INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: CONDITIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES

EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA NA UCRÂNIA: CONDIÇÕES DE IMPLEMENTAÇÃO E DESAFIOS

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Abstract. This paper suggests a model of information and technological support for inclusive education that considers the specifics of this process in Ukraine. Inclusive education is a key factor in the development of civic democracy. It aims to transform schools into platforms of equality and improvement for all students. The literature review aims to assess the current state of inclusive education and identify the conditions necessary for developing inclusive education systems. The article explores the following aspects: the concept of inclusive education as a platform for civic democracy; the influence of historical context and societal values on attitudes toward differences and disabilities; research covers the current state of inclusive education in Ukraine, America, and Europe; it describes the obstacles that preceded the implementation of inclusive education in these countries. As part of this model, the authors consider a data storage system designed for the comprehensive processing of information related to the psychophysical assessment of people with special needs. The article provides an overview of key aspects and formalized criteria for assessing the impact of implementing information technologies on the outcomes of inclusive educational support. These criteria consider social and scientific-technical aspects of implementing information technologies at every stage of inclusive education support. The results of the study indicate that most data focus on the analysis of attitudes toward inclusive education and people with disabilities. Although most survey participants generally support inclusive educational initiatives. In addition, the authors identified a series of obstacles that must be overcome to implement these initiatives in the region successfully. The article identifies the possibilities of implementing inclusive education in the historical context of the region. Moreover, the authors identified structural and cultural barriers to its implementation and provided directions towards future research.

Keywords: information and technological support, inclusive education, socio-cultural integration, cognitive modeling.

Resumo. Este artigo sugere um modelo de informação e apoio tecnológico para a educação inclusiva que considera as especificidades deste processo na Ucrânia. A educação inclusiva é um factor chave no desenvolvimento da democracia cívica. Tem como objetivo transformar as escolas em plataformas de igualdade e melhoria para todos os alunos. A revisão da literatura visa avaliar o estado actual da educação inclusiva e identificar as condições necessárias para o desenvolvimento de sistemas de educação inclusiva. O artigo explora os seguintes aspectos: o conceito de educação inclusiva como plataforma para a democracia cívica; a influência do contexto histórico e dos valores sociais nas atitudes em relação às diferenças e deficiências; a investigação abrange o estado actual da educação inclusiva na Ucrânia, na América e na Europa; descreve os obstáculos que precederam a implementação da educação inclusiva nestes países. Como parte deste modelo, os autores consideram um sistema de armazenamento de dados concebido para o processamento abrangente de informações relacionadas à avaliação psicofísica de pessoas com necessidades especiais. O artigo fornece uma visão geral dos principais aspectos e critérios formalizados para avaliar o impacto da implementação de tecnologias de informação nos resultados do apoio educacional inclusivo. Estes critérios consideram aspectos sociais e técnico-científicos da implementação de tecnologias de informação em todas as fases do apoio à educação inclusiva. Os resultados do estudo indicam que a maioria dos dados centra-se na análise das atitudes em relação à educação inclusiva e às pessoas com deficiência. Embora a maioria dos participantes no inquérito apoie geralmente iniciativas educacionais inclusivas. Além disso, os autores identificaram uma série de obstáculos que devem ser superados para implementar com sucesso estas iniciativas na região. O artigo identifica as possibilidades de implementação da educação inclusiva no contexto histórico da região. Além disso, os autores identificaram barreiras estruturais e culturais à sua implementação e forneceram orientações para pesquisas futuras.

Palavras-chave: informação e suporte tecnológico, educação inclusiva, integração sociocultural, modelagem cognitiva.

INTRODUCTION

In Ukraine, there is an active process of reforming the education system. It also includes strengthening the role of integrative processes (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2021). This reform has led to the implementation of the inclusive education concept (Budnyk & Sydoriv, 2019). Inclusive education aims to ensure comprehensive access to education and the inclusion of all groups of students in the education system. This includes children with various physical or psychological specifics, such as special educational needs (SEN). The primary goal of teaching and nurturing these students is their integration into society and the maximum level of socialization. Successful learning activities of children who receive recognition contribute to forming their sense of competence. The latter is the most important personal quality (Budnyk et al., 2022).

