

# The System of the Educational Process of Pupils with Disabilities in Ukraine

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**Abstracts:** This expert text brings thought and reflection to the system of special pedagogy in Ukraine. We hear about this country in the context of a war conflict, and other equally important areas are unknown to us. At the present stage, new perspectives have shown up in the system of correctional education related to the rethinking of the attitude to the organisation of education and upbringing of children with special needs. Authorities, pedagogues, and ordinary citizens seek to come closer to understanding the difficulties these individuals face; actively discuss the benefits of special or integrated education; try to create certain conditions for their life (ramps, sign language translation, etc.); implement foreign experience. The practice of European countries, the United States, and Canada shows that children with special needs can be educated not only in special, separate from general education institutions, but also in usual schools on the model of integrated or inclusive education, which provides quality educational services to children regardless level of their development. The introduction of modern models of education, upbringing, and rehabilitation of children with psychophysical development requires not only a special organisation of the material environment, but also training of psychological and pedagogical staff of secondary schools, as the effectiveness of integrated and inclusive education depends on proper psychological and pedagogical support of these children. Non-governmental organisations, including organisations of parents of children with special educational needs, play a significant role in implementing such changes in Ukrainian society.

**Keywords:** Description, Education, Pupil, Reflection, System, Ukraine.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, most Western and Central European countries have accommodated significant changes in special education legislation. The standard rules for equal opportunities for people with disabilities were approved by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly on October 28, 1993. These rules are coined in a crucial document which organisations of disabled people can use in their campaigns for equality (United Nations, 2022).

Ukraine's constitution in Art. 53 guarantees all citizens the right to access education. Ukraine's law "On Children Protection" in Art. 26 ", Protection of the rights of children with disabilities and children with mental and physical disabilities", signed on 26th April 2001 in Kyiv by Leonid Kuchma, states that discrimination against children with disabilities and with mental or physical disabilities is prohibited. The state fosters the creation of necessary conditions for children with disabilities and with psychological or physical disabilities equal to other citizens' opportunities for life fulfilment and development ... (Конституція України/Constitution of Ukraine, 2019).

Ukraine's law, "On Child Protection", was adopted in 2001. The law echoes one of the prior rights of the child for protection from all forms of physical and mental violence. Nowadays, the one's legislation norms in the field of children's rights protection accomplish the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the international standards in children's rights. Furthermore, to secure and maintain the UN Concept of the Rights of the Child, ensuring the survival, protection and development of children, special training in Ukraine is provided in the following areas:

- special schools (boarding schools).
- integrated learning in a secondary school.
- inclusive education – simultaneous education of children with various disorders of psychophysical development with their healthy peers.

(Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2021)

The boarding school model officially accepted in the state ceases to be the only and obligatory type of institution in which children with peculiarities of psychophysical development study separately and are isolated from society. Parents and students can choose different forms of education (individual at home, in a special school, boarding school, training and rehabilitation centre, special class at a secondary school, in the form of an externship, etc.). But this does not fully satisfy the equality of the right to education of children with psychophysical development.

Ukraine is undergoing a large-scale education reform called "The New Ukrainian School" that began in 2018, which includes a transition from compulsory 11-year schooling to mandatory 12-year teaching. As a result, pupils who entered education before 2018 have 11 years of mandatory schooling, and pupils who joined in 2018 and the following years already have 12 years of compulsory schooling. Due to this, education takes place according to two systems of education: one is catching up, and the other is starting.

The significant point of focus is the new education law is on inclusive education. This aspect of education has not existed in Ukraine before. The law presents a new perspective on educators' work with children with physical and mental disabilities. Plus, it introduces their integration into regular schools.

Diverse perspectives, such as state and professional aspects on the education of "special" children in Ukraine through different historical stages of social development, have been investigated by this field of special pedagogy specialists. To name a few, Bondar and Zolotoverkh (2004), Hladush (2006), as well as a historian of education Yarmachenko (1975). Similarly, a systematic experience assignment gained in Ukraine through correctional and rehabilitation work, teaching children with visual, hearing, speech, and mental disorders, and individualising students with primary failure is approached as a holistic field of study for the first time (Dichek, 2021).

## **2. REFLECTION ON THE PROBLEM**

### **2.1. Inclusive education as a pedagogical idea not only in Ukraine**

The outcome in European countries indicates that most of these students can be educated in secondary schools that apply the inclusive education model. The use of the inclusive education model signifies the arrangement of quality educational services to students with special needs in regular classes (groups) of secondary (preschool) educational institutions, subject to appropriate teacher training and family support.

