

FORMATION OF AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (UKRAINIAN EXPERIENCE)

FORMAÇÃO DE UMA ABORDAGEM INCLUSIVA NA EDUCAÇÃO DE CRIANÇAS COM NECESSIDADES EDUCATIVAS ESPECIAIS (EXPERIÊNCIA UCRANIANA)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to rethink the standardized course curriculum in accordance with an inclusive approach. The method of analyzing secondary data made it possible to put forward the hypothesis that a modern Ukrainian school should be both regular and adapted to the needs of all students who attend it, considering their differences and special educational needs. Results. The article analyzes the formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs in Ukrainian education based on the professional activity of a teacher's assistant (accompanying person), reveals the dilemmas faced by a school attendant in search of his professional identity, which puts him on the verge of another profession - the profession of a teacher. The novelty of the work lies in the disclosure of the problems of interprofessional relations and the field of activity of teacher assistants, which has not yet been disclosed. Based on the experience of the focus group, the author presents her own approach to inclusive education of children with special educational needs. Conclusions. The analysis has revealed a diverse typology of teacher assistants' positions in inclusive schools in Ukraine, which reflects the delimitation of territories and borders,

which complicates cooperation. It is recommended to create a national reference system of skills for teacher assistants to clearly define their scope of work in working with children with special educational needs and establish joint work trajectories with teachers. This will help to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes across the education sector, improve their performance and change their skills.

Keywords: Inclusion. Inclusive pedagogical approach. Teacher's assistant. Allocation. Self-confrontation.

RESUMO

O objetivo do estudo é repensar o currículo dos cursos normalizados de acordo com uma abordagem inclusiva. O método de análise de dados secundários permitiu apresentar a hipótese de que uma escola ucraniana moderna deve ser simultaneamente regular e adaptada às necessidades de todos os alunos que a frequentam, tendo em conta as suas diferenças e necessidades educativas especiais. Resultados. O artigo analisa a formação de uma abordagem inclusiva da educação de crianças com necessidades educativas especiais no ensino ucraniano com base na atividade profissional de um assistente de professor (acompanhante), revela os dilemas enfrentados por um assistente escolar na procura da sua identidade profissional, o que o coloca à beira de uma outra profissão - a profissão de professor. A novidade do trabalho reside na revelação dos problemas das relações interprofissionais e do campo de atividade dos assistentes de professores, que ainda não tinha sido divulgado. Com base na experiência do grupo de discussão, a autora apresenta a sua própria abordagem à educação inclusiva de crianças com necessidades educativas especiais. Conclusões. A análise revelou uma tipologia diversificada de cargos de assistentes de professores em escolas inclusivas na Ucrânia, o que reflecte a delimitação de territórios e fronteiras, o que complica a cooperação. Recomenda-se a criação de um sistema nacional de referência de competências para os assistentes de professores, a fim de definir claramente o âmbito do seu trabalho com crianças com necessidades educativas especiais e estabelecer trajetórias de trabalho conjuntas com os professores. Isto ajudará a integrar conhecimentos, competências e atitudes em todo o sector da educação, a melhorar o seu desempenho e a mudar as suas competências.

Palavras-chave: Inclusão. Abordagem pedagógica inclusiva. Assistente do professor. Atribuição. Auto-confrontação.

Introduction

In recent decades, the education sector has been paying increasing attention to the development of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs. This trend stems from an understanding of the need to ensure equal learning and development opportunities for all children, regardless of their characteristics and needs. Ukraine has also focused its attention on creating inclusive education, and this article is devoted to the study of the Ukrainian experience in this area. Inclusive education means that all students learn together in the same school environment (Kozibroda, Kruhlyk, Zhuravlova, & Chupakhina,

2020). An inclusive education system is one in which schools adapt their infrastructure, methods, teaching materials, and staffing policies to all students. In this way, they ensure that every student feels at home at school. In such conditions, the education system adapts to the needs of each student, and not vice versa. In the context of the challenges of globalization, education focuses on the uniqueness of everyone. Within a school, every student is unique. Inclusive education focuses on quality education for all so that schools can help every student achieve their best and participate fully in society (Shevchuk, Mokhonchuk, Lysodyed, & Mamonova, 2020). Inclusion is made possible by recognizing uniqueness and responding in a timely manner (Chikuvadze, 2023).