International experience in implementing inclusive education clearly demonstrates its great usefulness in the socio-cultural integration of children with special needs. In addition, it helps to foster tolerant attitudes toward them among their healthy peers and other adults. Ukraine's integration into the European context is one of today's most pressing issues (Udych, 2018). This process has been ongoing for over a decade and requires significant changes in various areas of our lives, including the economy, politics, and culture. Ukraine's accession to the European space opens up new opportunities for the development of education, including inclusive education (Demchenko et al., 2022).

One of the main contemporary issues is raising awareness of the social importance of each person and their potential for self-realization (Grishina & Klimenko, 2022). This issue is particularly relevant for people with special educational needs and their integration into the educational process and society in general (Horishna et al., 2020). The term "inclusion" is derived from the English language. Implementing the principles of inclusive education in higher education can be a challenging task. Inclusive education was initially developed for younger students before it was applied to higher education. However, there is a strong need to move towards inclusive practices in higher education as more students with special needs successfully complete primary schools. It is essential to understand that society must create all the necessary conditions for the full inclusion of people with special educational needs in the learning environment, public life, and their professional and personal development (Udych, 2017).

Inclusive education can be considered as a system of educational services based on the principle of ensuring every person's fundamental right to high-quality education in any educational institution of their choice. Higher education in universities, similar to secondary education, can be defined as a comprehensive process of providing equal access to qualitative higher education for students with disabilities by organizing learning following their personal specifics, as stipulated by the internal documents of the universities (Regulations on the Organization of the Educational Process, Rector's Order of Ternopil National Pedagogical University named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk, 2015), (Procedure for Supporting (Assisting) Persons with Disabilities and Other Low-Mobility Population Groups, Rector's Order of Ternopil National Pedagogical University named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk, 2018).

According to the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education," a higher education institution is a separate type of institution that carries out scientific, technical, innovative, and/or methodological activities. It ensures the educational process and people's acquisition of higher or postgraduate education, considering their professional interests and abilities (Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education," 2014).

Today, there are measures taken to preserve and develop higher education despite the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022) and the declaration of martial law in Ukraine. These measures include:

- the retention of students and academic staff in most higher education institutions;
- flexible admission campaigns;
- the support for students abroad or located in temporarily occupied and extremely dangerous regions (Udych, 2019).

Furthermore, there are conditions for the functioning of educational institutions that have been temporarily relocated from the occupied and especially dangerous regions. For instance, according to data from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, as of November 16, 2022, 31 higher education institutions and 65 separate units were relocated from occupied and especially dangerous territories (Vocational and Higher Education in the Conditions of a State of War. Ukraine, 2023).

The success of inclusive education implementation is determined by various factors, such as:

- the quality of regulatory and legal regulation;

- the availability of information support, scientific, educational, and methodological resources;
- staffing, material, and technical support for the educational process (Shulha, 2019).

As a result of these efforts, inclusive education creates conditions for equal access to education and the inclusion of all categories of students, especially those with physical disabilities (Kalaur et al., 2022).

According to E. Ericson, developing a sense of competence, which is a key personal trait, only occurs when a child's educational activities are successful and acknowledged (Ericson et al., 2018). International experience confirms the benefits and effectiveness of implementing inclusive education to ensure the social and cultural adaptation of children with special educational needs and to foster tolerance among healthy peers and adults (Kozibroda et al., 2020). For this purpose, various approaches are being implemented, including the use of information technology Petri Net. It is a mathematical model that can be used to describe and analyze the process of inclusive education. This approach consists of two main components: places (positions) and transitions. It is used to model different states of the system and the changes between them.

It is necessary to create a system of conditions that provide special psychological and pedagogical support for the education of children with special needs in order to fully implement the inclusive education model (Kramar et al., 2022). The psychological readiness of educators plays a vital role in this process. It encompasses their emotional perception of children with special educational needs, interaction skills with them, support for their emotional well-being, knowledge of inclusive education, and the mastery of inclusive teaching approaches.

Many studies show that the pedagogical staff of secondary schools often lack sufficient knowledge or have a distorted understanding of inclusive education models. They do not comprehend the developmental peculiarities of children with special educational needs and various developmental disorders. Besides, they do not possess the necessary skills to organize the educational process and interact in society successfully.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The readiness of educators to work in inclusive educational institutions is an essential prerequisite for the successful implementation of inclusive educational processes. Therefore, forming students' psychological readiness in higher education institutions for pedagogical activities in inclusive environments is recognized as one of the main tasks of higher pedagogical education (Kramar et al., 2022). The concept of inclusive education emphasizes the need to integrate pedagogical approaches for children with special needs with general principles and methods of social education.

