

Article

# Humanization of society through integration and inclusive education: Challenges and prospects for individuals with visual impairments in Ukraine

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#### CITATION

Tulashvili Y. Humanization of society through integration and inclusive education: Challenges and prospects for individuals with visual impairments in Ukraine. Forum for Education Studies. 2024; 2(3): 279. https://doi.org/10.59400/fes.v2i3.279

#### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 25 October 2023 Accepted: 18 December 2023 Available online: 16 August 2024

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**Abstract:** The new concept of humanizing society, founded on the priority of personality development through socialization processes, opens new perspectives for citizens with visual impairments in Ukrainian society. The article analyzes the issue of social adaptation of this category of people through inclusive education, which encompasses preschool, general, and vocational training. The historical, philosophical, psychological, and methodological aspects of implementing an integrative approach to inclusive education for visually impaired individuals are considered. The study emphasizes the importance of the "principle of equal opportunities" in education for children and youth with functional limitations, focusing on the integration of such individuals into the general educational process. It underscores the need for a societal attitude shift towards children with special educational needs and the support for the idea of inclusion at the state level, involving school administrators, educational staff, parents, and other participants in the educational process. The psychological and pedagogical support of children with visual impairments within the context of inclusive education, playing a key role in the development of Ukraine's modern educational system, is distinguished by its multidisciplinary approach. This support ensures the preparation and psychological readiness of all participants in the educational process for cooperation with children with health issues and includes the prevention and correction of secondary developmental deviations in such children. Special attention is paid to the role of social and pedagogical work in the development of a child with disabilities in accordance with the general patterns of child development, considering secondary symptoms related to abnormal social development. The article investigates the main approaches to implementing inclusive education in the educational space of Ukraine. The author examines the normative legal acts concerning the integration of people with special needs and their impact on the development of democracy. Additionally, an overview of the experience of organizing education for people with visual impairments in Ukraine and abroad is provided. The authors of the article highlight the need for support of regional rehabilitation and social protection programs for people with visual impairments, the creation of scientific-methodological resource centers for inclusive education, and the integration of such children into general education institutions. The conclusions of the study underline that addressing issues of accessibility, inclusion, and humanization of societal relations towards visually impaired individuals will contribute to their successful socialization and professional training, reflecting modern approaches to education and vocational training for blind and visually impaired individuals. The importance and prospects of implementing inclusive education in Ukraine's educational space are demonstrated and significant for educators, lecturers, and students of pedagogical and technical universities, as well as education and science professionals.

**Keywords:** humanisation of society; inclusive education; persons with visual impairments; social rehabilitation; vocational rehabilitation; integrative approach; development of inclusive education

# 1. Statement of the problem

Considering the historical development of the social integration of blind people, it should be noted that Ukrainian society, taking into account universal human values and a humanistic approach, has developed and implemented a number of normative documents regulating the education and training of persons with special needs. These documents emphasise that the full integration of persons with disabilities into the public life of modern society is a problem of social integration [1]. This problem can be solved through their inclusion in the educational environment based on the principles of an integrative approach, obtaining an appropriate level of education, vocational training, and further integration into social and labour relations [2–4].

The tasks of social adaptation of people with visual impairments and their vocational rehabilitation are addressed at the state level by social policy workers and scientists in the fields of typhlopsychology, typhlopedagogy, and vocational education [5–7]. In the chain of stages of social integration, vocational training is of great importance, as it is a key tool for the social and labour adaptation of a person with visual impairments. The blind have their place in the social environment, and all persons with visual impairments can be included in society not only as socially full-fledged but also as creatively active, productive members of society [8].

# 2. Analysis of key research and publications

The studies by Alferova and Potehina [9], V. Bondar, A. Kolupaieva, L. Savchuk, L. Stasiuk, L. Budiak, and others examine the problems that arise during the integration of children with special needs. It is important to apply several approaches: a person-centered approach, which involves perceiving a child with a disability as a child with natural childhood interests such as the need for communication, etc.; a family-centered approach (as the family is the primary support system for the child); an interdisciplinary approach to teaching children with special needs is also an important component.