Today, it is important to provide school education for all, considering the characteristics and special educational needs of everyone. Attempts to develop an inclusive program are not without enthusiasm from some, fear, criticism, or simply questions from others. Contrary to pessimistic discourse, this paper assumes that the inclusion paradigm, which is a priori intended for the most excluded people (children with disabilities), applies to everyone who potentially faces conditions of problems, isolation, or social insecurity. Inclusive education, a project that is both pragmatic and idealistic, presents great challenges. In this context, we believe that inclusive education means the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream settings. In many countries today, children with disabilities attend regular schools but follow a specific curriculum. The transition to a more inclusive model (students with disabilities follow an inclusive curriculum alongside other students) is indeed a long-term process. As countries move toward more inclusive education, special schools and their staff can play a key role in serving as specialized referrals that support mainstream schools in their efforts to become more inclusive.

Inclusive education thus differs from traditional education in terms of exclusion (there are times when children with disabilities are completely deprived of the opportunity to receive education), segregation (the misconception that they should study in a separate education system), and integration (children with special educational needs are placed in regular classes without receiving appropriate

support and must adapt). These problems in inclusive education must be eliminated. What is inclusive education? Its goal is a single inclusive education system. In Ukraine, many children with disabilities still receive special education. Research shows that separate education is closely linked to poor learning outcomes and low-skill development. In addition, these children are more likely to be employed in adapted workplaces in the future, are more financially dependent, have fewer opportunities to live independently and form weaker communities after graduation. Thus, we focus on the problems of inclusive education. For Ukraine's new education system, inclusive education should mean that in the long term, regular and special education will be merged into a single system of inclusive education for all students. To achieve this goal, it is important that teachers and teaching assistants receive adequate resources and support.

Focusing on professional knowledge for inclusive and emancipatory practices means, first and foremost, recognizing and identifying knowledge in action among the diversity of inclusion actors. It also means challenging the assumptions about the possibilities of inclusion. Finally, it points to the ability of inclusive teachers to invent ways to rethink pedagogical models and practices daily.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs in Ukrainian education with a focus on the professional activities of a teacher's assistant (support person). The study aims to reveal the dilemmatic issues faced by the school support person in search of their professional identity and determine their place between the professions of teacher's assistant and teacher. The study also aims to find out how the assistant positions himself in relation to the teacher in joint missions for students with special educational needs and how he delineates his place in the interprofessional space, using the experience of a micro-level focus group. Moreover, the study aims to propose a strategy for a "Universal Design for Inclusive Education".

Literature review

The lack of access to quality inclusive education dramatically reduces the chances of children with special educational needs to reach their potential, learn the necessary life skills, and earn a living as adults. While the situation of children in Ukraine is steadily improving, challenges remain. For too many children, access to quality education has become impossible due to the war, which has been fuelled by factors such as poverty, discrimination, or lack of support from parents and the community. The analysis of related literature points to several other problems related to inclusion. The most relevant ones are presented in (Table 1).

Table 1 – *The most pressing issues among specialists in inclusive education*

Interaction between professionals is the key to the harmonious development of inclusive education	Shavel, Hrybovska, Stepanchenko, Pityn, Danylevych, Kashuba, & Marionda (2021)
Teamwork becomes an important tool in the service of an inclusive school	Mu (2021)
Cooperation is a necessity to eliminate many professional nuances	Sasse (2020)
The school support worker is a necessary link but needs to be supervised	Shevchuk, Mokhonchuk, Lysodyed, & Mamonova (2020)
Recognizing the skills of some should not lead to the denial of others	Shume (2023)
Cooperation is the “fuel” necessary for the development of an inclusive school	Rix (2020)
The multiplicity of education sectors is one of the characteristics of the Ukrainian education system.	Lazorko, Zhanna, Yahupov, Valchuk-Orkusha, Melnyk, & Sherman (2021)

The presence of a teacher's assistant is a prerequisite for any inclusive school project.	Symeonidou, & Mavrou (2020)
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Source: authors' own development

The context of inclusive education primarily implies the participation and interaction between professional educators, teachers, parents, and all educational stakeholders to adapt appropriately to the different life situations of children with special educational needs (Shavel, Hrybovska, Stepanchenko, Pityn, Danylevych, Kashuba, & Marionda, 2021). Thus, an inclusive school initiates cooperation among education stakeholders to create a flexible environment and organize a proper educational process.