Statistical data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine indicate that 10% of the country's population comprises people with special needs, of which 6% have intellectual disabilities. It underscores the need to provide specialized educational services for these children during their school years (Lemeshchuk et al., 2022). Nowadays, inclusive principles have become an integral part of state education policy. They are reflected in the following official documents:

- The new Law of Ukraine, "On Education," in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 957 of September 15, 2021.
- "On the Approval of the Procedure for Organizing Inclusive Education in General Secondary Education Institutions," in the Order of the Ministry of Social Policy of December 23, 2021, No. 718.
- "On the Approval of the State Standard for Social Support Services during Inclusive Education," and other official regulatory acts (Nikolaesku et al., 2021).

Currently, the development of inclusive education has become a mandatory part of the teacher's professional training standard. This standard includes skills and competencies that enable educators to successfully interact with various groups of students, including those with special educational needs (SEN). These findings confirm that the importance of inclusive education in today's world requires revision of approaches to teaching and pedagogical practice. Furthermore, state support plays an important role in this process (Nikolaesku et al., 2021).

It is important to note that the Ukrainian inclusive education model differs from Western standards. It has developed relatively recently in changed conditions. This fact has affected its implementation and led to ambiguous attitudes toward inclusion among both theoreticians and practitioners (Nikulochkina et al., 2022). Most of them recognize the value of an inclusion idea and its importance for qualitative education

and the successful socialization of children with SEN. Inclusive education also contributes to the personal development of children without special needs. It fosters the formation of tolerance skills and social interaction with "special" peers, as well as creates conditions for their socialization (Udych, 2023). Additionally, innovative pedagogical technologies and additional financial resources can enhance the quality of education in this context (Patwary et al., 2023).

Research results from foreign scholars indicate that the success of the educational process depends on effective collaboration among all participants. This interaction is based on mutual respect, open dialogue, willingness for joint planning, and a shared educational philosophy (Platash, 2019). An analysis of current scientific literature shows the impact of various factors on the inclusion and autonomy of people with special needs. Digital technologies are applied in the context of inclusive education. In particular, Petri Net can be used to model the main processes and interactions that take place in the educational environment. Below are some possible elements of a Petri Net that reflect an inclusive approach:

Places:

- "Students". All students, including those with special needs, can be represented in this place.
- "Educators". This place can represent teachers who work with students in inclusive classrooms.
- "Resources". This place can display available resources, such as special materials, technical aids, support from specialists, etc.

Transitions:

- "Learning". This transition can show the learning process in an inclusive environment.
- "Support". This transition can show the support received by students with special needs.

Interactions between places and transitions in Petri Nets can reflect various aspects of inclusive education. These aspects include the learning process, collaboration among educators and resources, accessibility of educational opportunities for all students, etc. Various methods and tools can be used to analyze such a model to explore the effectiveness of inclusive education, identify potential issues, and identify ways to address them. Petri Nets can be a valuable tool for managing and improving inclusive educational programs and processes. These factors encompass historical, political, and cultural shifts.

Activists in Western countries advocate for inclusion, fight for equity in education and employment, and promote active civic participation of people with disabilities. They aim to develop and implement inclusive models that consider the historical, political, and social context specific to their country. Together with their Western partners, these activists seek tools for inclusion in their communities (Tkachenko & Zhukova, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

The study of establishing inclusion in the educational environment can be carried out using various methods and tools. These methods will help to understand and evaluate the effectiveness and stages of this process. The following methods were used to study the development of inclusion in the educational environment:

Analysis of documents and policies. The research was based on analyzing existing legislation, policies, and programs aimed at developing inclusive education in a particular country or region. This analysis was aimed at finding out what steps have been taken to implement inclusion and what strategies are being used.

Surveys and questionnaires. This part of the study focused on the attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine.

The study aims to determine the attitude of respondents to inclusive education. It seeks to identify the main difficulties in implementing inclusion in Ukraine and to assess the feasibility of inclusive education.

A Google Forms-based survey was conducted by the Inclusive Resource Center of Ternopil National Pedagogical University, named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk during the Third All-Ukrainian Interdisciplinary Conference in April 2013.

The main questions for further analysis:

1. What are the most significant challenges, in your opinion, regarding the implementation of inclusivity in Ukraine? (Choose one or multiple options, and if necessary, add your own relevant issue.)
    - Imperfect legal framework related to the protection of the rights of individuals with disabilities and the implementation of inclusive education.