Nowadays, inclusion in special education contains diverse activities with a range of professional collaborations. The individual approach towards a child is only one area from others. Häsel and others identify special educational attention and support as disruptive due to underestimating specific supportive measures. However, it takes time in schools before special educational attention is provided to children, mainly due to the fear of stigmatisation. Nevertheless, children may experience crucial problems which might not be recognised. Therefore, prevention could be impossible. Understanding this problem from the radical constructivism's point of view can be challenging. Therefore, as researchers, we have to ask if a child's development can be better without "disturbing" special educational care and if they would achieve higher educational pathways. There is no evidence for this except for a few cases (Schumann, 2018).

Inclusive education is the result of the cooperation of all children in the educational process. This includes severe changes in the school's culture, policies, and practices. For example, inclusive education should effectively educate pupils about psychophysical development in general education. This aspect targets children's socialisation and quality education achievement. The main goal of inclusive education is qualitative changes in the personal development of such children (Biewer, 2009).

**Table 1. generalised reflection on the development of approaches to the problems of children with special needs in Ukraine (Dichek, 2021).**

<i>Type of paradigm</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Responsible for implementation</i>
Isolation of children with psychophysical features from the child population, their differentiation by types of disorders.	1920 - 1930	For the first time in national education, the organisation and system of guarding, training, and rehabilitation of children with special needs is created in the form of diverse state-profile boarding institutions is introduced.	State.
It magnifies the study and othering of children with special needs, extending special education and correctional institutions.	1940 - 1990	Expansion in scientific approach towards the features and pathologies of children's development, educational theories' development, and socialisation of such children.	State.
Within the same paradigm of the origin of ideas of inclusive-individualised approach.	1980 - 1990	Experiment introduction on differentiation of children enrolling into first grades of secondary schools based on their psychological testing with the aim to establish the ideal form of study – individual or typical (for children with advanced mental development and children with learning difficulties who require higher pedagogical support).	State.
The new paradigm is the paradigm of inclusive education.	Since 2017	Introduction of practice for inclusion of children with special needs in ordinary secondary schools in agreement with international regulation of inclusive education and the gradual reduction of the network.	State together with private and public parent organisations.

Inclusive education recognises that all children are different, and schools and the education system must be tailored to the individual needs of all students, with or without disabilities. However, inclusiveness does not mean assimilation or the desire to make everyone the same. On the contrary, its key component is flexibility, considering the personal characteristics that determine the pace of learning (Pivarč, 2020).

In most cases, children simply need accessible teaching that uses different methods that meet individual requirements, abilities, and developmental characteristics.

The main characteristics of inclusive education:

- recognises that all children can learn.
- perceives and respects the features of students.
- ensures compliance of educational structures, systems, and methodology with the needs of all students.
- is a dynamic process that is constantly improving

(Tippelt, Heimlich, 2020).

The inclusive model of education provides for the participation of support teachers (teacher assistants) in the educational process, who ensure the inclusion of all children in general education classes. These can be volunteers, parents, instructors-practitioners who support several schools in one district.

The leading idea of modern special pedagogy is the focus on the effective use of preserved systems and functions that can take on compensatory and corrective workload, purposeful development of mental processes that determine the level of knowledge, skills and education of the child, and its integration into society.

According to Kolupaeva (2009), inclusive education can take one of the following forms:

1. Full integration, according to which children with psychological readiness for joint learning with healthy peers are included in the usual classes of a general educational institution; at the same time, they must receive correctional assistance at the place of study and residence.
2. combined integration, in which children with a close to a normal level of psychophysical development of 1-3 people are included in the usual classes; in the process of learning, they constantly receive the help of a teacher-special educator (teacher's assistant).
3. partial integration, in which children with special needs, who are unable to master the educational standard together with healthy peers, are included in general education classes (groups) of 1-3 people only or a part of the day.
4. temporary integration, in which children with special needs are combined with healthy peers 2-4 times a month for joint educational activities.

Complete and combined forms of integration are acceptable only for children with a high level of psychophysical and speech development.

Any form of integrated learning for students with psychophysical development can be effective only under appropriate conditions:

- early detection of deviations and the beginning of correctional work, which significantly contributes to the preparation for inclusive education.
- correct diagnosis and objective potential of the child's development.
- the level of psychophysical and language development close to the age norm.
- psychological readiness of the child and his parents to study together with healthy peers.
- providing qualified correctional and rehabilitation assistance.
- the willingness of parents to help the child in the process of learning.
- creation of the corresponding educational environment and living conditions.
- providing the material and technical base of the educational institution.

## 2.2. Statistical Data On The Number Of Children With Special Educational Needs Who Are Integrated Into Secondary Schools In Ukraine

Nowadays, there is a lack of static records on the proportion of children with special education needs enrolled in secondary schools in Ukraine. This indicates that the integration of children with special education needs appears unsystematically, which is the exact opposite of what is needed for inclusive education. According to the data obtained (Grof, Lauwers, 2020), psychological, medical, and pedagogical consultations at the regional and city levels have identified a significant number of children with psychophysical disorders, a significant number of them in ordinary secondary schools. In total, there are 8,907,492 children in the regions, of which 12.2% are children with special needs.

