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SPECIFIC FEATURES OF CREATING A TOLERANT ENVIRONMENT IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Abstract. The article examines specific features of creating a tolerant environment in inclusive education. The relevance of the topic is determined by the growing number of children with special educational needs in general secondary education institutions and the necessity of creating favourable conditions for their socialisation and learning. The study aims to identify the specific features of forming tolerant relationships among participants in the educational process in an inclusive learning environment. The study employs methods of scientific literature analysis, generalisation of theoretical approaches, and expert surveys of teaching staff and researchers. As a result of the study, the principal challenges of implementing inclusive education in Ukraine were identified, including insufficient staffing and material-technical provision, as well as a low level of tolerance towards children with special educational needs. It was established that the essential conditions for forming a tolerant inclusive environment include the development of a tolerant teacher's personality, the enhancement of teaching staff's professional qualifications, the formation of positive parental attitudes towards inclusive learning, and the establishment of collaboration with specialists in psychological and pedagogical support. Particular attention in the study is given to the analysis of theoretical approaches to understanding the concepts of «inclusion» and «inclusive education», as well as to determining their role in ensuring equal access to quality education for all pupils. It is demonstrated that inclusive learning promotes not only the educational integration of children with special educational needs but also the formation of social skills and the development of empathy, as well as mutual understanding among all participants in the educational process. The findings of the expert survey indicate that the effectiveness of forming a tolerant and inclusive educational environment depends to a considerable extent on teachers' professional development, parents' readiness to support inclusive learning, and collaboration among teachers, psychologists, and social workers.

Keywords: inclusion, inclusive education, inclusive learning, children with special educational needs, tolerance.

Introduction. Over recent decades, the issue of implementing inclusive education in Ukraine has become particularly relevant in both scholarly and practical contexts. This is attributable to transformations in the state's social policy, aimed at ensuring equal access to education for all children, including those with special educational needs (SEN). The abandonment of the practice of isolating children with special needs in specialised institutions and the gradual transition towards an inclusive model of education facilitate their integration into society and ensure the realisation of their right to education.

According to research data, Ukraine demonstrates a consistent increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs enrolled in inclusive classrooms. In particular, as of 1 January 2021, over two thousand pupils were receiving education in inclusive classes, a figure almost ten times greater than that recorded five years prior. In total, more than 18,000 inclusive classes have been established in general secondary education institutions, and inclusive learning has been organised in nearly half of Ukrainian schools [3, p.26-27].

This trend attests to the active implementation of the inclusive education model; however, it simultaneously raises the question of creating a favourable educational environment for children with SEN.

In the normative-legal dimension, the implementation of inclusive learning is regulated by a range of international and national instruments that define the principles of equal access to education, non-discrimination, and the social integration of persons with special needs [10, p.30].

Notwithstanding the existence of an appropriate legislative framework, practical challenges persist with regard to the material-technical and staffing provision of inclusive learning, as well as the formation of positive attitudes towards children with SEN among participants in the educational process. Of particular importance in this context is the creation of a tolerant, inclusive educational environment that promotes socialisation, the development of communicative skills, and the full integration of children with special educational needs into school life.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

The issues of inclusive education development and the formation of a tolerant educational environment are actively investigated in contemporary pedagogical and socio-pedagogical scholarship. Scholarly works address the theoretical foundations of inclusive education, the characteristics of organising inclusive learning, and the socialisation of children with special educational needs (A.Kolupaieva [10], T.Lorrman [8]), as well as issues on the formation of tolerant attitudes towards children with SEN and the creation of a favourable inclusive educational environment (N.Zaveriko [7], T.Hnyra [2], T.Motuz [9], O.Fert [15], L.Butuzova & A.Tereshchuk [14]).

Nevertheless, despite the considerable body of research, the characteristics of fostering a tolerant, inclusive educational environment and the interactions among all participants in the educational process under the contemporary conditions of Ukrainian educational development require further research.

The **article aims** to identify the specific features of forming tolerant relationships among participants in the educational process in an inclusive learning environment and to determine the conditions for establishing a positive, tolerant, inclusive educational environment in Ukraine. The study employed **methods** of analysing and generalising scholarly literature on the subject of inclusive education, systematising theoretical approaches, and conducting an expert survey of teachers and researchers to identify current issues in the implementation of inclusive learning and the conditions for forming a tolerant educational environment.

