

Dynamics of modern society: Analyzing the trajectory and mechanisms of social and inclusive development



Liudmyla Chernichenko^a   | Nataliia Sokha^b  | Eliana Danilavichiutė^c  |
Viktoriia Lohvynenko^d  | Ruslan Lavlinskyy^e 

^aDepartment of Special and Inclusive Education, Pavlo Tyhyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Uman, Ukraine.

^bDepartment of Social Pedagogy and Special Education, Faculty of Social Pedagogy and Psychology, Zaporizhzhia National University, Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

^cDepartment of Speech Therapy, Mykola Yarmachenko Institute of Special Education and Psychology, National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine.

^dDepartment of Social Work, Management and Social Sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Social Protection, Lviv State University of Life Safety, Lviv, Ukraine.

^eInterregional Academy of Personnel Management, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Abstract This study examines the inclusive development of Ukrainian society with a particular focus on inclusive education as a key mechanism of social participation under wartime conditions. The aim of the article is to analyze current trends in the development of inclusive education in Ukraine, assess the institutional role of inclusive resource centers, and identify the major barriers preventing young people with visual and hearing impairments from entering higher education. The research design combines literature analysis, descriptive analysis of official educational statistics, a questionnaire survey of 60 respondents aged 18–30 from three regions of Ukraine, and a case-based review of inclusive educational practice. The results show a steady increase in the number of students with special educational needs and inclusive classes in Ukraine during 2020–2025, indicating growing demand for institutional support, educational adaptations, and professional staffing. The findings also demonstrate that psychological barriers, especially the expectation of rejection and discrimination, may be more significant than purely infrastructural constraints in shaping educational decisions. At the same time, the article highlights the role of inclusive resource centers as an important institutional mechanism of support, while emphasizing that their quantitative expansion should be complemented by qualitative strengthening. The study concludes that the effective development of inclusive education in Ukraine requires not only formal legal guarantees but also better institutional readiness, improved information support, teacher training, and a barrier-free educational environment.

Keywords: inclusive education, inclusive resource centers, higher education accessibility, special educational needs, information, digital competence

1. Introduction

The concept of “inclusive education” in the modern pedagogical literature refers to the process of ensuring equal access to education for all students (both for people with and without disabilities), taking into account the variability of educational needs and individual capabilities (Panok, 2012). According to Gladush (2018), inclusive education is “a system of educational services based on the principle of ensuring the child’s fundamental right to education and the right to study at the place of residence in a general education institution”. The main idea of inclusive education is the absence of any discrimination against individuals. The modern education system focuses on the socialization functions of individuals, including people with SEN. Socialization is a complex and continuous process, the stages of which “specialize” in solving certain tasks, without which each subsequent stage may not occur or be distorted or slowed down. That is why we should discuss the importance of lifelong learning.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is called the “World Constitution of the Rights of the Child,” which Ukraine ratified in 1991, thereby agreeing to protect children from exploitation, discrimination, and all kinds of violence, especially to take care of orphans and refugees. In 2017, Ukraine adopted the law “On Inclusive Education”. In 2019, the All-Ukrainian Consortium for Inclusive Education was established, which included eight higher education institutions in Ukraine (Gladush & Kozlinska, 2017).

The aim of this article is to analyze the development of inclusive education in Ukraine as a key dimension of inclusive social development, to assess the institutional role of inclusive resource centers, and to identify the main barriers that prevent young people with visual and hearing impairments from pursuing higher education. This goal led to the setting of several practical tasks, in particular:



- to review the scholarly literature on inclusive development and inclusive education;
- to clarify the conceptual relationship between inclusive development, social inclusion, inclusive education, and barrier-free accessibility;
- to analyze official statistics on the development of inclusive education in Ukraine during 2020–2025;
- to characterize the institutional role of inclusive resource centers in supporting children with special educational needs;
- to identify the main self-reported barriers preventing young people with visual and hearing impairments from entering higher education;
- to outline the practical implications of these findings for educational institutions and inclusive policy.

The analysis of scientific sources confirms that the problems of socialization and inclusive education are urgent scientific issues and that attention to this topic is growing only. After analyzing all the studies on this issue, we can conditionally classify them into the following:

- studies that examine the legal framework for the implementation of inclusive education programs (Pradel-Miquel et al., 2020);
- Studies that address the problems of inclusion in the economic sector, particularly the agricultural sector (Martin et al., 2008; Stepanenko, 2023);
- studies that examine the processes of digital and information inclusion in society and equal access to information for people with different disabilities (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2017; Eliseeva, 2020);
- studies that examine the role of assistants and the process of assistance in inclusive development (Black & William, 2009);
- research that explores and develops the basic principles, methods and tools of inclusive education for children and adults (Alvarez-Cueva, 2022; Gladush & Parkhomenko, 2016; Nilholm, 2021).
- research related to the study of the psychological aspects of inclusive education (Novella Cámara et al., 2022; Raposo, 2022; Horby & Kidd, 2001).
- studies that examine the particulars of professional training or retraining among teachers to work with inclusive groups or the individualized education of students with special needs (Argemí-Baldich et al., 2022).