- Undeveloped practical mechanisms for implementing inclusive education.
- Insufficient funding for educational institutions for effective implementation of inclusive education.
- Inadequate professional training of teachers for working in an inclusive environment.
- Psychological and emotional unpreparedness of teachers to work in an inclusive environment.
- Lack of precise requirements for the training of teacher assistants and assistants for children with special educational needs.
- Challenges in the functioning of inclusive resource centers (lack of necessary experts, diagnostic methods, and corrective services).
- Lack of teamwork in the implementation of inclusive education.
- Formalism in the implementation of inclusive education.
- Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the essence of inclusion and inclusive education.
- Stereotypical views on the capabilities of individuals with special educational needs.
- Lack of acceptance of inclusive education by parents of typically developing children.
- Intolerant attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and people with limited social mobility.
- Insufficient special literature and teaching materials for working with children with special educational needs.
- Lack of special equipment in educational institutions for teaching and corrective developmental work.
- Incompatibility of the physical space of educational institutions with the principles of universal design (architectural inaccessibility).
- Lack of centers/services that can assist in addressing specific issues.
- Absence of a state early intervention system.
- Challenges related to establishing communication with parents/official representatives of students with special educational needs.
- Other:

2. On what question or solution to what problem do you hope to receive an answer during your participation in the conference?
3. Additional suggestions, questions, or ideas.

The study involved 304 respondents who expressed their attitudes towards inclusive education, identified key challenges, and expressed their awareness about the expediency of further development of inclusive education in Ukraine.

The survey was created using Google Forms and was made available at the following link: https://forms.gle/FvjQLKej7ipF5tnN9

Selection of respondents

A diverse group of respondents included teachers, parents, students, members of civil society organizations, as well as representatives of the administration and legislature.

Data collection

A link to the survey was shared with all respondents who participated in the conference. The questionnaire was conducted by the Inclusive Resource Center of Ternopil National Pedagogical University, named after Volodymyr Hnatiuk, during the conference.

Impulse model of inclusive education

An impulse on cognitive maps in theoretical analysis is an ordered sequence of values $w_i(n)$, $w_i\ (n + 1)$ at vertex i without reference to time. It is used to interpret the results of a calculation experiment. Impulse processes were modeled according to the following equation (1):

$$w_i(n+1) = w_i(n) + \sum_{j=1}^{k-1} f_{ij} P_j(n) + Q_i(n) \quad (1)$$

where: w_i(n): Impulse at vertex i for the previous simulation time (n).

w_i (n + 1): Impulse at vertex i at time (n + 1).

f_{ij}: Conversion impulse response, where $f_{ij} = 1$. It means that the conversion occurs without changing an impulse.

P(n): Impulse in vertices adjacent to vertex i.

Q_i(n): Perturbation and control influence vector, which are included in the vertex i.

The impulse model of inclusive education can be used to analyze the dynamics and interactions of various aspects of the inclusive educational process. Each vertex represents a specific element or aspect of inclusive education, and the impulses at the vertices indicate their changes over time. The conversion impulse coefficient f_{ij} allows accounting for influences during data transformation or processes.

The perturbation vector and control influence Q_i (n) can represent various factors and influences considered in the model. These may include external forces, natural changes, decisions, and actions affecting inclusive education.

With the help of this impulse model, it is possible to analyze the dynamics of the inclusive educational process and identify how various factors affect its development and results.

RESULTS

According to the survey results, 304 respondents expressed their attitude to inclusive education. They also identified key challenges and shared their awareness of the need for further development of inclusive education in Ukraine.

Figure 1 shows the form of involvement of the conference members who participated in the survey.

