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*Research Insights*

*Исследовательски проникновения*

## FORMATION OF INCLUSIVE COMPETENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN THE FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE 01 EDUCATION/PEDAGOGY

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**Abstract.** The analysis of the problem of forming inclusive competence of future teachers in theory and practical research shows its extreme relevance. It is especially important to develop inclusive competence at the stage of teaching students at a higher education institution to ensure their further effective practical work. The study shows that a significant part of higher education students understands correctly the concept of “inclusive education”, but one third of respondents don’t realize who exactly can be recommended to study in an inclusive form. It has been found that most respondents understand the benefits of inclusive education, they express their attitude to it positively, but some respondents found it difficult to demonstrate their attitude to inclusive education for children with special educational needs. It has been determined that more than half of the respondents are aware of their own role in the team of psychological and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs and the need to cooperate with other team members, but a significant number of higher education students were unable to answer this question. The respondents emphasize a conscious attitude to the difficulties that will arise in the process of inclusive education of children with special educational needs, noting that providing appropriate conditions in the educational institution and the availability of personal qualities of teachers will help to overcome these difficulties. It was found that only one third of modern higher education students have a desire to work with children with special educational needs in conditions of inclusive education, while the vast majority of respondents admitted their own unpreparedness to work with children with psychophysical developmental disorders. Prospects for scientific research are the development of pedagogical support for the formation of inclusive competence of higher education students in the field of knowledge 01 Education/Pedagogy, which would provide for the formation of inclusive competence of higher education students – future teachers.

**Keywords:** inclusive competence; higher education students; teachers; pedagogical conditions; children with special educational needs

## **Introduction**

Significant socio-economic and socio-political changes taking place in modern Ukraine are causing a change in approaches to the functioning of the national education system, including children with special educational needs, one of the priorities of which is the training of qualified specialists in this field, teachers with formed inclusive competence as an integral part of the professional and pedagogical competence of a modern teacher.

Today scientists from different countries have conducted research that reveals the essence of the phenomenon of “inclusive competence of the teacher” and creates the prerequisites for its formation. The works of scientists define the philosophical and theoretical aspects of inclusive education – A-C. Armstrong, D. Armstrong, D. Goodley, K. Runswick-Cole, F. Polat, Kremin, Y. Naida, N. Sofiy, etc.; compare the trends in the development of inclusive education in different countries - K. Goranson, K. Karlsson, R. G. Berlach, D.J. Chambers; a study of the practical aspects of implementing inclusive education in preschool and general secondary education institutions – J. Goodman, T. Lorman, J. Deppeler, D. Harvey, V. Bondar, V. Zasenکو, A. Kolupaieva, I. Kuzava, N. Sofii, O. Taranchenko, etc.

The theoretical analysis of the literature has shown the existence of a number of studies aimed at studying the phenomenon of “inclusive competence”. For example, S. Nakhod (2020) presents the definition of “inclusive competence” as an integral personal formation that is part of “soft skills” and determines the ability of a teacher to perform professional functions in the process of inclusive education, taking into account the different educational needs of children, ensuring their inclusion in the general education environment and creating conditions for their development and socialization. It is noted that it is necessary to have a valuable attitude of future teachers to inclusive education, a conscious choice of profession, sustainable motivation to learn and a positive attitude to children with special educational needs. O. Voloshyna and N. Dmitrenko (2017) analyzed the foreign experience of training teachers for inclusive education, pointed out the peculiarities of modifying vocational education programs in higher education institutions in the process of inclusive teacher training, revealed the components of inclusive competence in education; characterized the competence approach as a conceptual guideline for the development of modern education within the Bologna Process.

A. Vasyliuk (2022) and I. Kucherak (2022) define inclusive competence as an integrated phenomenon that combines motivational and value-based, cognitive and operational, as well as reflective and evaluative components; I. Kuzava (2024) analyzed the theoretical sources and practical state of studying the essence of the phenomenon of inclusive competence of future special education specialists, developed its components and criteria; N. Fihol (2020)

characterizes inclusive competence as a component of the professional competence of a teacher, interprets inclusive competence as the level of knowledge and skills necessary to perform professional functions in an inclusive education environment; Wendelieen Vantieghem (2023) notes that teachers should be aware of the scope of inclusive education and assess their own capabilities to create the educational prerequisites necessary to maximize the learning of different pupils.