Although the existing literature covers legal, pedagogical, psychological, and organizational aspects of inclusion, these strands are often examined separately. Fewer studies integrate official educational statistics, institutional analysis of inclusive resource centers, and empirical evidence on barriers to higher education participation among young people with sensory impairments in the Ukrainian wartime context. This gap determines the contribution of the present study.

Studies need to consider inclusive development as an independent concept that differs from inclusive growth. The academic term “inclusive development” emerged for the first time in 1998, but scientists started using it as a fundamental concept in their research only after 2008. Although many more articles use the term “inclusive growth” rather than “inclusive development,” most publications use the two terms interchangeably. The research by Gupta et al. (2015) rightly argues that they are in fact different in structure and components. “The definition of inclusive growth which Ali & Son (2007) established describes a system that generates fresh economic prospects which all population segments including low-income individuals can equally participate in. With the help of various players and aggressive state policies, it aims to increase per capita income through economic development and expanded access to nonincome components of well-being (Chatterjee, 2005).

According to Ali and Zhuang (2007), its “pillars are: a) high and sustainable growth to create productive and decent employment opportunities and b) social inclusion to ensure equal access to opportunities for all”. The theory of inclusive development shows that uneven development leads to different employment sectors, which create economic inequalities that push certain groups out of the market system. The approach to inclusive development moves away from economic expansion because it demands that citizens exercise their civil, civic and political rights and requires an equal distribution of essential resources, including healthcare, education and infrastructure development, for everyone to access these benefits (Sachs, 2004). The main elements that make up these facilities together with their opportunities are educational services.

In this study, inclusive development is treated as the broadest analytical category. Social inclusion is understood as the process through which exclusion is reduced and participation is enabled. Inclusive education represents a sectoral mechanism through which social inclusion is implemented in the educational sphere. Barrier-free accessibility, in turn, is considered a supporting condition that enables participation by reducing physical, informational, communication, and institutional barriers. Such differentiation makes it possible to avoid the interchangeable use of these concepts and to specify the analytical focus of the article.

In modern psychological and pedagogical science and practice, the concept of an “inclusive educational environment” is widely used when the conditions of education and upbringing are discussed. The educational environment is a system of influences and conditions for personality formation; a set of opportunities for its development is contained in the social and spatial subject environment (Bakhmat et al., 2023; Semenets-Orlova et al., 2022; Smolinska et al., 2024). The “educational environment” category connects education as a sphere of social life and the environment as a factor of education (Gladush &

Baranets, 2015). Scientists (Yermachenko et al., 2023; Byrkovych et al., 2023) define inclusive development as one of the conditions for the sustainable development of society.

The issues of inclusive education have become the focus of state policy in education, particularly the New Ukrainian School, which focuses on the successful socialization of children with disabilities in a specially created, accessible environment. Kuzava (2015) developed a conceptual framework for inclusive education in preschool; “the system of inclusive education of preschoolers with special needs based on a tolerant attitude toward pupils of this category was substantiated and tested.” In this context, it is important to note: an original theoretical and experimental model of inclusive education in Ukraine was developed and presented, and the wide and diverse international experience of its implementation in various national education systems was thoroughly analyzed.

Some aspects of the inclusive education methodology and its principles, means and forms have also been the subject of scientific research. Panok (2012) studied the problem of choosing the right form of education for children with SEN (special boarding school, integrated, inclusive, individual forms). In his monograph, Gladush (2012) developed the theoretical and practical foundations of the postgraduate pedagogical education of defectologists. Binoti Simas (2022) studied the problem of inclusive education in the higher education system. Atkinson (2002) studied the problem of social inclusion within the European Union, and Alexiadou (2002) studied a similar problem within the UK. The article by Alvarez-Cueva (2022) examines the potential of art therapy, particularly music, in the process of socialization.

Despite the significant number of scientific works on the outlined issues, the issue of inclusive development in society requires further research, and today, the aspects of implementing information policy on inclusion in society, particularly the formation of an adequate perception of people with special needs in schools, universities and society as a whole and the development of interactions with such people, are poorly understood. There is also a need to study the improvement of the work of inclusive resource centers established in Ukraine, which will be the focus of our study.

2. Methods

This study is based on an exploratory mixed-method research design combining four components: (i) a review of scholarly literature on inclusive development and inclusive education; (ii) a descriptive analysis of official statistical data on the development of inclusive education in Ukraine; (iii) a cross-sectional questionnaire survey of young people with visual and hearing impairments; and (iv) a case-based analysis of inclusive educational practice at a Ukrainian college. Such a design made it possible to combine conceptual clarification, institutional analysis, and empirical evidence on barriers to higher education participation.

