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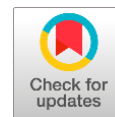
# The development of strategies and approaches to the successful implementation of inclusive education

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**Abstract** The study focuses on the development of strategies and approaches for the successful implementation of inclusive education. The importance of this research results from the fact that the Ukrainian educational space is constantly expanding. Therefore, considerable attention is paid to the provision of special education services. At the same time, the paper contains the results of the authors' own strategy, which has tasks, principles, and approaches and is divided into stages. The authors have chosen only 4 complementary approaches, the implementation of which alone will significantly impact the state of inclusive education in Ukraine. This article aims to highlight the formation of strategies and approaches to successfully implement inclusive education. The subject of the research is an inclusive educational environment. Research methods. The following research methods were used in the study: description, analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalization, and modeling. The paper is devoted to the formation of strategies and approaches to the successful implementation of inclusive education. The authors described the state of inclusive education in Ukraine in 2023. They also identified the advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education in Ukraine. In addition, the essence of the National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030 is described. The authors defined the purpose, principles, and approaches of the program document. In addition, they described the stages of the strategy and proposed their own strategy. The article reveals the tasks, principles, approaches, and stages of the authors' original strategy. In particular, it is noted that the goals of the strategy are to increase the number of inclusive classes, expand the network of institutions providing inclusive education services, improve the quality of inclusive education, and develop inclusive education as a promising field of education. The authors outline the principles of the strategy, such as equality of access, simplicity, ease of implementation, systematicity, complexity, and scientific validity.

**Keywords:** implementation, inclusive education, learning, educational process, approaches, strategy.

## 1. Introduction

At the present stage, the question of strategies and approaches to the successful implementation of inclusive education is quite important. This is due to the fact that our country is actively introducing foreign experience into modern educational practice, and as a result, the problem of inclusive education is quite acute. At the same time, inclusive education is only partially implemented in Ukraine. In particular, inclusive centers and classes are mostly located in large cities and regional centers with limited resources to operate. All this leads to the need to develop and implement a comprehensive, effective, and comprehensive strategy for inclusive education. At the same time, it is worth considering approaches that should also meet the main goals of the strategy.

The paper aims to highlight the formation of strategies and approaches for the successful implementation of inclusive education. The research goal is motivated by the significant role currently assigned to inclusive education in the modern educational space, as addressing special educational needs allows for expanding the number of students receiving knowledge.

According to the aim of the study, the following goals have been set:
− to analyze the state of inclusive education in Ukraine at the present stage;

− to review the National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030;
− to develop our own strategy for developing inclusive education for 2024-2034.

## 2. Literature review

The formation of strategies and approaches to the successful implementation of inclusive education has been studied by such domestic researchers as D. Bondarenko (2018), O. Lys (2021), V. Pisniak (2019), I. Tatianchikova (2021), and S. Chupakhina (2020). They are convinced that at the current stage, it is essential to implement quality inclusive education to meet the needs for special educational services of a large population.

For example, in the article "Formation of inclusive education in the EU, consequences of Implementation and Methods of Integration in Ukraine," D. Bondarenko asserts that inclusive education in Ukraine is still at the development stage and requires the incorporation of foreign experience (Bondarenko, 2018; Bazaluk, 2020). In particular, European practices could enable the implementation of an effective inclusive education strategy and the development of modern approaches.

In the article "Implementation of the Strategy for the Development of inclusive education in Ukraine: administrative-legal Aspect," O. Lys emphasizes that inclusive education in Ukraine is insufficiently represented in the legal sphere (Lys, 2021). Legal regulations are mainly directed at traditional education, while distance, blended, and inclusive education are not fully defined in existing normative-legal acts.

Overall, the issue of developing strategies and approaches for the successful implementation of inclusive education is only superficially addressed in the scientific literature. This is directly due to the fact that the implementation of inclusive education is a long process that requires practical experience, which may be lacking among domestic scientists.

## 3. Methods

Various methods were used in the research, including description, analysis and synthesis, comparison, generalization, and modeling. The descriptive method was used to outline the problem of this study. The analysis and synthesis method was used to elucidate the current state of inclusive education in Ukraine. The comparative method was used to contrast the advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education in Ukraine. The generalization method was used to summarize the research findings.

The modeling method was used to construct a model of the author's own strategy. Accordingly, this method was used to determine the key aspects of the future strategy and its components. Furthermore, this method allows the projection of the development of an inclusive education strategy in the future.

## 4. Results

At the current stage of Ukrainian education development, the inclusion issue is quite relevant. This is due to the fact that children with disabilities and various health conditions require active integration into society (Tsaras, 2018). Therefore, they should receive quality and dignified education. Organizing the educational process for them is about acquiring knowledge, adapting to new conditions, and developing certain traits and qualities in themselves (Namanyane, 2021).