Presentation of the main research material. The concept that defines the essence of inclusive education is «inclusion», which, translated literally from English, means «incorporating» or «joining». Inclusion as a category gained prominence as a counterweight to the process of social exclusion in Western societies, arising from issues of discrimination, poverty, and inequality, including with respect to persons with special needs. Considerable attention in the dissemination of the concept of social inclusion has been given to the process of implementing the principles of inclusive learning within national education systems.

A.Kolupaieva interprets the concept of «inclusion» as «a unified educational system for providing appropriate education to all pupils; the full involvement of children with differing abilities in the various aspects of school education that are accessible to other children» [10, p.306]. In the view of T.Lorrman, «inclusion is the full involvement of all pupils in all aspects of learning and school life, irrespective of the presence of individual differences of any kind. Mainstream schools must be responsive to the needs of all pupils» [8, p.26].

Accordingly, in the contemporary world, the concept of «inclusion» encompasses several dimensions: a social dimension, understood as participation in the life of society and the socialisation of persons with special needs; an educational dimension, understood as the provision of equal access to educational services; and, in the context of digital transformation and the development of modern information and communication technologies, digital inclusion [4] is acquiring increasing relevance as the technological provision of digital accessibility for persons with special needs.

The educational dimension of inclusion is embodied in the concept of inclusive education and learning. As defined by A.Kolupaieva, «inclusive education is a system of educational services grounded in the principle of ensuring children's fundamental right to education and the right to study at their place of residence, which

provides for the education of a child with special educational needs, including a child with particular psychophysical development characteristics, within a general education institution» [10, p.34].

Inclusive learning, in turn, is defined as «a comprehensive process of ensuring equal access to quality education for children with special educational needs through the organisation of their educational and developmental process in general education institutions, based on applying person-centred teaching methods, with due regard for the individual characteristics of such children's learning and cognitive activity» [12]. In this respect, O.Fert adds that «inclusive learning assists children with SEN in adapting to ordinary life situations, integrating into the wider society, overcoming personal complexes and feelings of isolation, promotes the elimination of social barriers and segregation, and fosters a sense of identity and belonging to the collective» [15, p.60]. Thus, inclusive learning presupposes not only the organisation of an educational environment adapted to the needs of children with SEN, but also their successful socialisation, the establishment of social and communicative bonds, and the opportunity for children with SEN to realise their personal potential.

The achievement of these objectives is facilitated by the creation of a favourable, tolerant environment and the formation of tolerant attitudes towards pupils with SEN among all participants in the educational and developmental process. «Tolerance towards persons with special needs is the capacity to perceive in a person with a disability another human being rather than their disability – a person of different appearance and behaviour, a bearer of different values and modes of thinking, with an awareness of their right to be different, to be other» [7, p.64].

Among the markers of tolerant attitudes towards children with SEN, which constitute a fundamental component of inclusive education, researchers L.Butuzova and A.Tereshchuk identify: 1) emotional markers: empathy, compassion, respect, and acceptance; 2) cognitive markers: knowledge of special needs, and awareness of stereotypes and prejudices regarding children with SEN; 3) behavioural markers: a readiness to demonstrate a tolerant stance, the ability to reconcile one's own interests, to negotiate, to seek compromise, and to apply tolerance in situations of tension [14, p.203]. Thus, the primary task of a teacher in an inclusive classroom is to create a favourable, tolerant atmosphere and to promote the formation of tolerant attitudes among other pupils towards children with SEN, whilst simultaneously developing his or her own capacity and potential for tolerance.

The formation of tolerant relationships among children is proposed by Yu.Hnyra to be understood as «a process of forming, under the influence of specially created psychological and pedagogical conditions, a personality capable of conscious expressions of tolerance, namely: selfless care and sensitivity; benevolent emotional responses and empathy; an equitable and accommodating attitude towards others; positive acceptance of oneself and those around one; and the capacity for restrained advocacy of one's own positions» [2, p.23].

