </ul>
Societal attitudes and valuations of diversity and difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stereotyped concept of people with disabilities</li> <li>• Conflict between safe 'old' and unknown 'new' and a feeling of powerlessness</li> </ul>
Concept and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Misunderstanding of terms 'inclusion' and 'integration'</li> </ul>
Organization of schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special segregated schools</li> </ul>
Practices of teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of teacher training</li> <li>• Forcing teachers to pursue training on inclusion to secure employment</li> </ul>
Networks and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low number of parent associations</li> <li>• No opportunities for experience exchange among parents and teachers</li> </ul>
Access and accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of resources in schools</li> </ul>
Policy and Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of governmental policies</li> <li>• Poverty</li> </ul>
Responsibilities and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welfare state's role in creating chances for people with disabilities</li> </ul>

Source: Stepaniuk (2019).

The lack of data on the number of youngsters experiencing special educational requirements and disabilities across countries creates a problem related to the accurate representation of the inclusion status of such groups of children (Kaniok & Brągiel, 2013). Stereotypical perceptions of people experiencing disabilities contribute to the presence of mental barriers in implementing inclusion. They lead to a negative attitude towards marginalized segments of the population. This attitude is particularly evident in post-Soviet countries (Peng, 2012). In Eastern European societies, people experiencing disabilities are perceived and treated differently depending on the type of disability (Pančocha & Slepíčková, 2012).

Among the barriers to inclusive education is the conflict between different inclusion practices: actively used, new, and unfamiliar ones (Kalinnikova Magnusson, 2016). For example, educators were willing to teach students with physical disabilities in regular classrooms but expressed concerns about teaching

students with emotional and behavioral disorders more than those with physical disabilities in traditional classrooms (Čagran & Schmidt, 2011). The challenge of inclusive development lies in teachers facing an increasing level of heterogeneity among groups of students with various educational needs and capabilities in the classroom (Ghergut, 2010).

In practice, various stakeholders (policymakers, educators, and parents of kids and adolescents with and without disabilities) misunderstand the concepts of "integration" and "inclusion" (Loreman et al., 2016; Peng, 2012). As a result, communication problems arise, leading to the substitution of the idea of inclusion with the idea of integration. The concept of integration focuses on removing physical barriers, providing necessary learning resources, and equipping students with disabilities (Kaniok & Brągiel, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to ensure professional pedagogical training for teachers and inform other stakeholders about inclusive education.

It is also vital to provide professional development of the competence of pedagogues and practicing educators. The effectiveness of such development depends on changes in the education system at the administrative level. Teachers and pedagogues should have the opportunity to reflect on their teaching and instructional practices and understand the required styles of teaching and instruction. They should consider various groups of pupils and students with disabilities (Stepaniuk, 2019).

In Ukraine, contradictions and problems are hindering the implementation of reforms and inclusion in the education sector, and include:

- the absence of specialists in the staff of educational institutions;
- insufficient level and the need to raise the professional competence of teachers;
- the need for increased funding for educational institutions hindering the adaptation of physical spaces in educational institutions;
- the provision of learning resources to students (Shulha, 2021).

Thus, the challenges in the implementation of education-for-all can be categorized as personnel, competence, financial, physical, institutional, strategic, organizational, social and communication, and political challenges.

## Methodology

The article employs general scientific and special methods to study the challenges, conditions, and strategies for implementing inclusive education in Ukraine. In the first part of the study, the authors applied a formal legal approach. They conducted a detailed legal analysis of international and national legislation that defines the legal, organizational, economic, social, and other conditions for the implementation of inclusive education. As a component of the formal legal approach, the authors used the methods of induction and systematization to draw conclusions and systematize the legal norms governing the education-for-all system in Ukraine.

The authors systematically organized international and national legal standards through an examination of pivotal documents:

1. At the global level, the following documents were examined: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities (1993), Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), Dakar Framework for Action Education for All (Meeting Our Collective Commitments) (2000), the European Social Charter (revised), ratified by the Law of Ukraine dated September 14, 2006, the Convention by the United Nations on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (1995), and the Incheon Declaration (2015) (Inclusive Resource Centers: Official Portal, 2023a).

2. On the national level, the following documents were examined:

- 2.1. The Constitution of Ukraine, the legislation of Ukraine ("On Education" dated September 15, 2017).