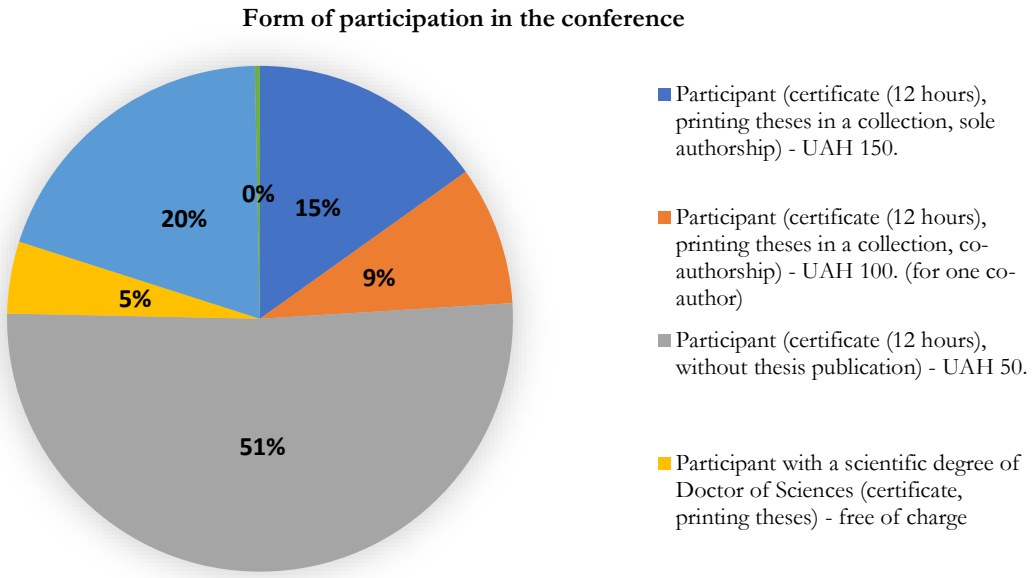

Figure 1. The form of involvement of the conference members who participated in the survey.

The survey was taken by 80.3% of the conference participants, including 5% of participants with a Doctor of Science degree and 19.7% of attendees. Analyzing the data provided by the answers to the first question, it is possible to summarize the information about the difficulties that arise in the context of implementing inclusion in Ukraine (Figure 2).

In particular, several key points should be highlighted:

Regulatory and legal framework.

More than half of the respondents (54.6%) pointed to the problem of an imperfect legal framework for inclusive education. This demonstrates the importance of developing and improving legislation in this area.

Funding.

A high percentage of respondents (45.7%) indicated insufficient financing for inclusive education. This emphasizes the need to ensure adequate financial resources.

Professional training.

About half of the respondents (46.7%) indicated that teachers need more professional training to work in an inclusive environment. This shows the need for professional development of teachers.

Psychological readiness of teachers.

More than 42% of respondents indicated that teachers are psychologically and emotionally unprepared to work in an inclusive environment. It shows the importance of psychological training for teachers.

