

DEVELOPING THE METHODOLOGICAL COMPETENCE OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTINGS

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Abstract: In this article, based on foreign and national research, the integrative-personal nature of inclusive competence is described, and strategic directions for developing these qualities in future special educators, as well as practical recommendations for improving the professional development system, are proposed.

Keywords: inclusive education, inclusive competence, special educational needs, integrative-personal quality, professional training, pedagogical personnel, individual educational trajectory, educational system

The formation and development of inclusive education in Uzbekistan are recognized as one of the key priorities of the modern educational system. Ensuring equal rights and educational opportunities for persons with disabilities is firmly established in the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Education”. In accordance with this legislation, every child with disabilities has the right to receive an education and to freely choose an educational institution. Therefore, children with special educational needs can study in any type of educational institution.

In educational organizations, inclusive education practices are structured in such a way that students with special educational needs study alongside their healthy peers in the same educational institution, but customized, adapted educational programs are developed for them. This implies the existence of individual educational trajectories for these students. Consequently, modern educators must be fully prepared to effectively implement inclusive practices within any educational institution. For this reason, providing high-quality professional training for pedagogical personnel capable of working with children with special educational needs is of paramount importance.

One of the main challenges in effectively implementing inclusive education practices is the shortage of pedagogical personnel who are fully prepared to operate in this field. The issue of training and retraining educators to work in an inclusive environment is viewed as one of the most critical tasks for the development of the educational system in Uzbekistan. Without the appropriate value orientations, professional motivation, initiative, and specialized training of the educator, it is impossible to ensure the full integration of a child with special educational needs into the educational process.

As a result of the introduction of inclusive education, certain shifts have occurred within the structure of a modern educator’s professional competence. Specifically, the concept of “inclusive competence” has emerged as a new structural component of professional competence. The inclusive competence of future teachers is a vital component of the professional capability required to effectively carry out inclusive education under the conditions of the modern information-driven society.

In this regard, the essence, definition, and stages of formation and development of the concept of “inclusive competence” have been extensively covered in the scientific research of scholars such as I.N.Khafizullina, M.E.Chaykovsky, O.S.Borodina, O.A.Kozyreva, and others. Analyzing the main challenges faced by an educator working in an inclusive environment, researchers emphasize that these circumstances have generated a clear demand within the pedagogical education system for the formation of inclusive competence in future teachers.

I.N.Khafizullina interprets inclusive competence as an integrative personal quality of an educator. In her view, this competence reflects the educator’s ability to carry out professional activities within the inclusive educational process - taking into account students with diverse educational needs - to adapt children with disabilities to the educational environment, and to create the necessary conditions for their development and self-development.[3.35]

O.S.Borodina, on the other hand, defines inclusive competence as an integrative-personal quality that determines the ability to perform professional functions in the process of inclusive education. This involves considering the various educational needs of students with disabilities, integrating them into the general educational environment, and applying health-promoting technologies to create a favorable atmosphere for their development, socialization, and self-development.[3.29]

O.A.Kozyreva characterizes inclusive competence as a set of abilities that enable an educator to create the necessary pedagogical conditions for meeting the educational needs of students with special needs and disabilities. This includes modeling an inclusive educational environment, applying methods and technologies that resolve problems related to teaching and upbringing this category of learners, and designing the development trajectories of the students.[4.38]

However, special educational needs do not solely refer to children with disabilities. This category also encompasses gifted students and children with low levels of social adaptation. Therefore, inclusive competence is interpreted as an integrative personal quality that reflects the educator’s capability to carry out professional activities while taking into account the individual educational needs of various categories of students. This competence ensures the successful integration of students into an inclusive educational environment.

Thus, a modern educator must possess inclusive competence within the structure of their professional capabilities. This is because it is the educator who determines the goals, tasks, content, and methods of teaching and upbringing children with special educational needs. To effectively organize inclusive practices in educational institutions, the professional training of pedagogical personnel is a critical factor. At the same time, the development of inclusive education dictates specific aspects of forming and improving the professional qualities of the educator’s personality. This process is carried out through the system of professional training, retraining, and professional development (advanced training).

Currently, although inclusive education has not been fully implemented across the practices of all educational organizations, its legal foundations are firmly established. At the same time, the majority of practicing educators do not possess a sufficient level of inclusive competence. Therefore, it is highly advisable to incorporate specialized modules aimed at forming the necessary competencies for executing inclusive education into the curricula of professional development courses.

Consequently, the formation of inclusive competence in future and practicing educators can be achieved through the following strategic pathways:

1. Integrating topics related to inclusive pedagogy into the structure of core pedagogical disciplines and modules.
2. Introducing specialized subjects or elective courses dedicated to inclusive pedagogy.
3. Organizing professional retraining and supplementary educational programs in the field of inclusive pedagogy.
4. Launching targeted advanced training (professional development) courses.
5. Advancing scientific-research and experimental activities in inclusive settings.
6. Mastering modern educational technologies, participating in the activities of methodological associations and creative groups, and utilizing various forms of pedagogical support.

In conclusion, a professional working in the modern educational system must possess inclusive competence. Such an approach enables educational organizations at various levels to train specialists who can perform effectively in the field of inclusive education. Therefore, forming inclusive competence within the professional preparation of educators stands as a priority task. This competence is crucial not only for the professional growth of the educator but also for shaping a highly spiritual, inclusive, and progressive society.

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