2.2. Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine (On the organization of activities of inclusive groups in preschool educational institutions dated July 28, 2021, No. 769; On the organization of inclusive education in general secondary education institutions dated September 15, 2021, No. 957; Order of the Ministry of Education and Science on the approval of the Regulation on special classes for the education of children with unique educational requirements in general educational institutions, dated December 9, 2010, No. 1224; On the organization of inclusive education in extracurricular education institutions dated August 21, 2019, No. 779; On the organization of inclusive education in institutions of vocational (vocational-technical) education dated July 10, 2019, No. 636; On the organization of inclusive education in institutions of further education dated December 15, 2021, No. 1321; On the organization of inclusive education in higher education institutions dated July 10, 2019, No. 635). Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers dated November 3, 2021, No. 1132 Regulations on special schools and educational-rehabilitation centers, dated November 3, 2021, No. 1131; Procedure for the residence and maintenance of students in the hostels of educational institutions. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers dated February 14, 2017, No. 88 (latest amendments: May 17, 2021, No. 477); On the Approval of the Process and Terms for Allocating a State Budget Subsidy to Local Budgets for the Provision of State Assistance to Individuals with Special Educational Requirements. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers dated July 12, 2017, No. 545, On the approval of the Regulation on the inclusive-resource center. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers dated December 28, 2021, No. 1391, Some issues of establishing salary increases (wage rates) and allowances for certain types of pedagogical activities in state and municipal educational institutions.

2.3. Legal norms of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine: Sanitary regulations for preschool educational institutions dated March 24, 2016, No. 234, Sanitary regulations for general secondary education institutions dated September 25, 2020, No. 2205.

2.4. Orders of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (hereinafter - MES Ukraine) On the approval of the Model List of auxiliary means for learning (unique methods for addressing psychophysical development) of people with

special educational needs who study in educational institutions, dated April 23, 2018, No. 414 (latest amendments: No. 1281 dated October 16, 2020). Order of MES Ukraine on the Model provision on the certification of pedagogical workers, approved dated October 6, 2010, No. 930. Order of MES Ukraine dated June 8, 2018, No. 609 regarding the team responsible for providing psychological and pedagogical support to students with special educational needs in general secondary and preschool education establishments.

2.5. Order of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers dated May 26, 2021, No. 517-r On endorsement of the Blueprint for the establishment and advancement of the early intervention system.

2.6. Order of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine as of December 23, 2021, No. 718 State standard of social service support during inclusive education (Inclusive-resource centers: Official Portal, 2023b).

The results of a survey were used to assess the challenges, conditions, and strategies for implementing inclusive education in Ukraine. The survey was conducted by the Inclusive Resource Center of Ternopil National Pedagogical University, named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk, within the framework of the III All-Ukrainian Interdisciplinary Conference, which took place online on April 23-24, 2023. A total of 304 respondents participated in this survey. The latter was conducted live during the conference, with the recording and respondents' answers saved on the YouTube platform. Participants were asked the following questions (Conference "Inclusive Education: Idea, Strategy, Result," 2023a; 2023b):

1) How do you personally feel about the implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine?

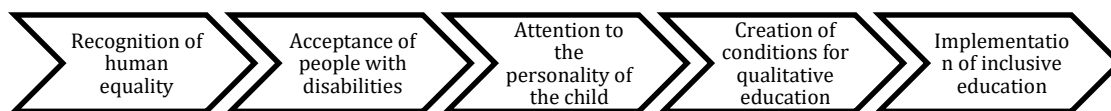
2) According to your perspective, what difficulties do you consider the most noteworthy in the context of implementing inclusion in Ukraine?

3) Do you think it is advisable to implement inclusive education further in Ukraine?

## Results

Adherence to the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination is a critical task in the context of Ukraine's European integration, including in the educational sphere. Many international and Ukrainian documents contain relevant provisions that confirm the importance of educational inclusion. Therefore, its implementation in national educational institutions is in line with the key idea of an open society (Shulha, 2021). Figure 1 shows the evolution of the content of the main international documents on inclusive education.