Even though different parts of the educational process are involved, their roles and responsibilities complement each other. Teamwork becomes an important tool in the service of an inclusive school (Mu, 2021). Of course, each participant in education is faced, on the one hand, with the dilemmas of operating in their original profession, and on the other hand, with interprofessional tensions that stem from the encounter between the values, knowledge, and rules specific to each profession. Thus, collaboration is a necessity, but it is also an extremely complex operation, involving boundaries imposed by a multitude of professional nuances (Sasse, 2020). Teachers are the first line of communication in working with children with special educational needs, but this work is complicated by their overall workload. This forces them to delegate part of their teaching responsibilities to a teacher's assistant, i.e., an accompanying person for children with disabilities. In such a difficult job, human compensation is essential.

Thus, a school support worker should work in agreement with the teacher and under his/her pedagogical responsibility (Shevchuk, Mokhonchuk, Lysodyed, & Mamonova, 2020). Learning situations should be envisioned together. Recognizing the skills of some should not lead to the disavowal of others (Shume, 2023). This collaboration, which should be encouraged, is the kind of “fuel” needed to develop

an inclusive school (Rix, 2020). The multiplicity of education sectors is one of the characteristics of the Ukrainian education system.

However, in the context of the war in Ukraine and due to the lack of sufficient human and financial resources, many schools, public or private, are unable to meet all the needs of children with special educational needs. Many children from war zones do not have access to inclusive education (Lazorko, Zhanna, Yahupov, Valchuk-Orkusha, Melnyk, & Sherman, 2021). But other schools, especially those in the for-profit private sector, facilitate inclusive education by providing a teacher's assistant, whose ubiquity has become a prerequisite for any inclusive school project. For the purposes of this study, an inclusive approach to education is human assistance provided to meet specific needs and help compensate for limitations in activities resulting from intellectual, motor, and sensory impairments, chronic illnesses, or any other disorder (Symeonidou, & Mavrou, 2020). It can take different forms: individual or collective assistance (with one or more students), permanent or periodic assistance, etc.

In the literature related to the topic presented, there are works about educators and teachers of inclusive education, however, there is little mention of the concept of a teacher's assistant, a person who accompanies children with special educational needs. The professional activity of a teacher assistant is a hybrid profession, complete uncertainty surrounds the role of these professionals, and there are discrepancies in the names adopted to refer to them (Rakhimov, & Mukhamediev, 2022). Teaching assistants seek a professional identity where roles and practices are clearly defined. The tasks and responsibilities assigned to them are not unified and are not subject to a professional reference system that would describe the skills required for this type of professional activity. In the absence of such a frame of reference, the delineation of functions, tasks, and roles becomes difficult and thus creates an obstacle to reflection aimed at delineating the boundaries between the functions of the support person and the role of the educator.

Beyond any legislative framework, the work of school support workers (teacher assistants) in Ukraine reveals the real dilemmas of the profession in their intervention in inclusive schools: whether it is monitoring one student or monitoring several, whether the profession of teaching is teamwork or individual work, or whether it is a personal decision... Thus, out of an insoluble dilemma, professionals seek to develop their activities and position themselves in relation to other professionals (Kubitskyi, Saienko, Demianiuk, & Mykhasiuk, 2022).

Materials

The proposed paper uses a secondary data analysis methodology. The analysis of data originally collected as part of previous research (see Table 1), which was conducted over a two-year period (2021-2022) and focused on the experiences of school support workers in Ukraine, the confusion between the roles of teacher and teacher assistant in the context of the growth of inclusive education in Ukraine, and the dilemmas of the profession of supporting students with special educational needs. Existing data were used for analysis in light of the new reflective goals.

The first study was based on a questionnaire aimed at determining the profile of school support staff for students with special educational needs. The questionnaire focused on the nature of their work and functions, their previous training and/or in-service training, their collaboration with the multidisciplinary team, and the needs and difficulties they face. The content of 78 completed questionnaires was analysed (Table 2).

Table 2 – *Secondary analysis of data from three previous studies*

Stage	Purpose	Target group
First stage Conducting a survey	Defining the profile of a teacher's assistant	78 teacher assistants
Second stage Analysis of the activity	Description of dilemmas in the work of a teacher	20 teachers
Third stage Analysis of the activity	Description of dilemmas in the work of a teacher's assistant	11 teacher assistants

Source: authors' own development

Two other studies that use a common methodology, namely the analysis of teacher assistants in inclusive schools, aimed to identify the dilemmas of the teaching profession and the dilemmas of school support staff.