The works of Alieksieieva [10,11], D. Dymytrychenko, V. Yermakov, K. Kolchenko, O. Legkyi, H. Nikulina, I. Poretskyi, Y. Tulashvili [12], P. Talanchuk, L. Shautsukova, H. Tseitlin, H. Yakunin, and others consider computer technologies not only as a subject of study but also as a new means of empowering visually impaired people for successful adaptation in modern society. For example, V. Yermakov, G. Yakunin, and others investigate the need to use elements of computer training for the socialisation of visually impaired people. The researchers point to the possibility of creating an ideal computer workplace for blind professionals in any modern institution.

The theoretical basis of the research is the works on the theory of learning (A. Aleksiuk, S. Honcharenko, V. Zagvyazinsky, V. Kraevsky, V. Lednev, A. Nisimchuk, M. Skatkin and others); on the theory of activity developed by psychologists (S. Bocharova, P. Halperin, V. Davydov, A. Leontiev, Z. Reshetova,

N. Talyzina, V. Yakunin and others); from the theory of educational and creative activity (V. Bezpalko, I. Lerner, Y. Ponomarev, S. Sysoeva and others); from the theory of personal and activity approach to learning (O. Padalka, G. Selevko, I. Yakimanska and others); on the theory of computerisation of learning and informatisation of education (V. Bykov, B. Gershunsky, R. Horbatiuk, R. Gurevych, M. Zhaldak, N. Morse and others); on the problems of personal and activity approach to learning. Morse and others); on the problems of interaction with the environment and the formation of a person with visual impairments (L. Vygotsky, O. Litvak, M. Zemtsova, B. Kovalenko, Y. Kulagin, A. Suslavichus, V. Akimushkin, I. Morgulis, V. Sinyov, E. Sinyova, and others).

In the course of our research, we analysed the legal framework, including such laws of Ukraine as the Laws of Ukraine "On Education", "On Higher Education", "On Vocational Education", "On the National Informatisation Programme", "On the Fundamentals of Social Protection of Disabled Persons in Ukraine", "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Education on the Organisation of Inclusive Education", "On the Programme of Vocational Training for Hearing and Sight Impaired Persons in Higher Education Institutions of I-IV Accreditation Levels", and "On Approval of the Procedure for Organising Inclusive Education". Their impact on the process of humanistic development of Ukrainian society through the integration of people with special needs is determined [1].

The purpose of the article is to analyse the effectiveness of an integrative approach to inclusive education for people with visual impairments, as well as to assess its effectiveness for different categories of participants in the educational process.

## 3. The methodological basis

The methodological approach of this study is based on the philosophical principles of systems analysis, which are utilized to investigate pedagogical phenomena. The research incorporates elements of the theory of knowledge, examining the interrelationships between theory and practice, methods of scientific research, the development of personal creativity, and logical and abstract thinking. Attention is also paid to didactic principles aimed at analyzing the theoretical foundations of the content of secondary education.

To achieve the set goals, a variety of research methods were employed. Theoretical methods included the analysis of philosophical, psychological, pedagogical, educational-methodological literature, and internet information resources related to the research topic. This allowed for the systematization, comparison, and refinement of key concepts; analysis of the leading factors in the development of children with visual impairments; studying the experience of teachers in secondary educational institutions; international experience in the specified topic; and analysis of current methodological systems and tools. This helped to assess the current state and prospects of inclusive education in Ukraine.

# 4. Summary of the main material

The current stage of innovative development of society is accompanied by a

rethinking of the role of education and the place of the individual in society [13]. The participation of Ukraine in the common European educational space involves the modernization and reform of the national education system. It will enable compliance with international standards, including ensuring equal rights to education for Ukrainian citizens, including those with special needs [14].

The term "children with special needs" has spread with the endorsement of the 1994 Salamanca Declaration, which provides the following definition: "Special needs include all children and young people whose needs are due to various physical or mental disabilities or learning difficulties. A plenty of children face learning difficulties and thus have special educational needs at certain stages of their schooling" [15].

In Ukraine, the definitions "children with special needs" and "children with special educational needs" are used. However, these terms are usually applied only to those who have been identified as having peculiarities or disorders of psychophysical development, as they are the main representatives of "children with special needs".

In a more general sense, the definition "children with special educational needs" covers all children whose educational needs go beyond the generally accepted norms. It includes children with special needs, gifted children, and those who belong to socially vulnerable groups (children from orphanages, etc.).

Ukrainian society also uses the term "children with psychophysical developmental disorders". This term refers to "children who have congenital or acquired deviations from normal physical or mental development".