**Table 2. The number of identified children in need of correction of physical or mental development (by region), in %:**

<i>The name of the region</i>	<i>Number %</i>
Autonomous Republic of Crimea	5.5 %
Cherkasy region	18.1 %
Chernihiv region	29.6 %
Chernivtsi region	22.7 %
Dnipropetrovsk region	11.7 %
Donetsk region	9.7 %
Ivano-Frankivsk region	26.8 %
Kharkiv region	16.4 %
Kherson region	18.7%
Khmelnitsky region	6.5 %
Kirovograd region	5.8 %
Kyiv	2.2 %
Kyiv region	6.5 %
Luhansk region	8.0%
Lviv region	8.9 %
Odessa region	11,0 %

Poltava region	18.0 %
Rivne region	8.5 %
Sumy region	8.9 %
Ternopil region	16.2 %
The Nikolaev region	6.4 %
Transcarpathian region	6.4 %
Vinnitsia region	15.0 %
Volyn region	5.9 %
Zaporozhye region	11.9 %
Zhytomyr region	27.8 %

### 2.3. Evaluation and preparation of an individual curriculum

The establishment of an individual curriculum for a child with special educational needs is anticipated by a period of assessments, which provides to determine features: behaviour, learning priorities, specific skills, and the general level of student's development. This data allows the educator to create the learning process and subsequently meet the needs of their pupils and encourage their comprehensive development. It is also beneficial to conduct children's formal assessment using special techniques which allow parents' and professionals' participation.

The assessment should be viewed as a systematic process of gathering comprehensive details about a child. These details identify a pupil's strengths and areas which need to improve. Furthermore, the assessment aims to determine the current level of a child's development which feeds into the creation of appropriate curricula and activities. Therefore, the assessment for children with special educational needs has to be more accurate and focused than for students with typical development (Vališová, Kovaříková, 2021).

Specialists from several disciplines should be involved in this evaluation process. The evaluation process should be continuing collective process involving systematic observations and analysis. The notes from one specialist created during a single observation cannot be considered accurate. More parts (parents, teachers, and professionals) need to be involved in developing individual curricula. Further, parents should be reassured that during an individual assessment and following analysis of their child, the focus will be kept on strengths. Needed information for the assessment can be collected from diverse sources such as parents, adults (and those who live with the child), children, teachers and other professionals collaborating with the child and others. Specialists from diverse professions, such as speech therapists, special pedagogues, doctors, psychologists etc., can play a crucial role in assessing the child. Everyone who participated analysed the results until the end of the evaluation process. After the results from the assessment are received, the creation of an individual curriculum begins.

During the development of individual curricula, the primary focus is on developing specific learning strategies and approaches. Also, the supplementary supporting services system allowing a child to participate in the ordinary classroom is prepared. Generally, the personalised curriculum included the following elements:

1. General child's details
  - a. Name, age, home address, phone number, parents' names, diagnosis, date of child's enrolment to a school, and the validity of the STI.
2. The current child's knowledge and skills.
  - a. Information about the child's developmental level, notes from observation and research. The strategy should include parents' worries. Information should be provided on the impact of the child's developmental disabilities and their ability and chance to flourish in the classroom. All supplied data should be as much accurate as possible because they are base for the creation of future tasks.
3. Aims and objectives should force a child to accommodate targeted knowledge and skills. Everyone working with the child is participating in the definition of these tasks.
  - a. Aims state target result. They can describe knowledge, skills, and behaviour. They should be positive and simply described. So, everyone can understand what is meant by them.
  - b. Tasks are the necessary intermediate steps to the outlined goal, written in clear and straightforward terms.
  - c. The strategy must identify who, what to do and when. The aims should be determined in all areas of developmental insufficiency, i.e., intellectual, social, and emotional development, motor skills, speech etc.

4. Special and supplementary supporting services. The individual study strategy is supposed to involve lectures with a specialist such as speech therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists etc.

a. Teachers and other specialists collaborate to accommodate supplementary services into the education process. For example, a student can demand specific services, such as a classroom with special equipment. It is reasonable to agree with a relevant institution that can provide these services if it happens. The individual curriculum must include the number and length of hours with a specialist the child requires.

5. Modification

a. Reasonable adaption to the environment supports children with special needs in studies in the regular classroom. Therefore, it is good to remember to include specific arrangements in the plan. By the arrangement, we mean the use of appropriate teaching methods, materials, and tools, but also placing other children and their needs.

6. The plan's effectiveness

a. Primarily the individual curriculum is created for one year. However, anyone who participates in the child's education process can request another meeting and modification of the plan or the creation of a new one. This can be requested when:

the child has achieved the goal.

the child has difficulty achieving specific goals.

a request was received to increase the number of services to the child.

the child is transferred to another school.

the child has behavioural problems, etc.