The participants of the study, conducted separately, were 11 teaching assistants and 20 teachers. The classes of four teachers and three teaching assistants were visited and filmed (two were working with one inclusive student and the third was accompanying several students in the same class). Simple self-confrontational interviews were conducted with the participants to comment on and explain their actions. Allo-confrontational interviews allowed us to identify the practices of other professionals and compare them with our own. At the final stage, mutual self-confrontations using the collective exchange of observations on the filmed scenes (three interviews with eight teacher assistants and three others with 16 teachers divided into three groups) caused an exchange of views on their own professional experience, during which 11 teachers and eight assistants reviewed the work of another person, allowed them to discover the practices of other professionals and compare them with their own. At the final stage, mutual self-confrontations using the collective exchange of observations on the filmed scenes (three interviews with eight teacher assistants and three others with 16 teachers divided into three groups) provoked an exchange of views on their own professional experience, during which 11 teachers and eight assistants reviewed the work of another person, allowed them to discover the practices of other professionals and compare them with their own.

At the final stage, mutual self-confrontations using a collective exchange of observations of the filmed scenes (three interviews with eight assistants and three others with 16 teachers divided into three groups) provoked an exchange of views on their own professional experience.

The reuse of the data of the presented study is aimed at 1) studying the dynamics of the teacher's assistant in his/her interaction with the teacher, 2) analysing his/her practices when he/she works in pairs with teachers 3) understanding the evolution of their profession in the development stage into an interprofession, which is a professional space located on the border of different professions (Classen, & Westbrook, 2022). It is a shared but temporary space focused on a common intention to reduce a problematic situation, i.e. the specific needs of students. Its dynamics are created by the team and allow different participants to understand each other and act in a complementary way, but without losing their professional identity.

The last point of the work was to present our own approach to inclusive education for children with special educational needs, based on the experience of the focus group.

In this part, the results of the study are presented in a binary light. The following axes of reflection are proposed: the first is the organization and functioning of support services (teacher's assistant) services, including the support provided to professionals, the established contract, and the description of roles and tasks, the second concerns interprofessional cooperation at the level of collective workplaces of teachers. Next, an analysis of these data is offered, highlighting the specifics of the dynamics of the work of a teacher's assistant/teacher in an inclusive environment. Finally, the typology of different positions of teacher's assistant in inclusive schools in Ukraine is defined.

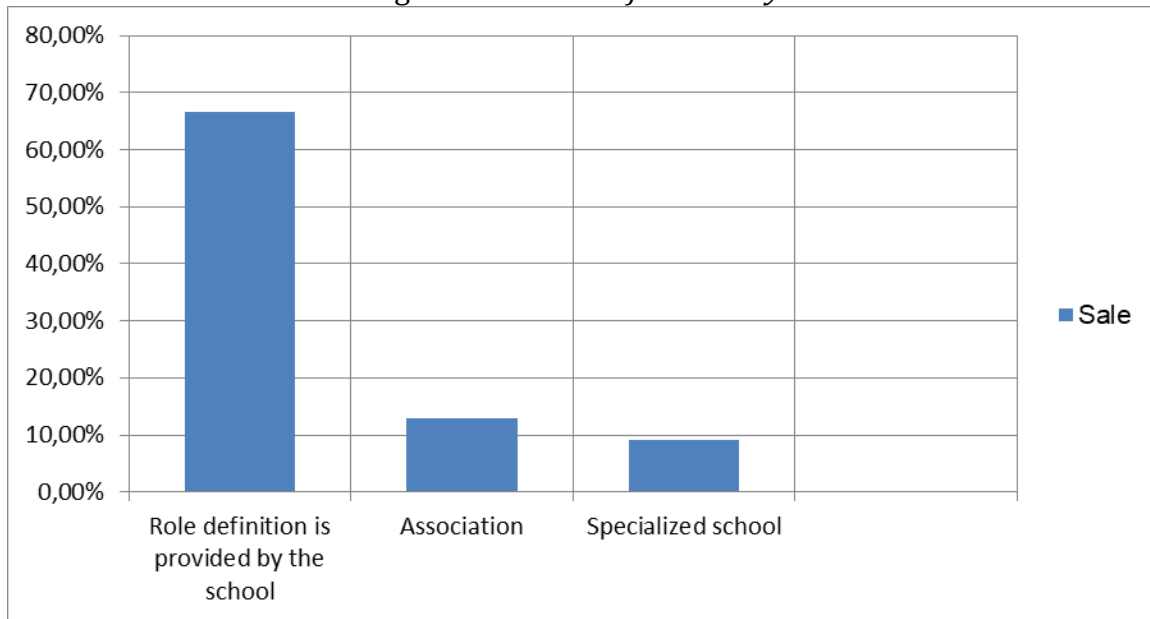
The findings show that support for teaching assistants can be provided in a variety of ways: in-service training before they start their profession and/or during classes and contacting the school's team of professionals for additional information and advice.