T.Motuz, in turn, identifies the psychological and pedagogical conditions conducive to the formation of a tolerant environment within inclusive settings: 1) the development and implementation of an adaptive psychological and pedagogical programme for the formation and cultivation of tolerance in an inclusive classroom; 2) empathic, benevolent communication and interaction between the teacher and the pupils of the inclusive class; 3) active development of communicative skills and collaborative abilities among all pupils of the inclusive class,

and the formation in them of social skills for interacting with all participants in the educational process; 4) pedagogical engagement with children with SEN employing interactive methods – the conduct of tolerance training sessions, the involvement of pupils in extracurricular interaction, the creation of collaborative creative projects, and so forth [9, p.100]. It should further be noted that the establishment of close collaboration between the teacher, the school psychologist, and the parents of typically developing pupils who are educated alongside children with special educational needs is equally essential.

To examine the specific features of tolerance in inclusive education and learning, the authors conducted an expert survey both offline and via the Facebook social network (December 2025 – January 2026). The sample

comprised 36 experts: teachers from secondary education institutions, lecturers from higher education institutions, and researchers engaged with issues of inclusive education implementation. The sample was random, formed based on an availability criterion. The principal objectives of the expert survey were defined as follows: 1) assessment of the current challenges and difficulties in the implementation of inclusive education; 2) identification of the problems associated with forming a tolerant inclusive educational environment; 3) determination of the conditions for forming tolerant relationships within inclusive education.

Figure 1 presents the current challenges and difficulties in the implementation of inclusive education within the Ukrainian educational landscape.

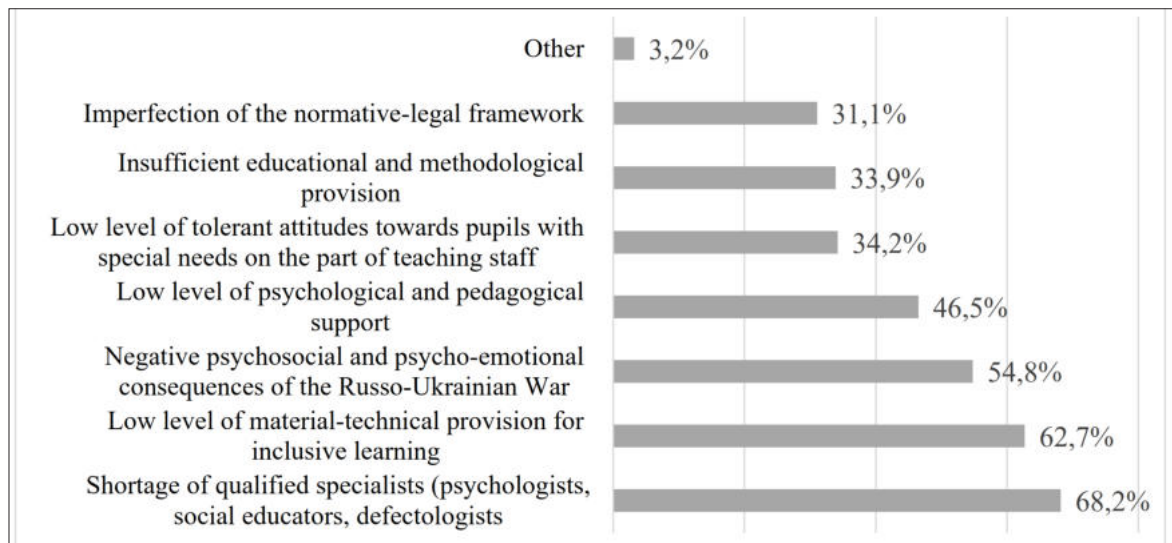


Fig.1. Current Challenges and Difficulties in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in the Ukrainian Educational Landscape (multiple options could be selected)

Source: compiled by the authors based on the results of the expert survey

As the results of the expert survey it is indicated, that the most pressing challenges in the implementation of inclusive education are: the staffing provision of specialist professionals possessing the qualifications and experience required for working with children with special needs (68,2%); a low level of material-technical provision (62,7%), with specialists noting that Ukrainian educational institutions lack the material-technical conditions necessary for the everyday functioning of pupils with special educational needs, both on the premises and within the institution itself; the negative psychosocial and psycho-emotional consequences of the war (54,8%), which exert a destructive influence on the emotional state of children with SEN; and, closely related to staffing provision, the challenge of psychological and pedagogical support (46,5%) for inclusive learning, which encompasses corrective and developmental work with children with SEN.