To study the reasons why people with SEN do not enter university, a questionnaire survey was conducted among people with visual impairments and hearing impairments. The questionnaire was designed to identify perceived institutional, psychological, and informational barriers that prevent people with special educational needs (SEN) from pursuing higher education. The instrument included both closed-ended and structured response questions aimed at capturing dominant reasons for nonenrollment. The survey items were developed on the basis of the theoretical framework of social inclusion, perceived discrimination, and the accessibility of higher education.

The questionnaire consisted of two main blocks: (1) sociodemographic characteristics (age, type of impairment, region of residence) and (2) perceived barriers to higher education participation. The respondents were asked to select the primary factor influencing their decision not to enroll in university studies. The questionnaire included closed-ended items and one structured-choice item asking respondents to identify the main factor that prevented them from enrolling in higher education. The key response categories included: fear of rejection or discrimination due to impairment, lack of necessary educational conditions, and lack of motivation to pursue higher education.

These categories were formulated on the basis of preliminary field observations and consultations with specialists involved in inclusive education and employment support. The response options were formulated on the basis of preliminary field observations and consultation with specialists working in inclusive education and employment services. Given the exploratory nature of the study and the relatively small sample size ($n = 60$), the research design focused on descriptive statistical analysis aimed at identifying dominant trends rather than establishing causal relationships. The survey responses were processed using frequency counts and percentage distribution in order to identify the dominant self-reported barriers to higher education participation. No inferential statistical methods were applied because the purpose of the survey was exploratory and the sample size did not justify causal or generalizable conclusions.

Surveys were conducted among residents of the Lviv, Ternopil, and Chernivtsi regions in 2024. The respondents were interviewed at employment centers where they applied for employment. The age range of the respondents covered by the survey was 18–30 years. The survey was conducted in compliance with ethical parameters, including obtaining consent from all the respondents, the inadmissibility of using methods and procedures that violate the dignity of the respondents' personality, the informed nature of the study, and the voluntary participation of all the participants in the survey.

The empirical method was also implemented on the basis of the pedagogical experience of implementing inclusive education at the Ivano-Frankivsk College of the V. Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk), which is particularly active in the theoretical and practical fields of inclusive education.

The study has several limitations. First, the survey covered only three regions of Ukraine and included a relatively small non-random sample. Second, the empirical component focused only on respondents with visual and hearing impairments and therefore does not reflect the full diversity of special educational needs. Third, the statistical analysis was descriptive, which limits the possibility of broader generalization. These limitations do not reduce the value of the findings but require cautious interpretation.

3. Results and Discussion

The development of inclusive education in Ukraine can be traced through official educational statistics, the institutional functioning of inclusive resource centers, and the perceived barriers reported by potential entrants to higher education. Together, these dimensions make it possible to assess both the quantitative expansion of inclusion and the qualitative limitations that continue to hinder equal educational participation.

The number of students in inclusive education in Ukraine is growing every year. One of the main reasons for this is the Russian–Ukrainian war, which is steadily increasing the number of people with disabilities, including children and adolescents, and contributes to the deterioration of psycho-emotional conditions that exacerbate existing chronic diseases and worsen the course of diseases. This is evident from the official statistics of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (Table 1).

Table 1 Statistics on the number of students with SEN and inclusive classes in Ukraine for 2020–2025.

Academic year	Number of students with SEN	Number of inclusive classes
2020/21	25078	18681
2021/22	32686	23216
2022/23	33861	24995
2023/24	40354	29321
2024/25	47610	33397

Source: Official statistics of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine.

The statistical dynamics presented in Table 1 indicate not only a quantitative increase in the number of students with special educational needs and inclusive classes in Ukraine during 2020–2025 but also a growing institutional burden on the education system. The increase from 25,078 to 47,610 students with SEN and from 18,681 to 33,397 inclusive classes suggests that inclusive education is expanding under conditions of increased demand for adapted learning environments, support specialists, teaching materials, and interprofessional coordination. Thus, the growth of quantitative indicators should be interpreted as evidence of both progress and rising pressure on institutional capacity.

A comparison of preschool and general secondary education indicates an uneven distribution of inclusive and special forms across educational levels. The substantially larger number of inclusive classes in general secondary education reflects the stronger institutionalization of inclusion at the school level, whereas preschool education retains a more pronounced role for special groups. This difference suggests that the transition from early childhood support to broader inclusive schooling remains uneven and requires stronger continuity mechanisms across levels of education (Table 2).

Table 2 Main specialists involved in the work of inclusive resource centers in Ukraine.

Preschool education			
Number of inclusive groups	Number of pupils	Number of special groups	Number of students
7658	15297	3027	34531
General secondary education			
Number of inclusive groups	Number of students with SEN	Number of special groups	Number of students with SEN
33397	47610	728	6179

A total of 700 inclusive resource centers (IRCs) have been established in Ukraine, of which 674 are still functioning. The activities of these centers are focused on providing various services, including the following:

- comprehensive psychological and pedagogical developmental assessment,
- correctional and developmental services,
- psychological and pedagogical support.