Given the relevance of the problem, the purpose of our study was to find out the focus of the educational process of a higher education institution on the formation of inclusive competence of higher education students in the field of knowledge 01 Education/Pedagogy.

### **Research methods**

To achieve this goal, the following methods were used: theoretical analysis of the problem of forming the inclusive competence of teachers; survey among higher education students; interview with them; quantitative and qualitative analysis of the achieved results.

In the course of *the theoretical analysis of the research problem*, literature sources were studied to define the phenomenon of “inclusive competence”, its components, ways and conditions of its formation, the importance of its formation for modern teachers.

*A survey among higher education students* of Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University was conducted anonymously with the help of Google forms. The survey included 13 questions. Each question required a mandatory answer. In order to achieve reliable results, we provided various options for answers, including open-ended questions to interpret one’s own attitude to solving a particular problem. The research was aimed at studying the following aspects:

- students’ understanding of the concept of “inclusive education”
- determining which categories of children, in the opinion of students, can be recommended an inclusive form of education;
- studying the attitude of students to the introduction of inclusive education in general secondary education institutions;
- finding out what, in the opinion of the respondents, are the advantages of introducing inclusive education;
- finding out, which specialists, according to the respondents, they will need to cooperate with in terms of working in an inclusive institution;
- finding out what difficulties the respondents think they may have in working with children with special educational needs in a general secondary education institution;
- finding out what qualities, in the opinion of students, should have teachers working in an inclusive institution;

- finding out what conditions, in the opinion of students, will ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education for children with special educational needs;

- finding out whether students would like to work with children with special educational needs in a general secondary education institution;

- identifying the difficulties of implementing inclusive education, according to the students' point of view.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis was used to process the results of the study.

## **Results**

The survey involved 81 higher education students of various specialties. It is worth noting that some of the higher education students have already taken the courses "Pedagogy". Module "Fundamentals of Correctional Pedagogy" and "Fundamentals of Inclusive Education", while others have not yet been taught educational components aimed at familiarizing themselves with the peculiarities of organizing inclusive education for students with special educational needs and developing inclusive competence.

Let's analyze the results of our study.

### ***1. What is your future specialty after graduation?***

The study involved higher education students of various specialties. In particular, 014 Secondary Education (Language and Literature (Polish)) – 10 students; 013 Primary Education – 13 students; 014 Secondary Education (Musical Art) – 7 students; 014 Secondary Education (Biology and Human Health) – 5 students; 227 Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy – 5 students; 035 Philology – 21 students; 014 Secondary Education (Fine Arts) – 7 students; 014 Secondary Education (History) – 13 students.

### ***2. What year of study are you in?***

The results of the survey show that 15 first-year students, 29 second-year students, 26 third-year students, and 11 fourth-year students took part in the survey.

### ***3. Are you familiar with the concept of "inclusive education"?***

72.8% of respondents are familiar with the concept of "inclusive education"; 19.8% of respondents said they were partially familiar; 7.4% of students gave negative answers.