We should note that there are numerous theoretical classifications of disabilities in human health and development. One of the most common is the British Disability Scale. According to this scale, an impairment is defined as a loss or abnormality of mental or physiological functions or an abnormality of structure that makes activity difficult, and a limited ability is defined as a loss of ability (due to a defect) to perform a certain activity within the limits of what is considered normal for a person. Disability is a consequence of a defect or disability of a particular person that prevents or limits the performance of a certain normal role, taking into account age or social factors [16].

When working with children with functional limitations, it is important to take into account general and specific patterns. It includes "changing the essence of the state policy on children with disabilities and developing certain mechanisms of action for its implementation" [17].

Among the measures aimed at rehabilitating children with disabilities are the following:

- 1) Software and methodological support for special (correctional) educational institutions;
- 2) Training and professional development of personnel working with children with disabilities:
- 3) Development of rehabilitation centers for children with disabilities and creation of new ones;
- 4) Creation of new educational models for children with disabilities.
- 5) Inclusive education is one of the modern educational models aimed at taking

into account the needs of every student, including children with functional disabilities.

When working with children with functional disabilities, the following principles should be followed:

- ensuring the rights of the child;
- guaranteeing state services in the field of social services;
- ensuring equal opportunities for social services and their accessibility for children;
- guaranteeing access to all types of social services;
- focusing social services on the individual needs of children with disabilities;
- prioritizing measures for the social adaptation of children with disabilities;
- responsibility of state authorities and local self-government bodies for observance of the rights of children with disabilities in the field of social services [18].

When studying the specifics of working with children with disabilities, several specific patterns can be identified:

- the effectiveness of social and pedagogical rehabilitation of a child with disabilities depends on mobilizing the family's potential;
- the implementation of an individual rehabilitation program for each child with disabilities is based on his or her potential for rehabilitation;
- the overall potential of society is united to maximize the needs of the family of a child with health and developmental problems [18].

When studying the issue of rehabilitation of children with disabilities, it is necessary to take into account that rehabilitation involves diagnosing the child's development to provide the family with timely special assistance as soon as signs of developmental disabilities are detected. It is important to remember that the rehabilitation process has a specific content [19].

In scientific research, we can find definitions of the essence of rehabilitation processes. "Rehabilitation in all its forms is the result of an impact on the individual, his or her mental and physical functions. Rehabilitation is the next stage after adaptation and cannot be considered separately from the family, which should contribute to the realization of rehabilitation opportunities. Social rehabilitation is an ongoing but time-limited process during which new qualitative changes in the child should occur. Social rehabilitation should be considered as a specific process for each age stage." [16].

Therefore, for the successful socialization of children with disabilities, it is sufficient to provide timely professional adaptive and rehabilitation assistance to the family where such a child is brought up. This assistance should be comprehensive and psychological, as it includes not only rehabilitation but also ensuring the social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development of a child with disabilities, with the maximum disclosure of his or her educational potential.

Additionally, with the aim of implementing an integrated approach to the education and upbringing of children and adolescents in inclusive conditions, taking into account their age, unique characteristics, and abilities, psychological and pedagogical support is provided. This support is based on a person-centered approach to assist the educational process of children with special psychophysical

needs. In the context of inclusive education, this support involves the implementation of an individually developed developmental program for each child. The program includes an individual educational plan, an individual learning program, adaptation of educational materials, and modification of educational services to correct and amend secondary developmental disorders in the child.

The topic of psychological and pedagogical support in the educational and cognitive process of children with unique educational requirements has been the subject of research by scholars such as V. Bondar, T. Grebenyuk, L. Grechko, V. Zasenko, A. Kolupaieva, Y. Nayda, T. Sak, V. Syniova, and others. To understand the key aspects of psychological and pedagogical support, let's consider the interpretations of this concept by different researchers.

The term "support" in the field of modern pedagogy and psychology was introduced by G. Bardier, I. Romazan, T. Cherednikova. They define it as a set of professional measures by psychologists and educators aimed at creating special conditions for the harmonious development and effective education of a child in a specific educational context.

According to the research of Y. Nayda and A. Kolupaieva, psychological and pedagogical support includes:

- As a component of a holistic and comprehensive system of social support and psychological and pedagogical assistance, implemented through the work of social-psychological and psychological and pedagogical services.
- 2) As an integrative technology, focused on creating conditions for the development and self-development of the personality, thus facilitating the effective performance of the basic functions of a human.
- 3) As a process of a special kind of interaction between those who provide support and those who need assistance.