Axis 1: Organization and functioning of support services for inclusive education

In most cases, a written contract is concluded between the teacher assistant and the school, which is not formalized (91%) but may also be concluded verbally with parents. At this level, it should be noted that 73% of teaching assistants have a university degree, and 39.7% specialize in teaching subjects (Tsekhmister, 2022). This explains why in some cases the specialty “teacher” is indicated in the contract. It should also be noted that there are very different titles for these support persons depending on the institution and school (teacher's assistant, teacher's assistant, assistant, auxiliary teacher, etc.).

Even if the results of the survey of teacher assistants show that the role is defined by the school (66.7%), association (12.8%), or specialized school (9%) where the child is studying, the interviews with self-confidence go in the other direction and point out, first of all, the lack of a job description, lack of explanations about tasks, functions, roles, self-identification of their responsibilities, most of which are related to pedagogical adaptation, etc. (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 – Results of the survey



Source: author's own development

Here are some of the adaptations mentioned by teacher assistants in the light of their daily practice, which do not necessarily appear at the contract level: simplifying concepts, working in small groups, explaining lessons, adapting materials, tools, and work materials, modifying exams, using different strategies according to individual differences, applying an adapted curriculum, etc. Thus, the role of a teacher's assistant in Ukrainian schools is primarily educational.

Axis 2. Interprofessional cooperation

The majority of the interviewed teaching assistants see themselves as a collaborator in a team (60.26%) and to a lesser extent as student's assistant in daily life (16.66%) or even teacher's assistant in the classroom (10.26%). However, the interviews reflect a lack of true teamwork: no relationship with school professionals or lack of cooperation and organization, non-participation in team meetings, rejection of the assistant as a professional by members of the multidisciplinary team, lack of visibility going so far as to disregard their point of view or a serious aspect of

their work. Rarely do they mention the ongoing collaboration with the teacher and meetings with the multidisciplinary team, or even support from management.

In the absence of a job profile, a teacher's assistant working with children with special educational needs works alone: they are responsible for the student(s), given the possibility of working with several students at the same time, within the same classroom, and very often they manage situations and make decisions on their own, sometimes with a sense of marginalization.

As for the teacher who deals with students with special educational needs, he or she finds himself or herself in a new situation that challenges his or her professional identity and requires him or her to develop different teaching strategies to adapt to a diverse audience. Due to the lack of training for this type of work and the diversity of rhythms, needs, etc., as well as the lack of tools (teaching tools and resources provided by schools), he feels disoriented in the face of this responsibility. In this context, it should be noted that as much as cooperation already exists between different actors in educational institutions, only in conditions of interprofessional cooperation is it possible to realize interaction useful for inclusive practices. Highlighting and sharing professional knowledge between actors involved in the education of children with disabilities allows us to move beyond the stage of implicit and comparative practices. Identifying the contracts that underlie practice appears to be a necessary condition for building actions that indicate the exchange of common signs in the service of new education. In light of these challenges, the strategy of Universal Design for Inclusive Learning (UDL) seems to be effective. UDL is a framework for planning and organizing instruction that allows teachers and teaching assistants to define pedagogical intentions, methods, assessments, and learning materials that are adapted to different learners. It is a universal and flexible approach that promotes inclusion and learning for all children while recognizing their diverse needs.

UDL is based on three main principles: representation, expression, and action (Table 3).