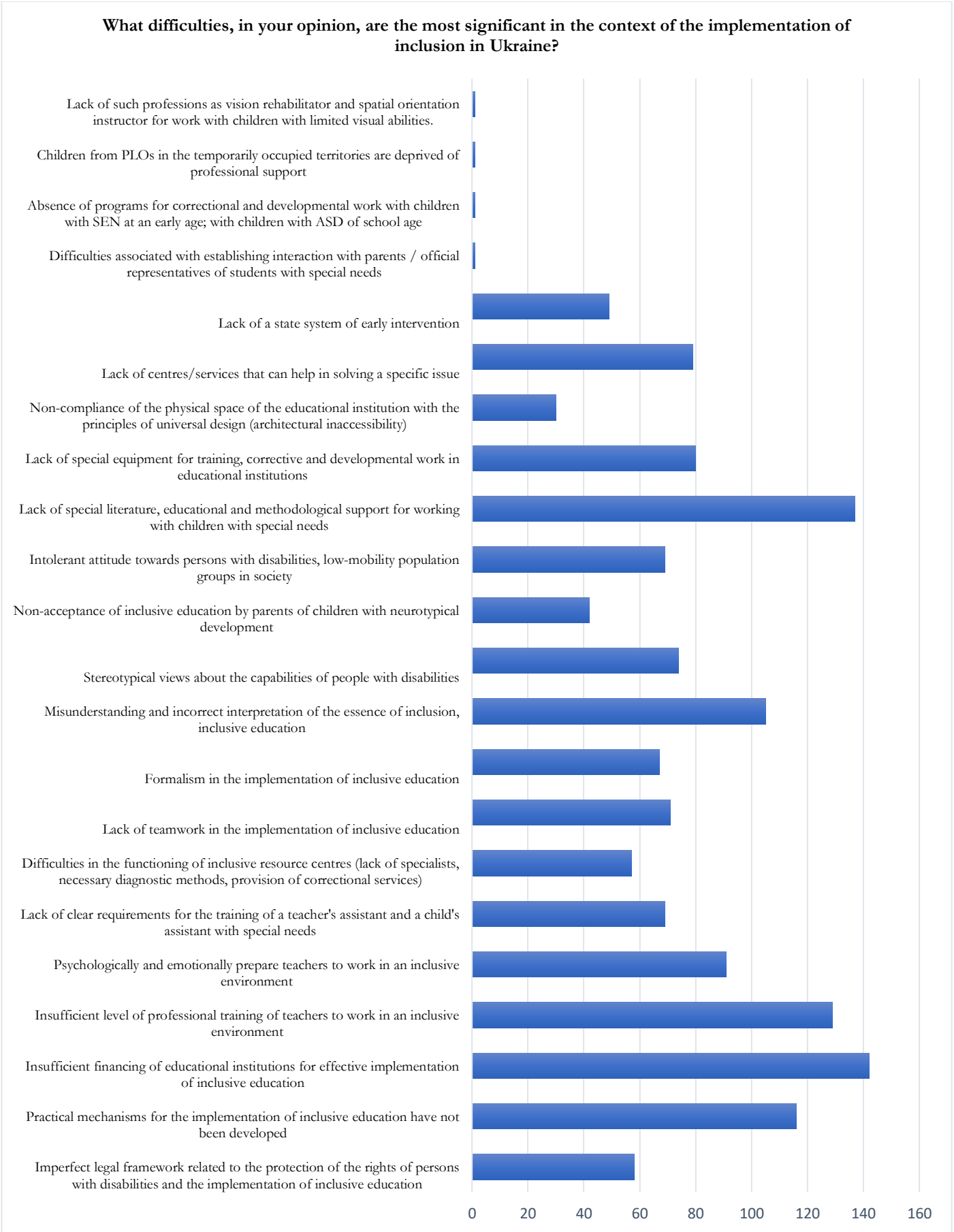

Figure 2. Results of the conference participants' survey.

On Figure 2 results of the conference participants' survey according to question 1:

1. Incomplete regulatory framework regarding the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and the implementation of inclusive education.
2. Undeveloped practical mechanisms for implementing inclusive education.
3. Insufficient funding for educational institutions to effectively implement inclusive education.
4. Inadequate level of professional training for working in an inclusive environment.
5. Psychological and emotional unpreparedness of educators to work in an inclusive setting.
6. Lack of precise requirements for the training of teacher assistants and assistants for children with special educational needs.
7. Difficulties in the functioning of inclusive resource centers (lack of specialists, necessary diagnostic methods, provision of correctional services).
8. Lack of teamwork in the implementation of inclusive education.
9. Formalism in the implementation of inclusive education.
10. Misunderstanding and incorrect interpretation of inclusion.
11. Stereotypical views on the abilities of individuals with special educational needs.
12. Unacceptance of inclusive education by typically developing children.
13. Intolerant attitudes toward persons with disabilities and the mobility-impaired population in society.
14. Lack of specialized literature and educational materials for working with children with special educational needs.
15. Absence of specialized equipment for teaching and correctional work in educational institutions.
16. Inadequacy of the physical space of educational institutions to the principles of universal design (architectural inaccessibility).
17. Absence of centers/services that can assist in addressing specific issues.
18. Lack of a state early intervention system.
19. Difficulties related to establishing interaction with parents/legal representatives of learners with special educational needs.
20. Lack of programs for correctional and developmental work with early-age children, as well as with school-age children with autism spectrum disorders.
21. + Occupied territories. Inclusive resource centers and general secondary education institutions - Ukrainian professionals do not work. Children are deprived of the conditions they had before. Specialists (whether speech therapists or defectologists) work online. Martial law and occupation deprive children with special educational needs of their rights and conditions for everyday existence.
22. There is a lack of such professions as vision rehabilitation specialists and orientation and mobility instructors for working with children with visual impairments.

Figure 3 shows the statistics of respondents' answers to the third question of the survey.

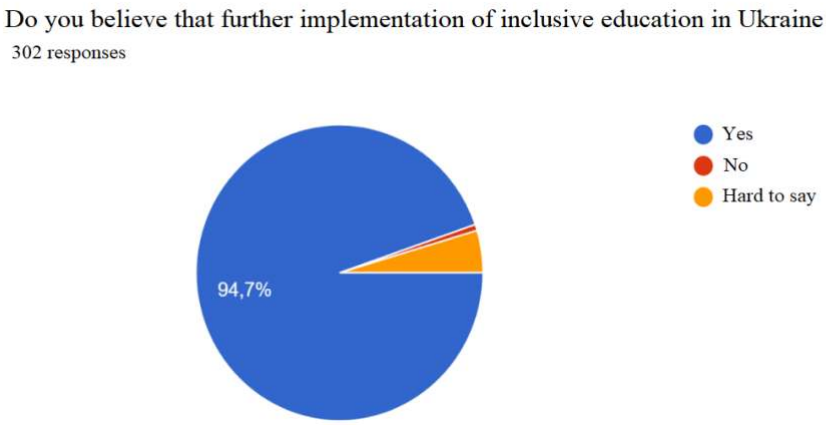

Figure 3. Statistics of respondents' answers to the third question of the survey on the implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine.