The centers employ teachers of the following specialties: speech and language therapists, defectologists, practical psychologists, and rehabilitation teachers. Therefore, the model of comprehensive psychological and pedagogical assessment, correction and support involves the coordinated work of these specialists (Figure 1).



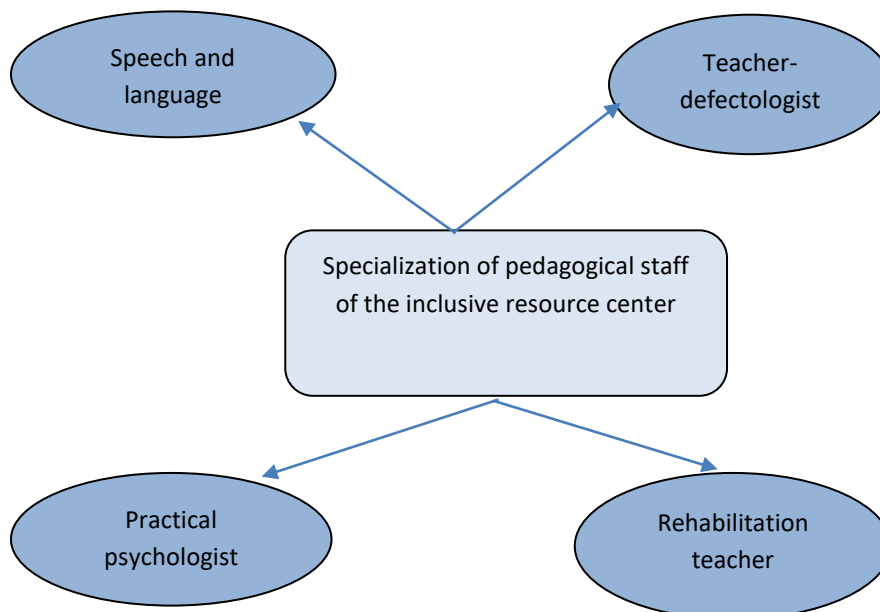


Figure 1 Cognitive features and results of learning native and foreign languages.

At the same time, the numerical expansion of inclusive resource centers should not automatically be equated with the equal effectiveness of their work. The institutional role of IRCs depends not only on the number of centers and listed specialists but also on staffing stability, interprofessional coordination, territorial accessibility, and the quality of local implementation. Under wartime conditions, regional disparities in access to specialists, continuity of services, and resource provision may reduce the practical effectiveness of formally established support mechanisms. Therefore, the role of IRCs should be assessed not only quantitatively but also through the quality and accessibility of the services they provide.

We conducted a questionnaire survey among visually impaired and hearing-impaired people (60 people, age group of respondents (18–30 years)) to determine the reasons why the respondents did not enter higher education institutions. The results of a survey of people with visual and hearing impairments regarding the reasons why they do not enter higher education institutions are shown in Figure 2.

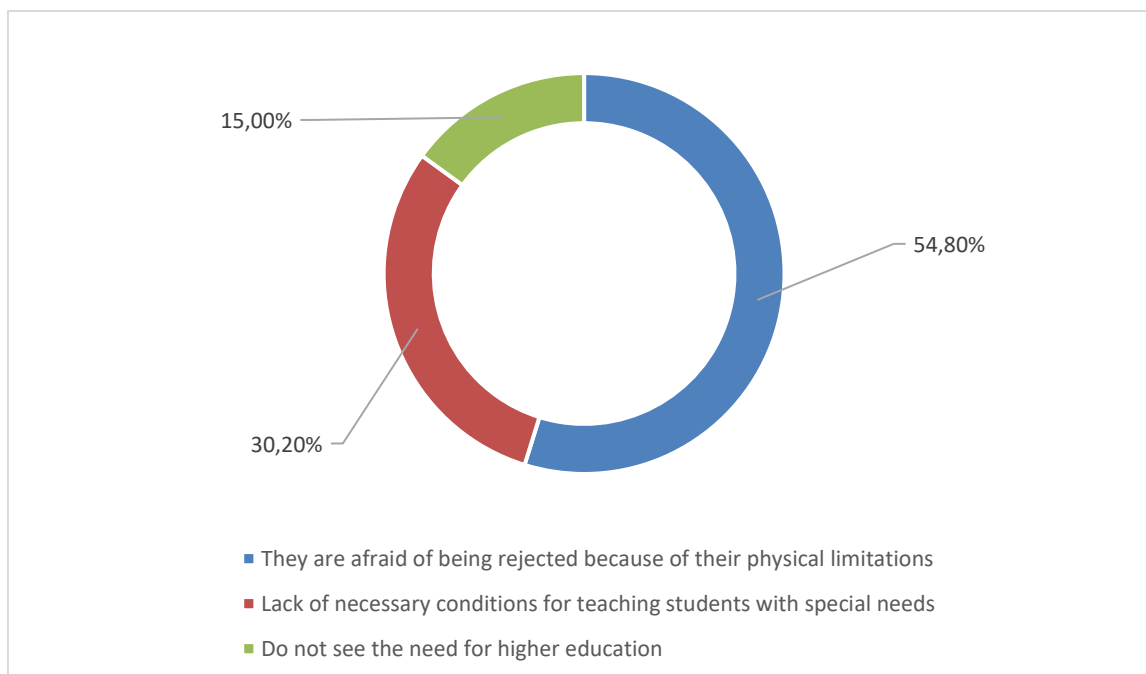


Figure 2 Results of a survey on the reasons for refusing to enroll in higher education institutions among people with visual and hearing impairments.