Accordingly, for inclusive learning to be implemented effectively in a secondary education institution, its administration must undertake a comprehensive range of organisational, material-technical, methodological, and psychological-pedagogical measures [11].

The key issues in forming a tolerant and inclusive educational environment, as identified by the experts, are presented in Figure 2.

In the opinion of experts, the key issues hindering the formation of a positive, tolerant and inclusive educational environment are as follows: a low level of teacher preparedness for educational and developmental work

with children with special needs (67,3%); a low level of tolerance (or even intolerance) towards children with SEN on the part of other pupils (47,4%) and, particularly, their parents (52,8%).

Of particular significance in contemporary research on the formation of an inclusive educational environment is the issue of the attitudes held by parents of typically developing pupils towards children with SEN, since, as O.Fert argues, the attitudes of pupils' parents towards the situation of their children being educated alongside children with SEN substantially influence the tolerant attitudes of those children towards pupils with psychophysical developmental differences [15, p.59]. It is therefore pertinent to examine this issue in detail.

In this regard, I.Drobotko [5] presents the findings of several surveys conducted by domestic researchers on the attitudes of parents of typically developing children towards the inclusion of children with special needs in their classes: 1) the majority of parents express concern that the inclusion of children with SEN will lead to a reduction in the academic standards expected of other pupils [13, p.156]; 2) the overwhelming majority of parents are either unfamiliar with the principles of inclusive learning or show no interest in the issue of including children with SEN in the educational environment; 3) one third of parents of typically developing children are opposed to the inclusion of children with SEN in classes attended by their own children, whilst half consider that such children ought to be educated

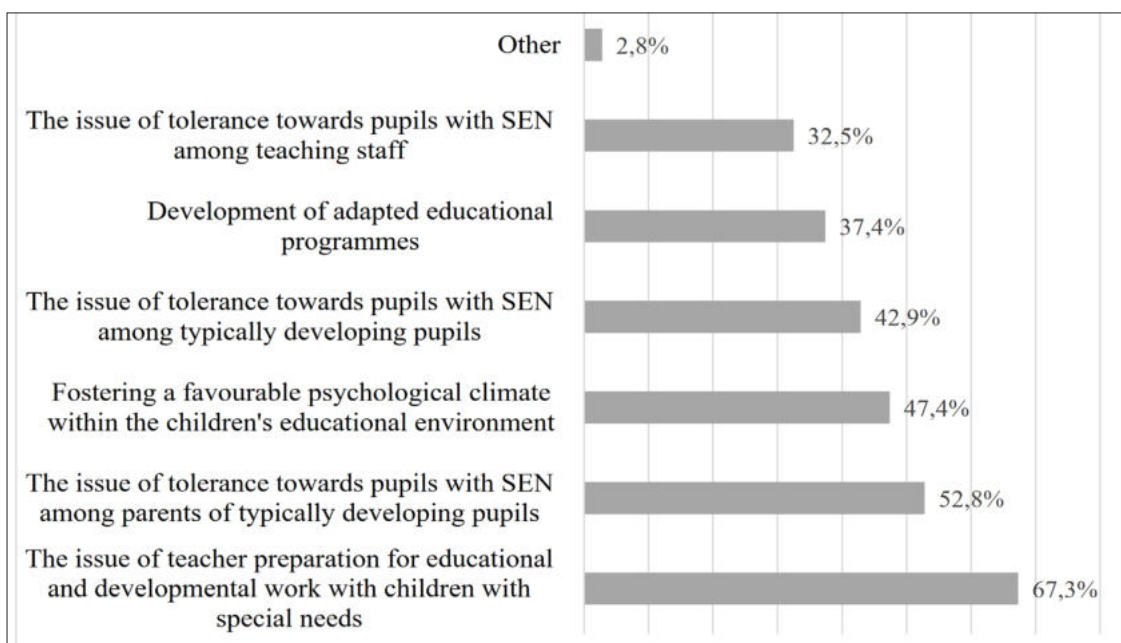


Fig.2. Issues in Forming a Tolerant Inclusive Educational Environment (multiple options could be selected)
Source: compiled by the authors based on the results of the expert survey

in specialised institutions [3, p.29]; 4) in the view of parents of typically developing children, a friendly and benevolent atmosphere in an inclusive classroom will have no bearing on a child with SEN, yet may prove disruptive to typically developing children [3, pp.29-30]. Accordingly, the challenge of forming tolerant

attitudes among the parents of typically developing children emerges as one of the foremost conditions for establishing a positive, tolerant environment within the inclusive educational landscape.