According to the survey, 94.7% of respondents consider introducing inclusive education in Ukraine appropriate. Among them, 4.6 % have yet to decide on the importance of implementing inclusive education, and 0.7 % do not consider this issue an important one.

Example 1. The use of information technology is vital for creating a competent process for thoroughly assessing a person and providing recommendations on the format of their education (Gumnitsky et al., 2022). The results of the impulse modeling presented in Figure 4 confirm that introducing such information technologies will contribute to the most effective improvement of administrative procedures in educational institutions. These technologies will also increase the level of analytical support for managing these institutions.

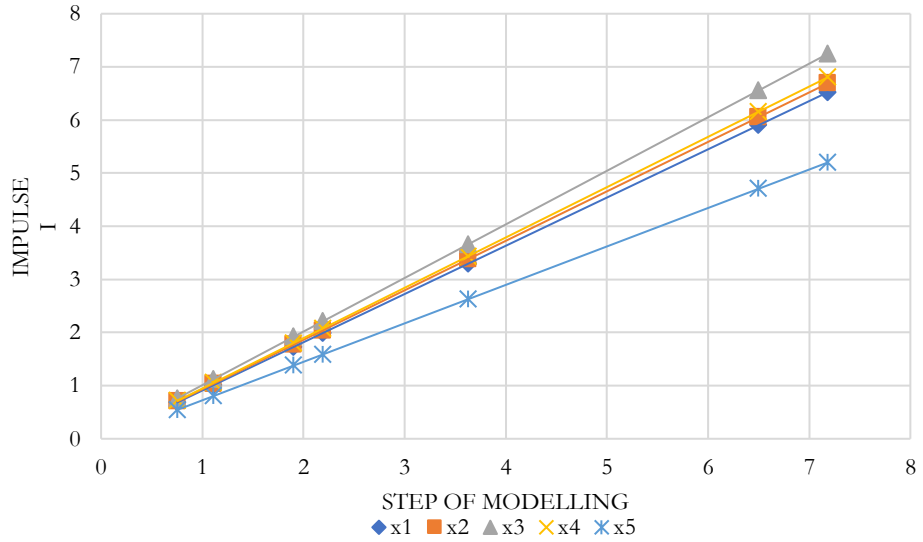

Figure 4. The results of impulse modeling, Example 1.

Example 2. The use of information technologies to analyze the activities of specialists in inclusive education institutions. According to impulse modeling results, as shown in Figure 5, it can be concluded that the introduction of the described information technologies will most contribute to improving the efficiency of the improvement process and raising the management activities in inclusive education institutions to the level of analytical support.

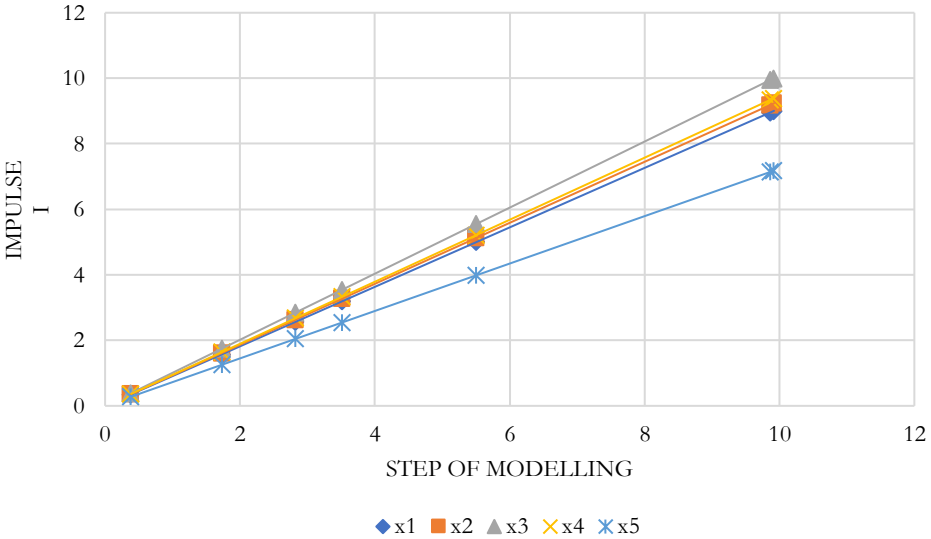

Figure 5. The results of impulse modeling, Example 2.