The percentages presented in Figure 2 reflect the distribution of self-reported primary barriers within the study sample and should therefore be interpreted as exploratory rather than representative for the broader population of persons with visual and hearing impairments in Ukraine.

The predominance of perceived rejection (54.8%) suggests that psychological barriers and anticipated discrimination may represent stronger deterrents than objective infrastructural limitations. This suggests that subjective perceptions of exclusion may function as an independent factor influencing educational trajectories. Even in the absence of direct experience, expectations of unequal treatment appear sufficient to shape decision-making and may lead to self-exclusion from higher education pathways. These findings align with the theoretical framework of social inclusion, where subjective perceptions of exclusion are considered as significant as objective barriers. As noted by Atkinson (2002), social exclusion often operates through internalized expectations that limit participation even in formally inclusive systems. Similarly, Novella Cámara et al. (2022) highlight that psychological dimensions of inclusion play a decisive role in shaping individual engagement in educational and social processes.

The second group of responses (30.2%) reflects the perceived inadequacy of institutional conditions. In this case, respondents do not primarily anticipate interpersonal discrimination but rather question the functional accessibility of the educational environment. This finding indicates that the structural readiness of universities—including learning adaptations, technical support, and academic accommodations—remains a critical component of participation. Unlike psychological barriers, this factor relates to the perceived feasibility of studying rather than social acceptance, suggesting that institutional accessibility operates as a practical constraint influencing educational choice.

These results are consistent with those of previous studies emphasizing the structural dimension of inclusion. Argemí-Baldich et al. (2022) stress that inclusive education cannot be reduced to formal access but requires institutional adaptation, including infrastructure, teaching methods, and organizational flexibility. In a similar vein, Nilholm (2021) argues that without the systemic transformation of educational environments, inclusion remains declarative rather than functional.

Finally, the smallest proportion of respondents (15%) reported the absence of motivation to pursue higher education. This response may not represent a purely personal preference but rather the cumulative effect of long-term social and environmental influences. Reduced educational aspirations can emerge as an adaptive reaction to persistent structural or psychological barriers, forming a pattern of lowered expectations. Therefore, motivational withdrawal may be interpreted not only as an individual decision but also as an indirect consequence of perceived exclusion and limited accessibility. Such an interpretation corresponds to the findings of Raposo (2022), who demonstrates that reduced motivation among marginalized groups is often socially conditioned rather than individually determined. Moreover, Horby & Kidd (2001) emphasize that long-term exposure to exclusionary practices may lead to adaptive disengagement from education systems.

These findings correspond with the theory of perceived discrimination, which emphasizes that anticipated negative treatment can significantly influence behavioral decisions, even in the absence of direct experience. Thus, the results of the survey indicate the need for legal education and awareness of people with disabilities about their rights to education, dissemination of information about available ways of studying, about universities that provide the necessary conditions for education, and educational work on the importance and necessity of obtaining higher education and further opportunities. On the basis of the results of this survey, it is possible to outline the range of problems and possible ways to solve them in the context of the issues of the inclusive development of society:

1. Low level of awareness of inclusive opportunities at universities and opportunities for career development in higher education.
2. Lack of inclusive spaces designed to educate people with SEN and insufficient material and technical support for universities, including the lack of professional literature written in Braille.
3. Communication with people with special needs is not well established, and there are no special educational programs that take into account the physical limitations of certain groups.

Taken together, these findings suggest that barriers to higher education are multidimensional and combine psychological expectations of exclusion, doubts about institutional readiness, and insufficient awareness of available educational opportunities. This means that formal guarantees of access are not sufficient in themselves: inclusive policy in higher education must also address communication, trust, adapted learning conditions, and visible institutional support.

The identified challenges correspond with the conclusions of Pradel-Miquel et al. (2020), who emphasize the importance of governance mechanisms in ensuring the effective implementation of inclusive policies. In addition, Martin et al. (2008) report that social inclusion initiatives often fail when infrastructural and communication barriers are not addressed simultaneously, which is also evident in the Ukrainian context. The outlined range of problems can be solved in the following ways:

1. Improving communication with people with developmental disabilities to inform them about the inclusive opportunities of educational institutions, including higher education institutions.
2. Improving the infrastructure and material and technical base of universities.
3. Implementation of new educational programs based on inclusive practices.

This interpretation is consistent with Gladush (2018), who argues that the expansion of inclusive education should not eliminate differentiated forms of educational support. It also corresponds to Etherington (2019), who emphasizes that the digital transformation of education requires teachers to revise pedagogical approaches when working with students with special educational needs.