Figure 1 – Evolution of the content of major international documents on inclusive education



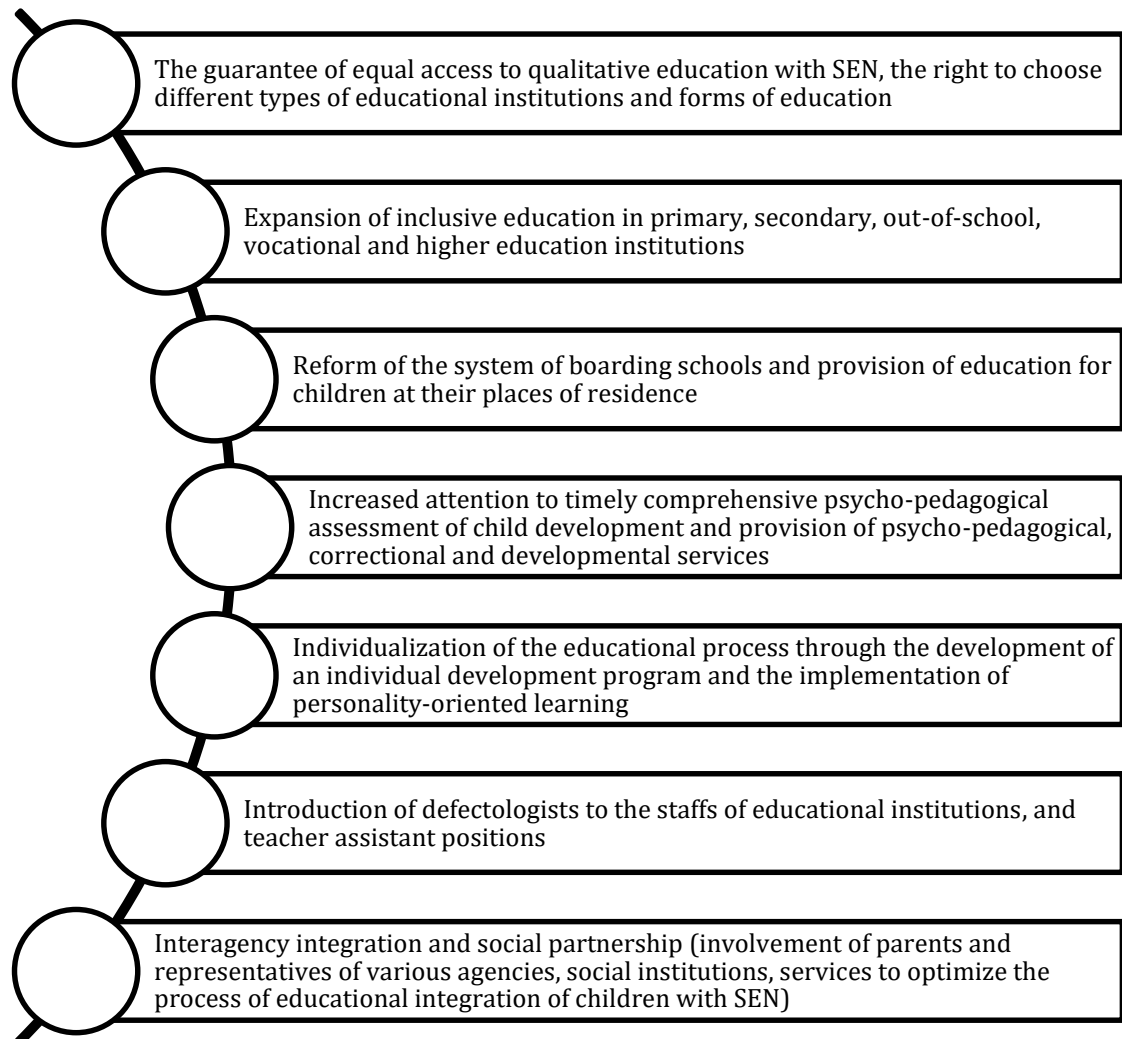
Source: compiled by the authors based on data from Inclusive Resource Centers: Official Portal (2023a).

The Incheon Declaration Education 2030: Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All envisages ensuring equal access to quality formal, informal, and informal education for every citizen (Inclusive-resource centers: Official Portal, 2023a).

In Ukraine, principles for the development of inclusive education are defined at the national level (Figure 2). Article 53 of the Constitution of Ukraine outlines the state's obligation to ensure the accessibility and free provision of various types of education in state and municipal institutions and different forms of learning, as well as the provision of benefits and scholarships to students. Article 3 of the Law of Ukraine, "On Education," establishes equal access to education, guaranteeing the right to education regardless of demographic characteristics, worldview, values, and socio-economic status. The legislation also outlines the establishment of circumstances to facilitate the provision of educational services tailored to individuals with distinct educational needs, interests, abilities, and opportunities.