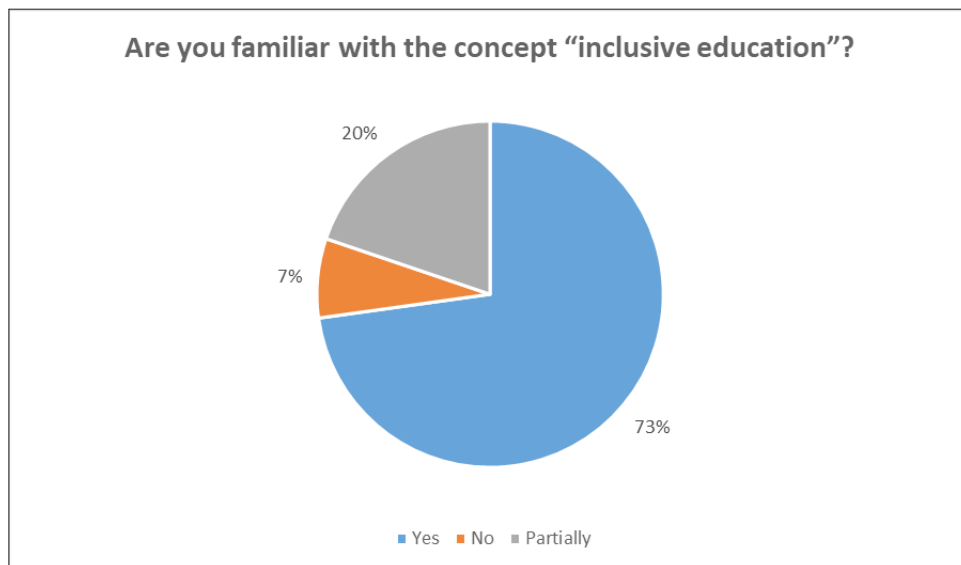


Figure 1

#### 4. How do you understand the concept of “inclusive education”?

72.8% of higher education students generally understand the concept of inclusive education correctly. They answered this question as follows: *“Inclusive education is the creation of a special approach to teaching a child with special educational needs in a common space”*; *“Inclusive education is an approach to education aimed at ensuring accessibility and success of education for all students, regardless of their abilities, characteristics and needs”*; *“Inclusive education is the education of pupils or students with special needs by involving them in the general educational environment at their place of residence”*; *“Inclusive education is the creation of an environment where every student feels important and where the diversity of their needs, learning styles and abilities is taken into account and supported”*; *“Inclusive education is learning that is achieved by all pupils (including those with developmental disabilities) in the same environment”*; *“The opportunity for children with special educational needs to learn together with their healthy (meaning those without special educational needs) peers”*, etc. 27.2% of respondents don’t quite understand what the term “inclusive education” means. They gave the following answers to the question: *“education for children with special educational needs”*; *“the possibility of education for children with special needs”*; *“education that allows children with special needs to participate in the educational process”*; *“it is a system of educational services where children with special educational needs study in*

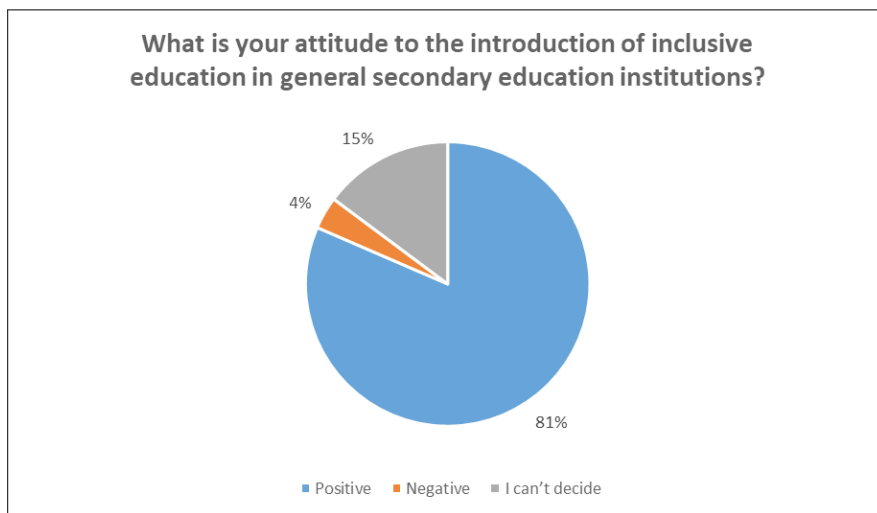
*special educational institutions”; “a special approach to teaching a child with special educational needs”, etc.*

**5. What categories of children, in your opinion, can be recommended for inclusive education?**

61.73% of higher education students believe that inclusive education can be recommended for different categories of people with special educational needs. In particular, for pupils with hearing, visual, intellectual, speech, musculoskeletal, mental retardation, and complex developmental disabilities. 29.63% of respondents gave generalized answers to the question. For example: *“children with certain peculiarities”; “children with disabilities and displaced people”; “children with special needs”; “different”; “those with certain mental or physical disabilities”; “children with special educational needs”; “those who are lagging behind in their studies or have certain problems”, etc.* 8.64% of respondents didn’t answer the question.

**6. What is your attitude to the implementation of inclusive education in general secondary education institutions?**

The purpose of the next question was to find out the attitude of students to the introduction of inclusive education in general secondary education institutions. 81.5% of the respondents gave positive answers; 14.8% of students haven’t decided yet; 3.7% have a negative attitude towards the introduction of inclusive education.