Despite the adoption of legal acts at the state level, it should be noted that there are a number of problematic aspects in the practice of inclusive education, especially in the organization of vocational education. In our opinion, special attention should be given to the lack of accessibility of vocational education for people with disabilities. Accessibility is seen as the quality of the social environment that allows them to choose a convenient form of studying basic and additional educational programs of vocational education; to freely visit vocational education organizations and other related facilities; and to feel physical and psychological comfort and self-confidence in the process of learning, communication, and interaction with other students and teachers; and to receive the necessary services for comprehensive support, taking into account the types of health limitations and special.

In implementing inclusive education, many universities face several unresolved issues in the system of higher education for students with SEN. First, the regulatory framework for the implementation of inclusive education in higher education, including other equipment for the educational process, is not sufficiently developed. The mechanism for adapting the main professional educational program for students with SEN should be improved. Second, there is often a situation in which teachers are not ready to implement inclusive education (lack sufficient knowledge about the nature of students' special educational needs; insufficient knowledge of special methods and technologies for working with special students; psychological barriers; and an emotional unwillingness to become participants in the inclusive educational process). This observation is broadly supported by the article by Gladush and Parkhomenko (2016), who emphasize that teacher preparedness is a central factor in the quality of inclusive education, whereas Black and William (2009) argue that effective inclusion requires ongoing professional development and the adaptation of assessment practices.

Third, there is insufficient financial support for educational organizations to create an accessible (barrier-free) environment and provide the necessary special hardware and software to meet the educational needs of students from different students with different categories of special educational needs. In addition, it is important for society to ensure the openness of information about social support and assistance measures, social benefits, opportunities for vocational education and the employment of various categories of persons with disabilities; to inform people with disabilities about educational organizations and vocational education programs of various levels and degrees available to them; and to develop infrastructure (connections to global information networks, etc.) that compensates for transport discrimination and allows them to receive education at a distance.

As an illustrative institutional case, the study considers the experience of the Ivano-Frankivsk College of the V. Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, which has participated in the development of inclusive educational practices in Ukraine. The college became one of eight institutions that formed the All-Ukrainian Consortium for Inclusive Education. In 2019, the college hosted an international training, "Inclusion Practices: Experience of Ukrainian-American Cooperation", which was attended by students, teachers, mentors, and stakeholders of the project "No Borders: Development and Support of Inclusive Education Community". College graduates can also continue their studies in the university specialty "preschool education" (specialization "Speech therapy", "English") and "primary education" (specialization "Correctional Education").

College teachers have developed master classes on "Using Art Therapy and Art Pedagogy Methods in the Framework of Psychological and Pedagogical Support of Inclusive Education," such as "Fairy Tale Therapy," "Puppetry as a Play Therapy Tool in Inclusive Education." "Theater Pedagogy in Inclusive Education", "Drawing therapy", and master classes on dissemination of the best Ukrainian educational practices, "Development of an individual learning trajectory for students with autism spectrum disorders" (author - Natalia Ivashura). As part of the training blocks, psychologists share the methodology of metaphorical cards to reveal the mental characteristics of children through associations and then choose an adequate form of behavioral correction. Some of the training is also aimed at adopting the experience of American colleagues in the field of inclusion ("Transition: What it looks like for parents", "Coteaching with universal design and learning to ensure equal learning achievement of students", "Creating a positive environment to support all students"). One of the important conditions for inclusive development is the creation of a barrier-free environment that reduces physical, informational, communication, educational, and institutional obstacles to participation.

Recent Ukrainian policy on barrier-free accessibility demonstrates that inclusion is increasingly interpreted beyond the educational sphere and extends to access to public services, mobility, information, rehabilitation, and social participation. However, in the context of this study, these initiatives are important primarily as a broader background confirming that inclusive development requires cross-sectoral coordination, while education remains one of its central institutional domains.

These findings are consistent with those of Cano-Hila (2022), who argues that inclusive conditions function not only as supportive mechanisms for vulnerable groups but also as drivers of broader social transformation aimed at sustainability and social justice. In this regard, the Ukrainian experience demonstrates that inclusive development should be interpreted not as a narrow educational or welfare instrument but as a cross-sectoral model of social participation that combines education, accessibility, digital inclusion, and reintegration support.

The identified barriers to higher education among respondents with visual and hearing impairments also confirm the observations of Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2017) and Eliseeva (2020), who emphasize that equal access to information and communication is a necessary precondition for real inclusion. Moreover, the importance of pedagogical support and adapted educational practices in the present study corresponds to the conclusions of Gladush & Parkhomenko (2016), Nilholm (2021), and Argemí-Baldich et al. (2022), who stress that inclusive education requires not only legal guarantees but also systematic teacher training, flexible methods, and institutional readiness.