Information about the child's progress

A crucial part of the development of a curriculum is the assessment and gathering of information about a child's progress. Simultaneously, samples of the child's work, observation results, checklists, behaviour descriptions, comparison results with a typical level of development, test results, and others can be collected. (Rotatori, Bakken, Obiakor, Burkhardt, Sharma, 2014) After some time, the teacher and other professionals assess the child's progress, determine how effective the curriculum is, and share information with the student's parents.

Teachers have long recognised the importance of parental involvement in school life, but families continue to have a decisive influence on children throughout their education. Thus, finding appropriate ways to ensure the participation and cooperation of parents with the school remains a necessary but difficult task in schools, which is especially important in inclusive schools. The importance of working with parents is also emphasised in Ukrainian legislation. In particular, the Law of Ukraine "On General Secondary Education" (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2021) states that "parents are participants in the educational process" and have the right to:

- choose educational institutions and forms of education for minor children.
- make decisions on participation in the innovative activities of the educational institution.
- to elect and be elected to public self-government bodies of general educational institutions.
- apply to the relevant education authorities for the education and upbringing of children.
- to protect the legitimate interests of children.

In the context of existing legislation, all schools are expected to:

- inform parents about the progress of children.
- provide information about the school curriculum.
- involve parents in leadership.
- hold an annual meeting for all parents.
- include parents in identifying special educational needs.

These acquire special weight concerning the parents of children with disorders of psychophysical development. After all, the education of such children is a common task of parents and professionals. Parents' positive attitude to this undoubtedly contributes to the integration processes in school and society.

Therefore, parents are the main initiators in the implementation of involvement programs in Ukraine, as well as in the whole world. This is primarily because parents are natural carriers of the idea, the spirit of attracting children

with special needs to the general system, and, in addition, they are customers of this type of educational service. However, like any link to inclusion, parents need appropriate support and assistance, which will undoubtedly increase their role. Therefore, parents must receive a wide range of services to enable them to become competent defenders of their children's rights, to further use these skills in upholding the child's right to equal access to quality education, and to ensure children's economic and social independence in the future.

Parents of children with special needs should:

1. be taught how to understand the inner state of children better and to become competent defenders of their interests.
2. be provided with educational, social, and other services.
3. Be provided information support to meet their professional growth in defending the rights and interests of children with special needs.
4. Promote the creation of parent organisations.

### **3. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

The development of modern Ukrainian society and the integration process into European society highlights the issue of securing the social protection of the country's habitants. Specifically, the most venerable ones, exclusively children with special needs. These are children with mental and physical disabilities, people with disabilities, and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The term 'special educational needs' refer to the needs which go beyond norms and depend on mental or physical attention and service to develop opportunities for children's potential.

A big topic, not only in Ukraine, is the issue of institutional care, which is tied to the educational process. According to Danek (2022) There is a need to lead the line of support in several directions. On the one hand, we need to intensively rehabilitate the original families, while building a quality aftercare network. In residential care facilities, it will be necessary to intensify the preparation of young adults for departure; ideally, this preparation should begin on the day of their arrival. We see synergistic cooperation across disciplines, from social work to sociology to special education, as essential. The energy invested and the money spent will be returned to our society many times over. The young adults will have the opportunity to overcome difficult challenges tied to their past, both in their original families and in children's homes, and will have an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential. After all, equal opportunity is at the heart of the inclusion paradigm. We have a long and challenging process ahead of us.

The most popular form of education for children with special educational needs is inclusive education. This form is recognised in many countries of the world. Inclusive education is a service which aims to ensure and provide the fundamental right of a child to education and the right to study at their place of residence. To maintain equal opportunities for education for every child, inclusive schools must accustom educational programs, plans, forms, teaching methods, and resources to the individual needs of every child with special educational needs. The cooperation between schools, parents, and specific professionals is crucial for a child's academic success.

The Ukrainian development of inclusive education is in accordance with the New Ukrainian School (2017) concept. The concept also manifests the modernisation of the state's humanitarian policy and change in the pedagogical paradigm. The main difference is in implementing a child-centred approach in all types and forms of education. The aims of inclusive education are similar to the global principles in education for children with special needs. Similarly, we cannot forget about the long-term preparation for inclusive education, such as the socialisation of children with special educational needs, experimental base, or scientific scene. These previous experiences in Ukrainian pedagogy provided the base for current pedagogical changes and possible future improvements.

Despite some positive results of the educational experiment, it should be noted that the introduction of inclusive education in our country still has many problems. Inclusive education is in dire need of improving the legal framework and funding principles, creating a favourable environment in schools, forming the material and technical

base, methodological and staffing, and overcoming social and professional stereotypes.

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