Figure 3 presents the conditions for forming a tolerant, inclusive educational environment.

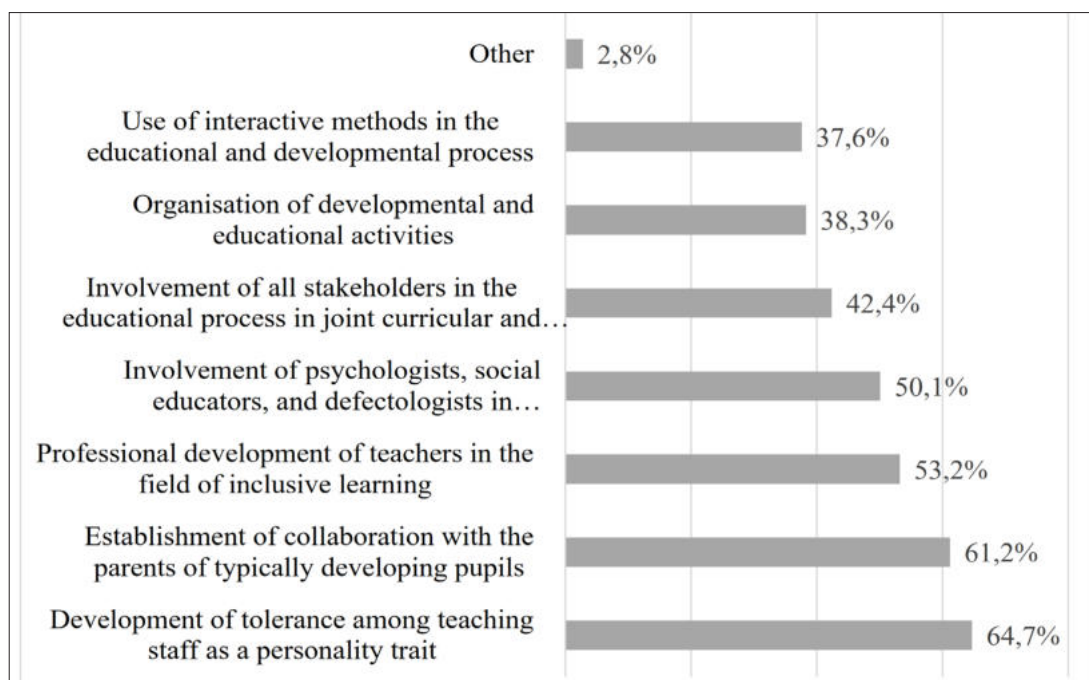


Fig.3. Conditions for Forming a Tolerant Inclusive Educational Environment (multiple options could be selected)

Source: compiled by the authors based on the results of the expert survey

The experts identified the following as the principal conditions for forming a favourable tolerant environment within an inclusive classroom: the development of a tolerant teacher's personality (64,7%); the formation of tolerant attitudes among the parents of typically developing pupils towards children with SEN (61,2%); the en-

hancement of teaching staff's professional qualifications (53,2%); and the establishment of collaboration with specialists from related fields of practice – psychologists, social educators, and defectologists (50,1%).

Conclusions. Based on the study's results, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the specific

features of forming tolerant relationships and fostering a favourable, tolerant educational environment in inclusive education.

It has been established that the concept of «inclusion» may be understood in the social dimension as the incorporation of persons with special needs into the life of society; in the educational dimension as the provision of equal access to educational services; and in the technological dimension as digital inclusion – understood as the technological provision of digital accessibility for persons with special needs. The educational dimension of inclusion is embodied in the concept of inclusive education and learning as a comprehensive process that ensures equal access to quality education for children with special educational needs, to provide educational services within general education institutions, facilitating adaptation to everyday life situations, and promoting integration into wider society.