From 2023 the following advantages of inclusive education in Ukraine can be identified. First, the number of students in inclusive classes and the number of institutions providing inclusive education services will increase. For example, if the number of students has increased by 2.6 times, the number of institutions has increased by 2 times. This indicates that modern educational institutions pay more attention to inclusive education and strive to make it accessible to different population groups (National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030).

In addition, the number of teachers' assistants is increasing significantly. For 2018-2023, their number has doubled. This covers 70% of the actual needs of educational institutions, but the number of assistants continues to grow. As a result, more children receive the necessary services (National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030).

It's also important to mention that the number of special educational and developmental services for children with special educational needs has also increased. This allows us to conclude that inclusive education at the current stage is focused on the provision of specialized educational services in the context of inclusion (Artiles, 2019; Popov, 2021).

At the same time, there are shortcomings in the educational process's organization in inclusive environments. First of all, it is the inaccessibility of educational institutions from the architectural point of view. Often, inclusive classrooms are not equipped to educate children with special educational needs (Ikhfi, 2018).

There is also a lack of readiness for some educators to work with children with special educational needs. This is often due to a lack of professional competence and experience or a lack of knowledge of how to interact with such children (Kumar, 2020; Akimov 2021).

Another problem is the lack of modern inclusive education programs for educational institutions at all levels. Specifically, there is a significant amount of development in inclusive education for preschool and secondary educational institutions. Meanwhile, such developments are practically absent in vocational, higher, and postgraduate educational institutions (Floretta, 2021).

Thus, the presence of strengths and weaknesses in the current state of inclusive education in our country indicates the need for a unified strategy for the successful implementation of inclusive education. However, it is worth mentioning that in 2020 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the program document of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine entitled "National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030". The strategy aims to "create an inclusive educational environment and conditions in which each person has access to quality education, taking into account a person's needs, contributing to the development of his or her potential without separation from the family and community" (National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030). The document states that every person has the right to education and participation in society. As a result, the program will contribute to every citizen's self-realization and personal development.

The document defines that it is based on principles such as:
− Racial equality;
− Tolerance;
− Protection of human rights and freedoms;
− Individualization of approaches to each participant in the inclusive educational environment;
− Complexity;
− Logic;
− Professional approach;
− Support for families with children with special educational needs;
− Cooperation between different institutions;
− Implementation of the best foreign or national experience (Lys, 2021; Lytvyn, 2022).

The program provides for the implementation of a mechanism that will comprehensively utilize various approaches to the implementation of inclusive education. In particular, this includes the establishment of funding for institutions providing inclusive education services. It includes providing such institutions with material and technical resources, allocating funds for specific needs, and determining salary levels with supplements.

It also includes ensuring that participants in the educational process have the necessary learning materials. These may consist of both educational materials themselves and didactic and methodological resources. A comprehensive selection of scientific literature will facilitate the quality implementation of the teaching process in inclusive settings.

In addition, according to the strategy, it is essential to increase the competence of professionals in inclusive education. This can be achieved through training, in-service courses, seminars, and round tables. It's crucial to provide theoretical knowledge and strengthen practical skills for organizing the educational process for children with special educational needs (Akimov, 2021; Popovych, 2022).

It's worth mentioning that inter-agency coordination is an important aspect. Cooperation should be established between institutions providing inclusive education services and various institutions and organizations.

The strategy also includes informing society about the importance of inclusion. This impacts public opinion, which should provide feedback on attitudes toward inclusion. As a result, there will also be widespread orientations among educational practitioners that include the provision of education for children with special educational needs. Positive attitudes towards inclusion may also be formed in society (Tatianchikova, 2021).

A peculiarity of the strategy is its division into three stages. This is due to the fact that at each step, it is necessary to define the objectives of the strategy, desired results, obstacles, and facilitating factors that allow to confirm the development of each stage. It's important to note that the division into stages is uneven. For example, the first stage is planned for 2 years, the second for 6 years, and the third for 2 years (Mezzanotte, 2022). This is illustrated in Table 1.

This uneven distribution can be explained by the fact that each stage has a specific list of tasks to be completed within a specific period. Consequently, the importance of a stage is determined by its duration concerning other stages. It is also important to note that the division of the strategy allows for a balanced determination of the functional purpose of each stage (Lazarev, 2022).

The first stage includes a thorough analysis of the current state of development of inclusive education in Ukraine. For this purpose, it is advisable to use both the analysis of actual indicators related to the increase in the number of students in inclusive classes and the consideration of the number of teachers and their professional competencies, as well as the state of inclusive classes. The construction of the strategy itself was based on the analysis of digital indicators (Bondarenko, 2022). However, it would also be relevant to identify specific problematic situations that hinder inclusion development. It could also be suggested to pay attention to specific cases where inclusion was not implemented. This had a real impact on providing special educational services to certain children (Pisniak, 2019; Murashko, 2021).