At the international level, similar patterns have been identified in studies showing that participation in higher education depends not only on formal admission opportunities but also on institutional trust, adapted learning environments, and perceived social acceptance. In this sense, the Ukrainian findings correspond to broader international observations: psychological expectations of exclusion and doubts about institutional readiness can remain powerful deterrents even where inclusive norms formally exist. What distinguishes the Ukrainian context is that these barriers are intensified by wartime conditions and by the growing pressure placed on support institutions and educational infrastructure.

In general, in recent years, calls for “inclusive development” to meet modern development needs and challenges have increased. While economic growth is indispensable, it is insufficient to enhance the welfare and social well-being of the populace. To guarantee that the advantages of growth are distributed equally among all segments of society, particularly among large groups of vulnerable individuals, it is necessary to adopt a development strategy that extends beyond “growth and income”. Development is not automatically inclusive but requires additional and diverse investments and efforts, and education should be the first point of application of these efforts.

4. Conclusion

The study has shown that the development of inclusive education in Ukraine should be analyzed not only as a normative commitment to equality but also as a practical institutional response to growing educational needs under wartime conditions. Official statistics for 2020–2025 demonstrate a steady increase in both the number of students with special educational needs and the number of inclusive classes, which indicates the expansion of inclusive education and simultaneously points to increasing pressure on educational infrastructure, support services, and professional staffing.

The analysis also confirmed the important institutional role of inclusive resource centers in providing assessment, correctional support, and interdisciplinary assistance. At the same time, the article argues that the formal expansion of such centers should not automatically be equated with equal effectiveness, because the quality of inclusive support depends on staffing, accessibility, coordination, and local implementation conditions.

The survey of young people with visual and hearing impairments showed that the most significant barriers to higher education participation are not limited to infrastructural constraints. The expectation of rejection and discrimination emerged as the dominant self-reported obstacle, followed by doubts about the adequacy of institutional conditions. This suggests that inclusive policy in higher education must address both objective accessibility and subjective perceptions of exclusion.

Overall, the findings indicate that inclusive development in Ukraine requires a combination of legal guarantees, institutional readiness, effective communication about educational opportunities, teacher training, and a barrier-free educational environment. Further research should expand the regional and empirical scope of the study and deepen the comparative analysis of international inclusive education practices.

5. Declarations

5.1. Ethical considerations

All participants in the questionnaire survey provided informed consent before participation. The survey was voluntary and anonymous, and no personally identifiable data were collected. The study procedures complied with general ethical principles of respect for participants, voluntariness, and confidentiality.

5.2. Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript.