The achievement of the aims and objectives of inclusive education and learning is facilitated by the creation of a favourable, tolerant environment and the formation of tolerant attitudes towards pupils with SEN among all participants in the educational and developmental process, through the establishment of specially designed psychological and pedagogical conditions.

On the basis of the expert survey findings, the following were determined: 1) the most pressing issues in the implementation of inclusive education are: the staffing provision of specialist professionals possessing the qualifications and experience required for working with children with special needs, and a low level of material-technical provision; 2) the key issues hindering the formation of a positive, tolerant and inclusive educational environment are a low level of teacher preparedness for educational and developmental work with children with special needs, and a low level of tolerance (or even outright intolerance) towards children with SEN on the part of other pupils and, particularly, their parents; 3) the conditions for forming a favourable, tolerant and inclusive educational environment are: the development of a tolerant teacher's personality, the formation of tolerant attitudes among the parents of typically developing pupils towards children with SEN, the professional development of teaching staff in the field of inclusive education, and the establishment of collaboration with specialists from related fields of practice – psychologists, social educators, and defectologists.

A promising direction for further research is the development of an innovative model of inclusive education within the context of Ukraine's post-war education system restoration.

Вимоги до досліджень, що проводяться із залученням людей, тварин або їх біологічних матеріалів, персональних даних або конфіденційних даних. Усі процедури були виконані з дотриманням принципів добровільності згоди та конфіденційності.

Конфлікт інтересів. Автори підтверджують відсутність фінансових, особистих чи інших інтересів, що можуть розглядатися як потенційний конфлікт інтересів щодо публікації цієї статті.

Фінансування. Робота виконана за відсутності фінансової підтримки з боку будь-яких організацій.

Доступність даних. Це дослідження не передбачає використання додаткових наборів даних.

Використання штучного інтелекту. Інструменти штучного інтелекту не використовувались при написанні цієї роботи.

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ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ФОРМУВАННЯ ТОЛЕРАНТНОГО СЕРЕДОВИЩА В УМОВАХ ІНКЛЮЗИВНОЇ ОСВИТИ

Анотація. Досліджено особливості формування толерантного освітнього середовища в умовах інклюзивної освіти. Актуальність теми зумовлена зростанням кількості дітей з особливими освітніми потребами в закладах загальної середньої освіти та необхідністю створення сприятливих умов для їх соціалізації та навчання. Метою дослідження є виявлення особливостей формування толерантних взаємовідносин між учасниками освітнього процесу в умовах інклюзивного навчання. застосовано методи аналізу наукової літератури, узагальнення теоретичних підходів, а також експертне опитування педагогічних працівників та науковців. У результаті дослідження визначено основні проблеми впровадження інклюзивної освіти в Україні, серед яких

недостатнє кадрове та матеріально-технічне забезпечення, а також низький рівень толерантності до дітей з особливими освітніми потребами. Встановлено, що важливими умовами формування толерантного інклюзивного середовища є розвиток толерантної особистості педагога, підвищення кваліфікації педагогічних працівників, формування позитивного ставлення батьків до інклюзивного навчання та налагодження співпраці з фахівцями психолого-педагогічного супроводу. Особливу увагу в дослідженні приділено аналізу теоретичних підходів до розуміння понять «інклюзія» та «інклюзивна освіта», а також визначенню їх ролі у забезпеченні рівного доступу до якісної освіти для всіх учнів. Показано, що інклюзивне навчання сприяє не лише освітній інтеграції дітей з особливими освітніми потребами, а й формуванню соціальних навичок, розвитку емпатії та взаєморозуміння між усіма учасниками освітнього процесу. Результати експертного опитування засвідчили, що ефективність формування толерантного інклюзивного середовища значною мірою залежить від рівня професійної підготовки педагогів, готовності батьків підтримувати інклюзивне навчання та взаємодії між педагогами, психологами і соціальними працівниками.

Ключові слова: інклюзія, інклюзивна освіта, інклюзивне навчання, діти з особливими освітніми потребами, толерантність.