Figure 2 – National legislation on inclusive education in Ukraine



Source: compiled by the author according to Inclusive-resource centers: Official Portal (2023b).

The active development of national legislation in inclusive education occurred in 2019-2022. During these years, the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers has endorsed a set of resolutions concerning the implementation of inclusive education across diverse educational systems (preschool, secondary, extracurricular, vocational, professional, and higher).

It is worth noting that national legislation also regulates the activities of special educational institutions. In the 2021-2022 school year, the number of such institutions amounted to 310 units, with 36,294 students (including 2,289 children who have lost their parents or are without parental care). According to the latest

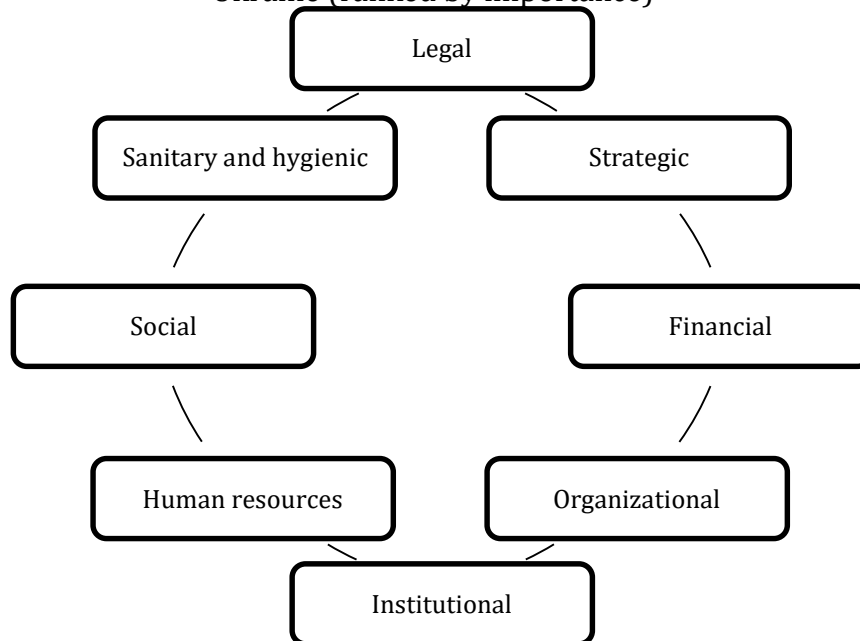
data from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the number of special general education institutions has decreased by 20 units compared to the 2021-2022 academic year. In the 2022/2023 academic year, there are 290 institutions with a student population of 34,029, including 2,270 children who have lost their parents or are without parental care (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023).

On November 3, 2021, Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 1132 "On Special Schools and Educational-Rehabilitation Centers" was approved, with the number of such institutions in Ukraine being 230 and 80 units, with student populations of 27,888 and 8,406 individuals, respectively, as of 2021-2022. In Ukraine, in the 2021-2022 academic year, there were 257 boarding schools (orphanages) associated with special education institutions, accommodating 29,881 students (including 2,066 children who have lost their parents or are without parental care 5,573 students attended only for education; 1,429 preschool children.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the number of special education institutions was 239, with boarding schools (orphanage branches) serving 27,635 students, including 2,104 children who have lost their parents or are without parental care. Additionally, 6,090 students attended only for education, and 1,358 preschool children, including 34 children who have lost their parents or are without parental care (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023).

Thus, international and domestic legal structures govern various aspects concerning the arrangement and execution of inclusive practices within the educational setting across diverse types of educational institutions. However, some elements, particularly those associated with the provision of correctional and rehabilitation services, require amendments and approval. Overall, Ukraine has established legal, strategic, financial, organizational, institutional, staffing, social, and sanitary-hygienic conditions for inclusive education (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – The main prerequisites for the development of inclusive education in Ukraine (ranked by importance)



Source: compiled and summarized by the author based on the analysis and systematization of Inclusive-resource centers: Official Portal (2023b).

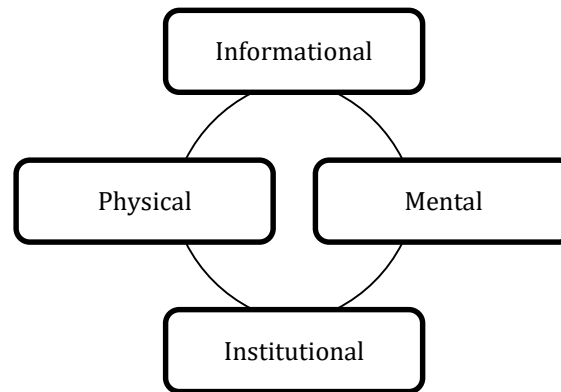
At the strategic level, the progress of inclusive education aligns seamlessly with major state undertakings, including Ukraine's Strategy for Establishing Inclusive Environments by 2030 (Inclusive-resource centers: Official Portal, 2023b).