**Figure 2**

**7. What are the benefits of implementing inclusive education in your opinion?**

According to the point of view of 87.65% of higher education students, the advantages of inclusive education are: *“inclusive education promotes the social*

*integration of children with different needs, improves their academic performance and develops the skills of cooperation and empathy in all students”; “a child with special needs learns to live in a society of healthy people, and develops a focus on a normal, fulfilling life”; “children with special educational needs are able to study on a level playing field with other children”; “children with special educational needs find it easier to adapt among their peers, feel more confident, and establish friendships with other children”; “inclusive education promotes social integration of children with special needs, develops tolerance and promotes diversity in the learning environment”; “preparing children with special educational needs for the real world; improving their academic achievements; developing empathy and tolerance”; “adaptation in society”, “classmates become models of behavior for children with special educational needs”, “no child will feel different”, etc. 12.35% of respondents answered “I can’t decide” to this question.*

**8. If you work in an inclusive institution, which specialists do you think you will need to work with?**

The purpose of the next question was to find out which specialists, in the opinion of the students, they would need to cooperate with in an inclusive institution if they were to work there. The respondents were offered the following answers:

- teacher’s assistant;
- teacher-defectologist;
- practical psychologist;
- social teacher;
- class teacher;
- medical worker;
- subject teachers;
- all answers are correct;
- don’t know.

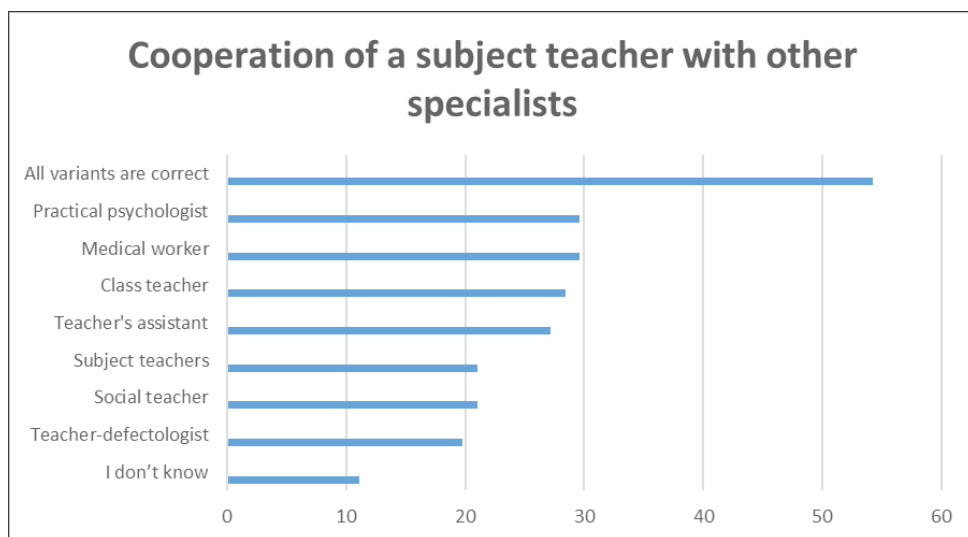


Figure 3

Higher education students answered as follows: with a teacher's assistant (27.2%); with a teacher-defectologist (19.8%); with a practical psychologist (29.6%); with a social teacher (21%); with a class teacher (28.4%); with a medical worker (29.6%); with subject teachers (21%); all answers are correct (54.3%); don't know (11.1%).

**9. What difficulties do you think you may have while working with children with special educational needs in a general secondary education institution?**

When asked about the difficulties they may encounter in working with children with special educational needs in general secondary education, 77.78% of respondents answered as follows: *"lack of knowledge and experience, lack of resources"*; *"misunderstandings with children"*; *"inability to calm down a student who is too active"*; *"difficulties in ensuring an individual approach to each student, understanding their needs and capabilities"*; *"difficulty in understanding children"*; *"different levels of learning among children"*; *"it depends on the child's specific disability and the ability of the educational institution to provide the child with special educational needs with the necessary conditions for comfortable learning"*; *"it will be more difficult to provide information to a child with special educational needs"*; *"establishing friendly relations between children"*; *"difficulties in establishing communication and the right approach"*, etc. 6.17% of respondents said they didn't know what difficulties they would face. 16.05% didn't answer the question at all.