The second stage is the most important, as it involves the implementation of the inclusive education strategy itself. This stage is aimed at the gradual implementation of inclusive education in the educational space, hence the allocated period. However, one of the most important aspects here is the interaction between all government bodies and institutions, educational institutions, and administrations (Kryshtanovych, 2022; Dudnik, 2020). The second phase is currently being

implemented. The increase in the number of inclusive classes in schools, preschool educational institutions, and higher educational institutions characterizes it. This makes it possible to provide special educational services for different categories of children.

**Table 1** Stages National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030.

| Stage | Duration | Essence |
|---|---|---|
| First | 2020-2021 | An analysis of the current state of inclusive education in Ukraine, identification of its weaknesses and strengths, and the development of tactics and approaches to the strategy. |
| Second | 2022-2028 | Implementation of the strategy. Active engagement with various institutions and monitoring of the tasks performed. |
| Third | 2029-2030 | Evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness. Determining what has been accomplished and what has not been accomplished, as well as the reasons and obstacles for not achieving certain goals. Developing an effective mechanism for the development of inclusive education in the future. |

Source: compiled by the authors.

Moreover, at present, there is a situation where inclusive classes are established even in educational institutions where there is no acute need for them. Only 3-4 children with real problems related to the inability to receive educational services in traditional conditions can be included in the total number of students. This indicates that even a few children receive inclusive educational services that enable them to receive a quality education. Therefore, at this stage, success has already been achieved as children, even in small towns and villages, are receiving inclusive services (Parthasarathy, 2021; Semenets-Orlova, 2022).

It's also noteworthy that many educational institutions are equipped with ramps at the entrances and inside the premises. Inclusive classes are also equipped with everything necessary to allow children to receive educational services regardless of their disabilities. In particular, such classes have wide aisles between desks or learning areas, allowing children with musculoskeletal problems to move between them.

It is also worth noting that inclusive classrooms increasingly involve teachers with relevant professional competencies. These teachers and specialists have practical experience, an understanding of child psychology, and skills in working with children with special educational needs. They have appropriate specialization and pedagogical-professional programs. Thus, these children are provided with comprehensive and systematic knowledge. At the same time, they acquire communication and socialization skills and learn to interact with other children (Chupakhina, 2020; Akimova, 2022).

The third stage plays an essential role in determining the significance of the whole strategy. Its essence lies in the fact that within 2 years, it is necessary to analyze the achievements of the strategy in the development of inclusive education, identify obstacles and barriers, and develop a strategy for the next 10 years. The evaluation must be objective and include real facts about what has been done to create the strategy. Only in this way can the development of the strategy be planned for the future and provide students and other categories of learners with quality inclusive education (Hansson, 2017; Chorna, 2019).

Considering the above, it is possible to propose a strategy for the development of inclusive education. Its main approaches are as follows:

− Implementing inclusive education at all levels;
− Ensuring equal access to inclusive education;
− Formation of positive attitude towards inclusive education in the community;
− Developing quality methodological and pedagogical support for the strategy.

The implementation of inclusive education at all levels includes access to an inclusive learning environment for pupils, preschool children, and students. This means that the perception that inclusive education is implemented only in general secondary schools should be changed. Therefore, this process should also include preschool and higher education institutions. In particular, separate groups for children with specific problems or developmental disabilities should be created in preschool educational institutions. Separate groups can also be formed in higher education or vocational-technical institutions where students with special educational needs will study. This will contribute to the development of knowledge and the formation of communication and socialization skills (Bondarenko, 2018).

Ensuring equal access to inclusive education means organizing inclusive classes in each educational institution or resource center, depending on the current need for such special education services. This is a critical decision for children living in rural or small urban areas, as they may only sometimes be able to attend inclusive classes, typically located only in regional centers. Addressing this challenge will simplify access to inclusive learning, and educational institutions providing such services will not have more students than their resources can support (Zaierkova, 2016; Chorna, 2021).

Promoting a positive attitude towards inclusive education in society requires a comprehensive effort within the community to shape a certain perception among the public. It's crucial to combat the current negative connotations associated with inclusive education, as it is often perceived as inferior and weaker by other children. This perception leads parents to consider placing their children with special needs in mainstream classrooms or groups, believing that this will interfere with their mainstream education. However, this attitude reassures parents that their child is just as valuable as others (Bondarenko, 2020).

Nevertheless, fostering a positive attitude to inclusive education in society is a gradual process. It requires the implementation of government programs, cooperation between various institutions, and the dissemination of social advertising. The creation of a series of videos explaining what inclusive education is, which categories of children it benefits, its advantages, and how the educational process is organized could be beneficial. These videos can be based on the recommendations of educational experts, parents of children with special needs, and directors of inclusive education centers (Kolupaieva et al., 2016; Mulska, 2022).