Overall, it means an increase in the efficiency of administration of inclusive education institutions (x3) from 14.2 to 19.8 (i.e., 9.1%). According to the modeling results, the level of analytical support for the management of inclusive education institutions (x5) will increase by 14% (from 15.5 to 17.8).

DISCUSSION

Despite any peculiarities of psychophysical development, social status, background, and other aspects, people with special needs can actively participate in all spheres of public life. A key role in changing the attitude toward people with special needs should be played by broad community awareness. This, in turn, requires society to accumulate experience in interacting with people with special needs (Tripak et al., 2022).

The implementation of an inclusive approach in education in Ukraine raises questions even among specialists who recognize the positive aspects of inclusion. Most experts believe that inclusion should not be mandatory but rather one of the forms of organizing the educational process for children with special educational needs. Experts negatively assess the phenomenon of "total inclusion," which is manifested in the reduction of the network of special educational institutions in the country. Foreign observers consider this model contradictory to the fundamental principles of inclusive education since it restricts the rights of children with special educational needs to choose their place of learning (Shulha, 2019).

A distinctive feature of the inclusive education model in Ukraine is its political nature, which researchers consider as a negative factor. Furthermore, the inclusion of children with special educational needs is often applied formally. Thus, it negatively impacts the inclusive process and its participants, which is unacceptable. However, the current legislation in Ukraine calls for the implementation of an inclusive education model supported by regional practical experience (Kozibroda et al., 2020).

Overall, inclusive processes are taking place throughout the country thanks to the generalization of the pedagogical experience of Ukrainian schools. These schools implement inclusive approaches to analyze new methods and create a conducive environment in educational institutions. However, psychological factors stand out among the challenges in implementing inclusive education in the Ukrainian education system. Society's attitude towards people with disabilities and their education determines society's readiness for inclusion and plays a significant role in its success and effectiveness (Lemeshchuk et al., 2022).

The readiness of general education teachers to work in new conditions is of great importance for successfully implementing the inclusive approach. Besides, the requirements for the personal and professional qualities of teachers, as well as for the conditions and content of their professional training, are constantly changing. However, this is one of the main problems that hinder the implementation and realization of inclusive education principles in Ukraine and many other countries worldwide (Shulha, 2021).

All people must be able to actively participate in various aspects of social life, regardless of their personal specifics, such as physical or mental development, social status, or ethnic background. It means that an inclusive society should be open and accessible to everyone. Achieving this goal requires raising community awareness and accumulating experience in interacting with people who have special needs (Patwary et al., 2023). The dissemination of information and public awareness should play a key role in changing the attitude towards these people. However, this requires society to be prepared to interact with individuals with special needs (Tkachenko & Zhukova, 2023). Moreover, the successful implementation of an inclusive approach significantly depends on the readiness of secondary school teachers to work in new conditions, where the requirements for their professional qualities and training change. However, this is also one of the main challenges hindering inclusive education implementation.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have examined important aspects of implementing the principles of inclusive education in Ukraine and integrating children with special needs into the educational environment of general educational institutions. Based on the conducted research, we can draw several significant conclusions.

The research involved an analysis of advanced innovative practices related to providing quality educational services for people with health impairments and special educational needs. Also, we have analyzed the experience in psychological, pedagogical, and social support of people who need adaptation and modification of the educational environment to create an inclusive educational environment. In addition, the paper identified the prospects for developing inclusive education in Ukraine and the current directions of scientific and methodological research in this area.

First and foremost, our research confirms the positive development of inclusive education in Ukraine. The primary forms of inclusion include integrating children with special needs into regular schools and

facilitating their active participation in the educational process. Overall, our study supports the positive impact of inclusive education in Ukraine on the development of children with special needs and their successful integration into society. Inclusive education creates a more fair and tolerant society where every child has the right to qualitative education and full access to educational opportunities.

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