Table 3 – *Universal Design for Learning: Empowering Education for All*

Representation	Expression	Actions
Planning ways of representation in the classroom	Different opportunities in terms of language, math, and other subjects	Activate prior knowledge
Presentation of different possibilities for perceiving the material	Easy to understand explanation of vocabulary and symbols	Provide basic knowledge
A variety of ways to personalize the presentation of information	Explanation of syntax and structure	Identify specific characteristics of learners
Support planning and strategy development	Developing skills through step-by-step support in practice and in performance situations	Guide the learner in setting appropriate goals
Facilitate information and resource management	Offer different opportunities in terms of self-expression and communication	Optimize access to supportive tools and technologies

Source: author's own development

Rethinking the pedagogical design of inclusive education practice and adapting it in accordance with the principles of the inclusive approach at the micro level would allow:

- improving the quality of learning and teaching;
- commitment to a reflective approach to one's role as an educator;
- reducing interprofessional misunderstandings.

For children, it is:

- increased independence and motivation;

- reducing stress related to coming to school;
- and increased motivation and confidence.

Formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs

Based on the experience of the focus group, the paper presents the most optimal approach to inclusive education for children with special educational needs.

Adopting a pedagogical stance that truly takes into account the diversity of students may seem like an unattainable goal. In fact, it is possible and feasible to create a context in which a student can have a positive, enriching, and motivating learning experience (Nieminen, & Pesonen, 2022).

Considering the opinions of teachers and teaching assistants who work with children with special educational needs, we present a continuous step towards an inclusive school for all students. It includes school integration, school inclusion, and inclusive education.

It should be noted that different school environments in Ukraine are doing their best to promote inclusion in the context of war, but despite the efforts, the goal of leading every student to success has not yet been achieved (Kozibroda, Kruhlyk, Zhuravlova, & Chupakhina, 2020). To improve the inclusiveness of the Ukrainian school environment, we present the following approach.

1. Know the characteristics of students

Knowing how to recognize specific learning difficulties in students allows you to adapt teaching by practicing differentiated instruction so that each one can thrive and reach their full potential. The same applies to so-called “neuroatypical” profiles, such as people with autism, attention deficit disorder, or people with high learning potential.

For many, access to technological learning aids (assistive technology) can reduce or eliminate the barriers that stand between them and the tasks they need

to accomplish. In this case, it is necessary to ensure a harmonious combination of available digital educational resources, devices used by students in the classroom, and the use of technical means for people with special needs (Haidabrus, 2022).

2. A course for differentiated learning

Differentiated instruction is an approach that combines several strategies to help students reach their full potential. There are three forms: pedagogical flexibility, adaptation (or adjustment), and modification. Pedagogical flexibility is the kind of flexibility where the teacher offers all of his or her students planned choices in teaching and learning. Adaptation refers to adjustments to these teaching and learning sequences but does not change what is assessed.

Modification refers to changes that modulate the teaching and learning sequence and affect the assessment criteria and expectations of the assessment situation. In the context of modification, the level of difficulty of situations changes.

“Differentiation” is not a bank of strategies, but rather a way of thinking about teaching and learning.

3. Choosing the basics of universal design for learning

Universal design for learning aims to develop learners with special educational needs: resourceful, knowledgeable, and competent (by offering them multiple means of representation), focused on strategic goals (by offering them multiple means of action and expression), motivated and determined (by offering them multiple means of engagement).

This inclusive approach tends to introduce ways of respecting the diversity of learners by taking their needs into account. It is based on the social model of disability, which asserts that people with disabilities are disadvantaged by external and environmental barriers that are imposed on them (Semigina & Chystiakova, 2020).

4. *Creating a favorable learning environment*

A supportive learning environment is closely related to universal design for learning. An enabling environment promotes a positive learning experience. Its origin comes from the capability approach (Bešić, 2020). According to the author, capabilities are different from abilities, as the former are a matter of know-how, while the latter are the ability to do. An empowering environment allows learners to develop their autonomy by giving them the freedom to make choices, act and reflect to demonstrate their “abilities” in their achievements.