The development of high-quality methodological and pedagogical support for the strategy requires the preparation of educational materials that meet the needs of an inclusive environment. These materials may include textbooks, electronic learning resources, programs for organizing the educational process, and graphic materials to meet the requirements of inclusive education. Cooperation between educational specialists, directors of inclusive education centers, teachers, and specialists in pedagogical development is essential (Kolupaieva, 2019).

Pedagogical support includes the preparation of qualified teachers, which requires the establishment of specializations such as "inclusive education," "special education," and "special and inclusive education" at pedagogical universities and colleges. This will ensure a sufficient number of specialists capable of working with children with special educational needs (Kirschner, 2015).

The goals of the strategy include
− Increase the number of inclusive classrooms;
− Expand the network of institutions providing inclusive education services;
− Improve the quality of inclusive education;
− Develop inclusive education as a promising academic field.

Its principles include equal access, ease of implementation, systematicity, comprehensiveness, and scientific justification (Shiksha, 2018).

It's important to note that the strategy is planned for 2024-2034. The stages are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2** Stages of implementing personal inclusive education strategy.

| Stage | Duration | Essence |
|---|---|---|
| First | 2024-2025 | An analysis of the current state of inclusive education. Identification of challenges and areas for action (Savitha, 2018). |
| Second | 2026-2031 | Implementation of inclusive education. Training of pedagogical staff in the fields of "inclusive education," "special education," and "special and inclusive education." Developing measures to promote positive attitudes towards inclusive education in society. Ensuring children's access to inclusive education, expanding the network of institutions, and developing methodological and educational materials (Schuelka, 2018). |
| Third | 2032-2033 | Assessment of inclusive education state in Ukraine. Surveys among parents, children, and teachers on the strategy's effectiveness. Identification of challenges related to its implementation (Mag, 2017). |
| Fourth | 2034 | Preparation of reports on the analysis of the implemented strategy. Developing a plan for future periods (Shaeffer, 2019). |

Source: compiled by the authors.

The strategy we propose is more comprehensive and systematic than the existing one. However, it is essential to determine its value in practice. It is also necessary to consider the realities of the times when inclusive education cannot always be implemented due to hostilities. In addition, financial resources are an essential factor, as certain inclusive education projects may be suspended due to reduced spending on education. However, there is hope that inclusive education in Ukraine will reach a high level and be as accessible as traditional education.

## 5. Discussion

The conducted research has allowed us to identify certain problematic issues of inclusive education in Ukraine. Inclusive education is mostly considered as a system of providing special educational services for children in regular secondary

educational institutions. However, it is necessary to mention that preschool and higher education are hardly addressed. This indicates the need for further implementation of a separate strategy adapted to preschool children and students.

It can be noted that this separate strategy has many similarities with the National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030. Nevertheless, the distinct strategy includes several stages that could be condensed to allow more time for the actual implementation process of inclusive education. In addition, the mechanism for financial and material-technical support of inclusive education institutions is not fully taken into account here, which primarily affects the speed and effectiveness of implementation.

## 6. Conclusions

The research is dedicated to highlighting the formation of strategies and approaches for the successful implementation of inclusive education. It can be noted that this issue is currently relevant and requires thorough study.

The state of inclusive education in Ukraine at the present stage was analyzed. Inclusive education in Ukraine currently has both positive and negative aspects of development. In particular, the advantages include an increase in the number of students in inclusive classes, an increase in the number of inclusive classrooms, and an increase in the number of pedagogical staff. The disadvantages include the following:

− Inaccessibility of educational facilities in architectural aspect.
− Lack of preparation of pedagogical staff to work with children with special educational needs.
− Lack of modern inclusive learning programs for educational institutions at all levels.

The research examined the National Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education for 2020-2030. The strategy aims to create an inclusive educational environment and conditions for everyone to have access to quality education, considering their needs. It promotes the development of their potential without separation from family and community. It is based on the premise that everyone has the right to education and requires social integration. The program is divided into 3 phases and spans 10 years.

A self-developed strategy for the development of inclusive education for 2024-2034 has been formulated. This strategy is based on the following approaches:

− Implementation of inclusive education at all levels.
− Ensuring equal access to inclusive education.
− Cultivating a positive attitude towards inclusive education among the public.
− Providing quality methodological and pedagogical support for the strategy.

This strategy is also designed for 10 years but consists of 4 stages. The tasks of the strategy include:

− To increase the number of inclusive classrooms.
− To expand the network of institutions providing inclusive education services.
− To improve the quality of inclusive education.
− To develop inclusive education as a future educational direction.

Thus, a self-developed strategy was formulated during the research. In the future, the strategic approaches to inclusive education will be more comprehensive and systematic, and the implementation of inclusive education will be simple and fast. The funding mechanism will also be clear and adapted to the current inclusive education needs in Ukraine.

## Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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