5.3. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

5.4. Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

References

- Alexiadou, N. (2002). Social inclusion and social exclusion in England: Tensions in education policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(1), 71–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930110100063>
- Ali, I., & Son, H. H. (2007). Measuring inclusive growth. *Asian Development Review*, 24(1), 11–31.
- Ali, I., & Zhuang, J. (2007). *Inclusive growth toward a prosperous Asia: Policy implications* (Economics and Research Department Working Paper No. 97). Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/publications/inclusive-growth-toward-prosperous-asia-policy-implications>
- Alvarez-Cueva, P. (2022). Music to face the lockdown: An analysis of Covid-19 music narratives on individual and social well-being. *Social Inclusion*, 10(2), 6–18. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.4894>
- Argemí-Baldich, R., Padilla-Petry, P., & Massot-Lafón, M. I. (2022). What is inclusive education? Voices and views from a carpentry classroom workshop. *Social Inclusion*, 10(2), 75–84. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.5099>
- Atkinson, T. (2002). Social inclusion and the European Union. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(4), 625–643. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00391>
- Bakhmat, N., Sydoruk, L., Poberezhets, H., Misenyova, V., Boyarova, O., & Mazur, Y. (2023). Features of using the opportunities of the digital environment of the higher educational institution for the development of future economists' professional competence. *Economic Affairs (New Delhi)*, 68(1), 43–50. <https://doi.org/10.46852/0424-2513.1s.2023.6>
- Binoti Simas, T., Cardoso Cavalcante, L., Mavíael de Carvalho, C., & da Silva Sousa, S. (2022). The interiorization of public higher education in Santana do Araguaia, Brazil. *Social Inclusion*, 10(2), 106–116.
- Black, P., & William, D. (2009). Developing the theory of formative assessment. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21(1), 5–31.
- Byrkovych, T., Denysiuk, Z., & Gaievska, L. (2023). State policy of cultural and art projects funding as a factor in the stability of state development in the conditions of globalization. *Economic Affairs (New Delhi)*, 68(1), 199–211.
- Cano-Hila, A. B. (2022). Understanding social inclusion in contemporary society: Challenges, reflections, limitations, and proposals. *Social Inclusion*, 10(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.5090>
- Chatterjee, S. (2005). Poverty reduction strategies: Lessons from the Asian and Pacific region on inclusive development. *Asian Development Review*, 22(1), 12–44. <https://doi.org/10.1142/S0116110505000023>
- Eliseeva, I. G. (2020). Development of inclusive education in the context of updating the content of secondary education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. *Bulletin of KazNPU Named after Abaya, Series "Special Pedagogy"*, 3(62), 22–28.
- Etherington, M. (2019). The challenge with educational transformation. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, 2(1), 96–112. <https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.02.01.8>
- Gladush, V. A. (2012). *Postgraduate pedagogical education of defectologists in Ukraine: Theory and practice*. Porogy.
- Gladush, V. A. (2018). *Inclusive education in Ukraine: Successes, problems, prospects*. <https://lib.iitta.gov.ua/id/eprint/729855/>
- Gladush, V. A., & Baranets, Y. Y. (2015). On the issue of forming the professional competence of a teacher of an inclusive institution. *Bulletin of the Alfred Nobel University of Dnipropetrovsk. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*, 1(9), 71–78.
- Gladush, V. A., & Kozlinska, A. (2017). Steps in the introduction of inclusive education in Ukraine. *Current Problems of Pedagogy*, 4, 39–46. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=uk&user=c2MDTYOAAAAJ&citation_for_view=c2MDTYOAAAAJ:35N4QoGY0k4C
- Gladush, V. A., & Parkhomenko, M. V. (2016). On the issue of professional training of teachers in the system of inclusive education. *Scientific Journal of the National University Named after M. P. Dragomanov. Series 19: Correctional Pedagogy and Special Psychology*, 1(32). <https://lib.iitta.gov.ua/id/eprint/729854/>
- Gupta, J., Cornelissen, V., & Ros-Tonen, M. (2015). Inclusive development. In P. H. Pattberg & F. Zelli (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of global environmental governance and politics* (pp. 35–44). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Horby, H., & Kidd, R. (2001). Inclusion and the transition: Transfer from special to mainstream ten years later. *British Journal of Special Education*, 28(1), 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8527.t01-1-00198>
- Kuzava, I. B. (2015). *Theoretical and methodological foundations of inclusive education of preschool children requiring correction of psychophysical development* (Doctoral dissertation, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University). <https://enpui.udu.edu.ua/entities/publication/a8a7467a-33a2-4d16-a85c-a755ee2ac2f3>
- Martin, A., Verhagen, J., & Abatania, L. (2008). Urban agriculture and social inclusion. *Urban Agriculture Magazine*, 20, 17–19. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233621156_Urban_Agriculture_and_Social_Inclusion
- Nilholm, C. (2021). Research about inclusive education in 2020—How can we improve our theories in order to change practice? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(3), 358–370. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2020.1754547>
- Novella Cámara, A. M., Crespo Torres, F., & Pose Porto, H. (2022). Meetings between professionals for the inclusion of children in citizen participation: A formative experience. *Social Inclusion*, 10(2), 19–31. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.5018>
- Panok, V. G. (2012). Inclusive education and the tasks of the psychological service. In *Multidisciplinary approach as a methodological basis for inclusive education*. Svydler Publishing. https://psyslujba.ucoz.ua/load/inkljuzivna_osvita/praktichnomu_psikhologu_materiali_po_inkljuziji/inkljuzivna_osvita_ta_zavdannja_dijalnosti_psikhologich_noji_sluzhbi/12-1-0-118
- Pradel-Miquel, M., Cano-Hila, A. B., & García, M. (2020). *Social innovation and urban governance: Citizenship, civil society and social movements*. Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839102325>
- Raposo, O. (2022). The art of governing youth: Empowerment, protagonism, and citizen participation. *Social Inclusion*, 10(2), 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v10i2.5080>
- Sachs, I. (2004). *Inclusive development strategy in an era of globalization* (Working Paper No. 35). Policy Integration Department, World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, International Labour Office. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.908233>
- Semenets-Orlova, I., Klochko, A., Tereshchuk, O., Denisova, L., Nestor, V., & Sadovyi, S. (2022). Special aspects of educational managers' administrative activity under conditions of distance learning. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 11(1), 286–297. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jct.v11n1p286>
- Smolinska, O., Koval, I., & Pavliuk, M. (2024). Research of assertiveness in organization of the time perspective of degree-seeking students in higher education. *Insight: The Psychological Dimensions of Society*, 11, 222–237. <https://doi.org/10.32999/2663-970X/2024-11-12>



- Stepanenko, S. (2023). Social inclusion as a priority for the further development of the agricultural sector and rural areas. *Scientific Bulletin of Uzhhorod National University*, 46, 77–82. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2413-9971/2023-46-14>
- Wahl-Jorgensen, K., Bennett, L., & Taylor, G. (2017). The normalization of surveillance and the invisibility of digital citizenship: Media debates after the Snowden revelations. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 740–762. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/5523>
- Yermachenko, V., Bondarenko, D., Akimova, L., Karpa, M., Akimov, O., & Kalashnyk, N. (2023). Theory and practice of public management of smart infrastructure in the conditions of the digital society's development: Socio-economic aspects. *Economic Affairs (New Delhi)*, 68(1), 617–633. <https://doi.org/10.46852/0424-2513.1.2023.29>