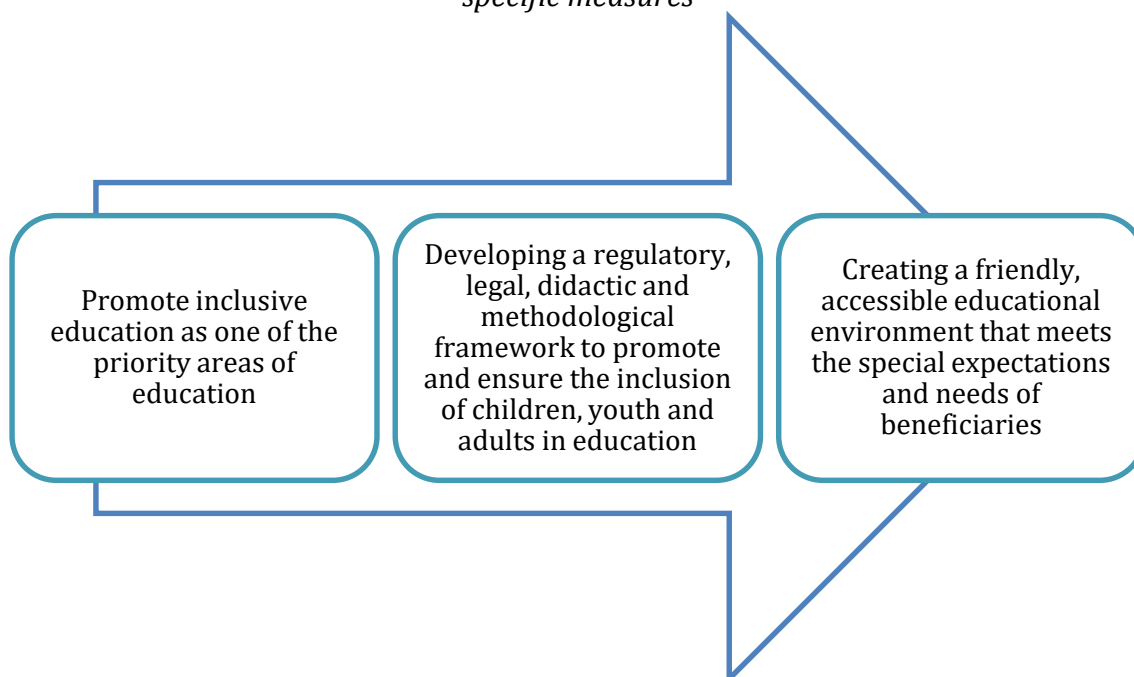
We believe that while individualizing support measures can increase the workload of educational resources (and all participants in educational circles), implementing inclusive education provides a better chance of success for all without draining resources (Crane, 2020).

Environments don't become inclusive overnight, but collective efforts in this direction (especially at the teacher/teaching assistant level) contribute to optimal learning for all.

Formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs

Thus, inclusive education is an approach that all children should have equal opportunities to attend the same school and learn together, regardless of their cultural, social, ethnic, racial, religious, and economic backgrounds or their intellectual or physical abilities and capacities (Acevedo, & Nusbaum, 2020). Thus, the general goals of an inclusive approach to education are as follows (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 – Implementation of an inclusive approach to education in the context of specific measures



Source: authors' own development

The presented approach envisages certain specific measures that, taken together, will facilitate the educational process and inclusive education of all children, regardless of the difficulties they face, as well as:

- harmonization of the national regulatory framework to ensure access to education and equal educational opportunities for every child, young person and adult;
- development and promotion of policies for the implementation of inclusive education;
- development and implementation of a system of standards for inclusive education;
- reviewing and developing mechanisms for adequate funding in the field of inclusive education;
- building institutional capacity and developing support services for excluded and/or marginalized children;

- initial training and professional development of personnel in the field of inclusive education;
- initial and continuing training of personnel in terms of inclusive education, resources;
- individual approach, respect for each child's own pace of development (initial assessment, individualized educational plan, monitoring, and ongoing evaluation, final evaluation);
- adaptation/implementation of an inclusive curriculum, which is inherently flexible;
- development/implementation of a flexible assessment system in terms of inclusive education;
- ensuring accessibility of educational and training institutions through the use of assistive technology and technological innovations;
- development of partnerships between state structures between government agencies, local governments, civil society, and families,
- development of partnerships between government agencies, local governments, civil society, and families to ensure community inclusion and access to an integrated system of social services;
- development of partnerships between government agencies, local governments, civil society, and families to ensure inclusive education inclusive education.

The need to educate students with disabilities has become an imperative in Ukraine. The issue of accessibility of education for all is a moral recipe for a modern and progressive society. Inclusive education should be open to all students regardless of their background, environment, or health status, as evidenced, among other things, by the introduction of the concept of inclusive education among the basic principles of the public education service (Li, & Singh, 2022). It is the one that should offer every child with disabilities the conditions for optimal development, putting everyone at the center of their problems in order to be as close as possible to their rhythms, needs, and expectations.