The analysis of the normative and legal framework regarding the creation of conditions for introduction of an inclusive learning approach in Ukraine serves as the basis for identifying the most significant barriers to its realization (Figure 4). Informational obstacles and challenges are related to the insufficient level of awareness among stakeholders and participants in the inclusive educational environment about the opportunities and benefits of providing access to education for individuals with special educational needs. Inclusive resource centers (IRC) have been established (709 units on the moment this content is published, with 7582 institutions offering inclusive education) to overcome informational barriers in Ukraine. The activities of IRC include:

- Conducting comprehensive psycho-pedagogical assessments of a child's development.
- Providing psycho-pedagogical and correctional-developmental services.

- Ensuring systematic and qualified support for children with special educational needs.

Figure 4 – The main barriers to inclusive education in Ukraine



Source: summarized by the authors.

IRCs also provide consultation and methodological assistance to educators in organizing inclusive education. IRCs consult parents or legal representatives of enrollment of children with special educational needs in educational institutions (Inclusive-resource centers: Official Portal, 2023).

In 2018, an Inclusive Resource Center (hereinafter referred to as the Center) was established at Ternopil National Pedagogical University, named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk. The Center is formed as a separate structural department of the university. The Center's activities aim to improve the conditions for students with disabilities and other needs to access educational services, thereby expanding access to quality education at the university. The Center provides informational and advisory support to parents of applicants, educators, and the community. It contributes to an execution of inclusive education through the realization of the Center's functions. The Center's main functions are informational, advisory, navigational, coordinative, educational, and adaptation-modification (Udych, 2023e).

Some obstacles in the mind hindering the progress of inclusive education in Ukraine involve overcoming challenges related to existing social stereotypes about persons with disabilities. In particular, there is a prejudiced attitude towards children with developmental disorders in Ukraine (Shulha, 2020). Overall, many

countries of the former Soviet Union (post-Soviet Union) experience contradictions and conflicts regarding the stigmatization and alienation of children with disabilities (Glaserberg, 2021). The research findings by Glaserberg (2021) indicate the following issues in Ukraine:

- attitudes and views on inclusive education,
- insufficient teacher training;
- lack of respect for the teachers' profession;
- fears of burnout and expectations;
- resource shortages;
- communication and interaction issues;
- collaboration with parents.

Similar challenges were identified in an empirical study by Loreman et al. (2016) on Canadian-Ukrainian cooperation in developing local potential for inclusive education over five years. The main problems of inclusion included resistance or negative attitudes towards inclusion and language barriers leading to communication difficulties. The success of inclusive education depends on the following aspects:

- positive attitudes;
- teachers' education and development;
- effective pedagogy and leadership;
- the availability of necessary resources;
- supportive policies and laws, family support, and cooperation;
- an organized approach to the implementation of inclusion (Loreman et al., 2016).

The institutional challenges of developing inclusive education in Ukraine involve deinstitutionalization. It involves implementing changes in the childcare system guided by the principles of prioritizing the interests of children, recognizing the priority of family upbringing, and the harm of orphanages and boarding schools. The transformation of the childcare system from institutional care was initiated with the adoption of the Strategy aimed at reforming the Institutional Care and Education System for 2017-2026. The strategy envisaged three stages:

1) 2017-2018. Assessment of educational institutions and their services in regions, resulting in the development of national development plans.

2) 2019-2024. Active development of medical, social, and educational services in communities and gradual transformation of institutions according to regional plans.

3) 2025-2026. Comprehensive analysis of the situation and determination of strategic development directions.

Horishna and colleagues (2020) claim that there are institutional challenges associated with the execution of an inclusive approach in education. Another key point emphasized by authors is the absence of a common understanding of inclusive education and the institutional weakness of newly created united territorial communities responsible for implementing inclusive approaches locally. In addition, institutional challenges are associated with the inconsistency of measures and efforts of central and local authorities regarding inclusive education, as well as unsatisfactory material-technical support for educational institutions (Horishna et al., 2020).