**10. What are the difficulties of implementing inclusive education in your opinion?**

74.07% of respondents mentioned the following difficulties in implementing inclusive education: lack of readiness of society; lack of resources; lack of teachers' readiness; lack of resource rooms in schools; insufficient number of teachers with experience in inclusive education of pupils with special educational needs; lack of motivation of teachers to work in an inclusive institution; lack of support from the administration; large classes; imperfect legislation in the field of inclusive education; negative attitudes of parents or the community towards inclusive education may complicate the implementation of inclusive education. 25.93% of students didn't answer the question.

**11. What qualities should have teachers working in an inclusive institution in your opinion?**

According to higher education applicants, teachers working in an inclusive institution should have the following qualities: tolerance, openness to diversity, empathy, flexibility, ability to perceive each student as a unique person, ability to provide an individualized approach to learning and support, love for children and acceptance of their diversity, sociability, patience, restraint, flexibility, sincerity, tact, good nature, justice, etc.

**12. What conditions will ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education for children with special educational needs?**

77.78% of respondents believe that the following conditions will ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education for children with special educational needs:

- individualized approach to teaching and support for each student;
- availability of qualified teachers and specialists who provide support and consult pupils and teachers;
- availability of adaptive materials and technologies for learning;
- promoting cooperation between teachers, specialists, parents and pupils;
- creating a friendly and tolerant classroom environment;
- ensuring physical accessibility of the learning environment for all students;
- constant support and training of teachers on methods and strategies for working with different types of educational needs;
- partnership with parents and guardians;
- good funding for inclusive institutions;
- creating a comfortable atmosphere in the institution where all children feel equal.

**13. Would you like to work with children with special educational needs in a general secondary education institution? Please explain your answer.**

29.63% of higher education students would like to work with children with special educational needs in a general secondary education institution. They justi-

fied their answers as follows: *"I would be glad to work"*; *"I believe that every child has the right to quality education and equal opportunities for development"*; *"I believe that every student deserves quality education and support in their own development"*; *"I'm not sure of my capabilities, but if there is such an opportunity, I'd like to try"*; *"children with special needs are the same as other children, they just need a slightly different approach"*; *"I understand that it is difficult to work with children with special educational needs, but they need support more than students with normal development, so I would like to work with them"*, etc. 70.37% of respondents gave negative answers, justifying them with their methodological and psychological unpreparedness to work with children with special educational needs. For example: *"I'm not sure, I think not at the moment. In the future, maybe"*; *"I could not take on such a responsibility"*; *"It's a controversial issue, on the one hand I want to, but on the other hand I don't"*; *"I don't have enough patience to work with such children"*, etc.

### **Conclusions and prospects for further research**

The analysis of theoretical sources on the problem of forming the inclusive competence of higher education students and practical research have demonstrated the extreme relevance of this problem. Extremely important is becoming the formation of inclusive competence of higher education students during their studies at a higher education institution, after which they will face the challenges of inclusive education of children with special educational needs in their own professional activities.

The results of the study show that the vast majority of higher education students are familiar with the concept of "inclusive education" and correctly understand its essence, but one third of respondents don't quite understand which categories of people with special educational needs can be recommended an inclusive form of education. In general, most students have a positive attitude toward inclusive education and understand its benefits, but a fifth part of the respondents haven't decided yet on their position. More than half of the respondents understand their role in the team of psychological and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs, in particular, which specialists they will need to work with in an inclusive institution, but a significant number of respondents didn't answer this question. Three-fourths of respondents are aware of the difficulties they may encounter while working with children with special educational needs in general secondary education and the difficulties of implementing inclusive education. However, they understand that due to the positive personal qualities of teachers and the provision of appropriate conditions in the educational institution, inclusive education of pupils with special educational needs will be effective. The results of the survey show that less than a third of applicants would like to work with children with special educational needs in a general secondary education institution, while

the vast majority of respondents believe that they are not ready to work with this category of students.

Thus, the study showed the importance of the problem of forming the inclusive competence of higher education students of pedagogical specialties. Prospects for scientific research are the development of pedagogical support for the formation of inclusive competence of higher education students in the field of knowledge 01 Education/Pedagogy, which would provide for the formation of inclusive competence of higher education students, who are going to be teachers in the future.

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