Thus, the policy of inclusive education in Ukraine has been developing over the past 15 years based on the best practices of other countries in this area and recommendations of international organizations (Bulakh, 2020). The legislative framework fully meets the needs of implementing inclusive education at the national level (Hrabovets, Kalashnikova, & Chernous, 2020). The introduction of inclusive education at the national level began with the reform of the boarding school system, the transfer of students from boarding schools to the community, and the need for their educational inclusion in general education schools (Kovalyshyn, Vivcharenko, & Gryshko, 2020). This new process has led to significant changes and the development of a national assessment of the educational needs of children with special educational needs and support in the educational process (Florian, 2019). However, in order to support each school individually, teachers and teaching assistants need to create their own approaches (at the micro level) to support educational inclusion across the country (Shaeffer, 2019). The imperative of accessibility of inclusive education implies a rethinking of the obligations of the state, society, and teachers. Instead of integrative ambitions based on equal access to knowledge and social goods embodied by the welfare state, this perspective favors inclusive ambitions that make accessibility a means of preventing all forms of exclusion (Han, & Lee, 2022). According to Knight and Crick (2022), this universal design should support everyone who needs help. The accessibility imperative of inclusive education thus defines a way of doing school based on a culture of success, placing the singularization of schooling modes at the heart of the legitimacy of the institution: the requirement to adapt is no longer a problem for the student (who is expected to adapt), but also for the institution, which is asked to adapt to the uniqueness of each student (Cologon, 2022). In this context, Miller et. al. (2022) note that the education sector, like the health and social sectors, is called upon to transform to focus on the strengths and skills of children with special needs rather than their weaknesses. Thus, avoiding stigma, promoting neurodiversity, and combating social segregation allow us to draw attention to inequalities and try to correct them. Education and teaching professionals, from kindergarten to

university, are clearly suffering from uncertainty and exhaustion. School actors, like those in health care, have a sense of having to manage very diverse issues, to be catalysts for social problems, without necessarily being supported by a hierarchy (Dwyer et. al., 2023). Because of these issues, the prospect of incorporating social and cognitive diversity is not the cause of the crisis that the institution will experience, but rather a means - imbued with ideals - to condense the school's mission and facilitate the expression of a shared vision. Above all, it involves recognizing the investment of the professionals who work for it, especially teachers and teaching assistants.

Conclusions

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that the formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs is an urgent and necessary task for Ukraine. The legal framework, practical implementation, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the inclusive approach are important aspects that affect the quality of education and social integration of children with special educational needs.

Thus, to achieve the aim of the study, the following steps were taken:

- ✓ The article analyses scientific sources and literature related to the formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs, in particular Ukrainian education.
- ✓ The study of the professional activity of a teacher's assistant (accompanying person) in the context of inclusive education.
- ✓ The dilemmatic issues that school counsellors will face in search of their professional identity and that put them on the verge of another profession - the profession of a teacher - are identified.
- ✓ The article analyses how the assistant positions himself in relation to the teacher in terms of joint missions towards students with special educational needs. It is investigated how the assistant delimits his place in the interprofessional space.

- ✓ The strategy of “Universal Design for Inclusive Learning” has been developed, which will help improve the quality of inclusive practice in Ukrainian education.
- ✓ The article analyses the results of the study and provides recommendations for the formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs in Ukraine based on the professional activity of a teacher's assistant.

This analysis has revealed a particular typology of different teacher assistant positions in inclusive schools in Ukraine, which reflects the very diverse demarcation of territories and boundaries according to schools and which may pose an obstacle to any real cooperation. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that research in this area is an ongoing process and that there are various challenges and opportunities for further improvement of the inclusive approach in education. The introduction of innovative methods, professional development of teachers, and improvement of the infrastructure of educational institutions are key aspects that will help ensure the successful formation of an inclusive approach to the education of children with special educational needs in Ukraine. It seems necessary to create a common national vision of a reference skills system for teacher assistants in Ukraine, delineating the boundaries of their sphere of intervention in working with children with special educational needs, as well as joint work trajectories between them and teachers. This will allow education sector personnel to acquire and integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are likely to improve their work and change their skills. Based on the responses and reflections of the professional focus group, it is reasonable to assert that the creation of inclusive approaches at the micro level in the education of children with special educational needs is an ambitious work project that cannot be implemented without the state meeting the above conditions.

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