Therefore, psychological and pedagogical support of a child with deviations in psychophysical development in the educational process involves the assimilation of educational programs, correction of developmental deviations, social adaptation, and psychological development in specially adapted psychological and pedagogical conditions of the educational institution. This approach is key in creating an individual development program and educational plan for a child with special educational needs within the framework of inclusive education.

According to the studies of L. Grechko, psychological and pedagogical support for children with disabilities encompasses various aspects, including prevention, individual and group diagnostics, consultations both at the individual and group levels; developmental and corrective measures for both individuals and groups; psychological education and training: building psychological awareness, developing psycho-pedagogical knowledge and skills among students, school administrations, teachers, and parents; as well as the expertise of educational programs, projects, manuals, the educational environment, and the professional activities of specialists in educational institutions.

The model of psychological and pedagogical support for students with special educational needs, developed by Z. Sofiy, has unique characteristics defined by the individual limitations and personal development of each child. The author also outlines the general stages of this support process. In the first, introductory stage, the

administration of the educational institution creates the necessary normative-legal, material-technical, educational-methodological, and socio-psychological conditions, fundamental for the unfolding of the support process. The second stage involves psycho-pedagogical diagnostics, where psychological assessment precedes pedagogical assessment. The third stage, corrective, focuses on rectification and adaptation according to the identified problems. According to the evaluation, the model of psychological and pedagogical support proposed by Z. Sofiy proves effective, as it involves adapting the educational process to the individual capabilities of the child, preparing the social environment for the integration of a child with psychophysical developmental issues, as well as undertaking targeted diagnostics and specialized work to correct secondary developmental deviations in the child. This approach is crucial in the development of an individual program for a child with special educational needs in the context of inclusive education.

Thus, analyzing scientific literature and our own observations, we have identified key tasks of psychological and pedagogical support for children with visual impairments within the framework of inclusive education. These include:

- Creating special conditions for organizing the education of this category of children.
- 2) Developing psychological readiness among teachers, parents, and students to interact with children with health issues.
- 3) Prevention and correction of secondary developmental deviations in the child, forming a psychological mindset in the child with visual impairments to overcome difficulties and achieve success in various spheres of activity, as well as their social adaptation.

Taking the aforementioned into account, psychological and pedagogical support of children with visual impairments in the context of inclusive education plays a key role in the development of the modern educational system in Ukraine, distinguished by its multidisciplinary approach. This support is aimed at creating special conditions for educating this category of students, ensuring preparation and psychological readiness of all participants in the educational process to cooperate with children who have health issues, and also includes the prevention and correction of secondary developmental deviations in such children.

Therefore, the integrative approach is of particular importance, which has led to close cooperation between general and special educational institutions, between these institutions and the child's family. All this cooperation is aimed at organizing education and providing pedagogical assistance to children with disabilities, as the education of these children in mainstream schools cannot be effective without special help.

Special educational institutions for children with special needs implement programs of primary, basic, and secondary (complete) general education by the State Standard of Special Education in the International Classification of Education Standards [20].

It is necessary to emphasize that equal opportunity education is realized only in a society where disability is viewed from a social perspective, where there is no discrimination against people with disabilities either in words or actions, and where an integrative approach to inclusive education is implemented. It requires the creation of conditions in regular schools and universities for the education of such children. "This will allow us to consider their individual characteristics in learning and promote their active interaction with healthy children" [21].

It is important to note that the process of integrating children with special educational needs and children with disabilities into a single general education environment at the current stage of society's development will be ensured by adhering to an integrative approach. This process can be complete if it meets three prerequisites:

- education of each child (taking into account his or her special educational needs and development)
- the opportunity for a child to attend an educational institution while living in a family, and for parents to raise their child;
- expanding the child's social circle and improving his or her social adaptation [22].

Launching an inclusive education model requires breaking stereotypes and introducing new forms of work by all participants in the pedagogical process. Probably one of the most positive aspects, i.e. combining the capabilities of special and general education schools, which is a priority for the implementation of the integrative approach, is

- settling the educational institutions closer to the place of residence of children with special needs to avoid their separation from their families and to eliminate their isolation in the limited environment of other children with similar problems;
- convergence of the two education systems, which is the only way to provide necessary assistance to all children who need it to varying degrees. In this case, schoolchildren will not feel separated from general social life, and education will be fully personality-oriented, replacing the defectological approach.