The challenges related to physical aspects in the advancement of inclusive education in Ukraine are linked to the lack of alignment of school spaces with the principles of universal design, the lack of sensory rooms in schools, and other means to address the requirements of students with disabilities during the learning process (Shulha, 2020).

***Results of the participants' survey during the conference "Inclusive Education: Idea, Strategy, Result". Inclusive Resource Center of Ternopil National Pedagogical University named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk***

Before and during the conference, outcomes of the conducted survey were discussed. It allowed the following conclusions to be drawn: inclusive education is a key factor in the evolution of Ukraine's educational system. Its implementation aims to create a set of conditions for the socialization and development of children's personalities, serving as a basis for their further active involvement in life and self-realization.



In Ukraine, a well-established legislative framework supports the integration and accessibility of children with special educational needs in various spheres of human life. However, despite positive changes from 2017 to 2022, the introduction of inclusive education is hindered by several challenges, including:

- establishment of effective inter-agency cooperation;
- consolidation of efforts by professionals and social institutions, sufficient funding;
- overcoming formalities in the activities of psychological and pedagogical support teams.

The participants of the conference made the following proposals to ensure the rights of educational services recipients to receive qualitative services, correctional and developmental services, and other services:

- Increase funding for inclusive education, including the implementation of the principles of reasonable accommodation and universal design;
- Ensure the operation of sensory and resource rooms in educational institutions and centers of inclusive resource to overcome physical barriers to inclusive development;
- Provide assistive tools for children during the learning process;
- Form and develop inclusive competencies of educators and raise the level of remuneration for professionals working in the field of education-for-all;
- Ensure the realization of all rights of children, especially those in areas of increased danger, including phased assistance for youngsters with disabilities;
- Increase the practical component of professional training for specialists in special and inclusive education, incorporating disciplines relevant to the development of professionals' ability to work with difficulties and educational needs of education recipients unique educational requirements (SEN);
- Ensure the operation of early intervention centers in territorial communities;
- Create conditions for enhancing inclusive competencies of teachers and other specialists involved in the team during their professional development;

- Develop strategies for inclusive development in educational environments in different types of educational institutions;
- Implement the creation of teams as a mandatory element for communication and interaction among team members for pedagogical and psychological support;
- Ensure different types of educational institutions (preschool, general secondary) with the necessary number of specialists (practical psychologists, speech therapists, social pedagogues) by increasing staff positions and rates;
- Improve and expand methodological materials and psycho-pedagogical tools, as well as provide them free of charge to inclusive education specialists;
- Ensure the quality training of assistants for education recipients with SEN;
- Develop a mechanism for specialists from centers of inclusive resource to provide services on a fee basis;
- Reorganize the networks of speech therapy points to include them in the network and establish communication with inclusive resource centers;
- Encourage territorial communities to enter into cooperation agreements to provide services to small mobile population groups;
- Review the content of normative and legal documents to understand their compliance with societal demands regarding inclusive education and improve them, including procedures for organizing inclusive education in different types of educational institutions;
- Open centers for psycho-pedagogical support and legal support/counseling for educational institution leaders, educators, parents, employees of education authorities, and education recipients with SEN to assist in solving specific tasks and situations.

## Conclusions

The research demonstrates that certain conditions must be met to support the ongoing progress of inclusive education. Among the key conditions for implementing an inclusive method in the education system, the authors highlight

the following: legal, strategic, financial, organizational, institutional, personnel, social, and sanitary conditions for inclusive education. They are formed to implement a multidisciplinary model of inclusion. The international and national legal framework regulates a wide range of challenges associated with the structuring and execution of inclusive practices in the educational environment of all types of educational institutions. However, some institutions, especially those associated with the provision of correctional and rehabilitation services, require amendments and approval. Ukraine is marked by informational, mental, institutional, and physical barriers the advancement of education that promotes inclusivity. Ukraine has a sufficiently developed legislative framework to promote inclusion in various types of educational institutions. Despite the positive changes in 2017-2023, some challenges and circumstances hinder the introduction of education-for-all.

Accordingly, it is necessary to establish high-quality interagency cooperation, provide sufficient funding, combine the efforts of specialists and social institutions, and overcome formalism during the operation of the psychological and pedagogical support team. The paper proposes several measures to ensure the rights of students with special learning needs to receive quality educational, correctional, developmental, and other services. Further research should focus on studying possible directions and ways to overcome the barriers to the advancement of inclusive education identified by the authors.

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