At the present stage of development of education in Ukraine, it can be stated that the inclusive model based on the principles of the integrative approach in education is a multifaceted structure, which, in our opinion, includes [23]:

- the system of educational services, in particular, gaining experience in teaching innovative methods; developing individual curricula for children with special educational needs based on the standardized working curriculum, taking into account the conclusion of psychological, medical, and pedagogical consultations; determining the maximum permissible weekly academic load; maximizing the involvement of parents and volunteers;
- establishing cooperation with institutions, providing necessary services in accordance with the needs of children, namely regional and city psychological, medical, and pedagogical consultations; with district and city methodological offices of education departments in cooperation with the department of inclusive education of regional institutes of postgraduate teacher education; with public organizations and regional resource centers;
- providing favourable environment for creating a positive microclimate in the school community; promoting the idea of tolerant coexistence; promoting the socialization and integration of children with psychophysical disabilities.
  International experience has already shown that "the principle of equal

opportunities in primary, secondary, and higher education for children and youth is about to create integrated structures (such as mainstreaming) in many countries of the world—joint education of children with disabilities and healthy children. The principle of equal opportunities in social work is to provide social assistance regardless of the category of disability." [24].

The developmental personality of a child with a disability is revealed in accordance with the general patterns of child development when a defect, condition, or disease determines secondary symptoms that arise indirectly through abnormal social development. It applies to persons with disabilities from childhood with hearing, visual, musculoskeletal, and complex psychophysical developmental disorders [25–27].

Successful integration of children with visual impairments into mainstream education is possible on the condition that society changes its attitude towards such children and the idea of inclusion is supported by the state, heads of educational institutions, teachers, parents, and other participants in implementing the inclusive education process. Thus, the realization of this process is possible only if all its participants are aware of the need and importance of the integrative principle. The process of training future teachers and lecturers in pedagogical institutions of higher education who are familiar with the basics of the integrative approach is of great importance. For professional rehabilitation, the level of preparedness of teachers of technical higher education institutions for inclusive education of such students, considering innovative pedagogical technologies developed by educators and scientists in recent years, is crucial. Namely, pedagogical technologies based on the use of computer technology not only as a subject of study but also as a new means of empowering people with disabilities are vital [28,29].

### 5. Conclusions

Consequently, the research findings highlight that enhancing the effectiveness of social and professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities urgently requires state-level support for regional rehabilitation and social protection programs for individuals with visual impairments and the establishment of scientificmethodological-resource centers for their inclusive education. Moreover, to integrate children with special educational needs into general educational institutions, it is essential first to change societal attitudes towards these children and gain support for the concept of inclusion from the state, heads of educational institutions, educational staff, parents, and other participants in the implementation process of inclusive education. Issues of psychological and pedagogical support for children with visual impairments within the framework of inclusive education, which play a significant role in the progress of Ukraine's modern educational system, characterized by their comprehensive multidisciplinary approach, have been discussed. This support is aimed at creating adapted conditions for the education of such students, facilitates the preparation and development of psychological readiness among teachers, parents, and other participants in the educational process for effective interaction with children with visual impairments, and includes important elements of prevention and correction of developmental changes in these children. This approach promotes the integration and full involvement of these children in the educational environment, ensuring their comprehensive developmental advancement. Therefore, beginning the process of integrating a student with psychophysical developmental features is crucial with the awareness of all participants of the necessity and importance of this step.

Addressing the outlined problems of accessibility and inclusion and the humanization of societal relations towards visually impaired individuals in the process of their rehabilitation will lead to a successful process of socialization and professional training of individuals with visual impairments, reflecting modern approaches to education and vocational training for the blind and visually impaired.

# 6. Prospects for further research

Our research includes the continuation of publications in this area. It also includes: analysis of support for regional programs for the rehabilitation and social protection of persons with visual impairments at the state level; analysis of the level of self-development opportunities for children with visual impairments in the process of their training in inclusive general education institutions; outlining ways to improve the effectiveness of social and vocational rehabilitation of persons with visual impairments; and studying opportunities to improve the accessibility and inclusion of persons with visual impairments in all spheres of society.

Thus, to summarize, it should be noted that the solution to the outlined problems of accessibility and inclusion, the humanization of social relations in relation to persons with visual impairments in the process of their rehabilitation, will lead to a successful process of socialization and vocational training of persons with visual impairments.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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