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PRACTICES OF INCLUSIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES: FUNDAMENTALS OF SOCIAL INCLUSION AND BARRIER-FREE

***Annotation.** The article highlights the key principles, structure, and implementation of the course “Fundamentals of Social Inclusion and Barrier-Free Environment”, which represents a model of best practice in inclusive higher education. The authors analyze the methodological foundations and pedagogical strategies for developing inclusive competencies among future social workers. The*

research emphasizes the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical activities aimed at forming inclusive communication, empathy, and professional responsibility. The course combines international experience, universal design principles, and innovative teaching methods such as case studies, simulations, and digital tools. The study presents the strengths and limitations of the educational model and provides recommendations for improving inclusive teaching methodologies in higher education.

Key words: *inclusive education, social inclusion, barrier-free environment, universal design, higher education, social work, inclusive communication.*

Анотація. *У статті висвітлено основні принципи, структуру та реалізацію навчальної дисципліни «Основи соціальної інклюзії та безбар'єрного середовища», що є прикладом найкращих практик інклюзивної освіти у вищій школі. Проаналізовано методологічні засади та педагогічні стратегії формування інклюзивних компетентностей майбутніх соціальних працівників. Наголошено на поєднанні теоретичних знань і практичних навичок, спрямованих на розвиток інклюзивної комунікації, емпатії та професійної відповідальності. Дисципліна поєднує міжнародний досвід, принципи універсального дизайну та інноваційні методи: кейси, симуляції, цифрові технології. Визначено сильні сторони та обмеження освітньої моделі й подано рекомендації щодо вдосконалення методик інклюзивного навчання у ЗВО.*

Ключові слова: *інклюзивна освіта, соціальна інклюзія, безбар'єрне середовище, універсальний дизайн, вища освіта, соціальна робота, інклюзивна комунікація.*

Introduction. Fundamental changes in the perception of social diversity and equal opportunities have transformed social inclusion from a theoretical concept into a practical paradigm reflected in state policies, organizational strategies, and professional practices.

The development of inclusive education marks a shift toward a humanistic, student-centered approach, focusing on creating safe, accessible learning

environments for all learners. Higher education institutions must therefore ensure physical, educational, psychological, and socio-communicative support that fosters adaptation, progress, and integration of students with diverse educational needs.

In line with the Laws of Ukraine «On Education», «On Higher Education», the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space until 2030, and the Strategy for the Development of Inclusive Education until 2029, creating an inclusive and accessible educational space remains a key strategic goal. Such an environment should enable all participants to study, communicate, and cooperate freely according to their individual needs. Developing an inclusive communicative culture is essential for building effective and ethical interpersonal interactions in this context.

To promote inclusive culture and rights, the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine participates in the Erasmus+ project INSIGHT: Inclusive Teaching Methods in Higher Education. The project aims to identify university-level inclusive teaching strategies aligned with Universal Design principles: to enhance participation and learning for all students, particularly those with specific learning difficulties. The consortium includes seven universities (Italy, Sweden, Austria, Spain, Ukraine, and Switzerland), the European Dyslexia Association, and organizations specializing in dyslexia and educational training. Global trends in inclusive education highlight the importance of social and communication aspects that help educators and students strengthen social competence, communication skills, and a sense of belonging. Literature analysis (PRISMA) confirms that inclusive communicative culture represents a system of knowledge, skills, norms, and values guiding effective, ethical, and purposeful interaction in educational settings (S.Verbeshchuk [3]; O.Kosheleva [9]; M.Sheremet [17]).

The main material presentation. The course «Fundamentals of social inclusion and barrier-free» is a model of the best practice in inclusive education at the Bachelor's level. Its strengths include a well-structured curriculum that integrates global and local perspectives, innovative teaching methods that promote active and empathetic learning, and a comprehensive assessment system that values diverse

competencies. These elements make the course a model for informing and developing training modules for university educators. With an emphasis on practical skills, universal design, and inclusive communication, the course prepares future social workers to promote inclusive methodologies, contributing to the goal of accessible and equitable education for all [13, p. 32].

This course is an example of best practice in instructional design thanks to its comprehensive and inclusive structure, which meets European and international standards for inclusive education. The work program combines theoretical and applied aspects, providing a holistic approach to professional training [1; 20, p. 69].

The *aim* of the course is to prepare future social workers for professional activity in an inclusive social space by developing theoretical knowledge, practical skills and competencies to ensure the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. The course is aimed at developing skills to create barrier-free environments, apply universal design principles and implement inclusive practices. In the context of the project, the aim includes informing the WP3 working group about good practices and creating a basis for the development of training modules on inclusive education for university teachers. For whom, the target audience? [4, p. 170]. The course is intended for third-year students of the bachelor's program in the specialty «Social Work and Counseling» (first level of higher education) of the National University of Life Resources and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine. These are future social workers who will work with various population groups, including people with disabilities, veterans, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable categories [18, p. 120]

In the context of an international project, the course experience can be adapted for university teachers who develop trainings on inclusive teaching methodologies, as well as for educational administrators and trainers who are involved in preparing specialists to work in inclusive environments. [3; 14, p. 48].

How do we implement (methodology, strategy, design)?

Methodology: The course uses a combination of informational and explanatory (lectures with presentations, video cases), discussion and communication (debates,

round tables with experts), active learning (case methods, role-playing games, projects), visualization (mind maps, scribing) and digital methods (current online platforms ELEARN, ZOOM, interactive tests). Empathetic methods, such as simulation exercises, contribute to the development of tolerance.

Strategy: Combining theoretical study (normative and legal foundations, disability models) with practical tasks (accessibility audits, creation of barrier-free routes). The strategy is based on a modular approach with a gradual increase in complexity from concepts to applied skills [2; 6; 13, p. 32].

Design: The curriculum is structured into two modules (social inclusion and barrier-free), which include 15 topics. A flexible schedule for full-time and part-time forms of study ensures accessibility. Resources such as the Accessibility Handbook and the Accessibility Solutions Album are used for practical application [15, 16, p.708].

The course is effective if:

1. Students demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge in practice, for example, by developing barrier-free environments or conducting accessibility audits with specific proposals.

2. Sustainable competencies such as inclusive communication, empathy and critical thinking are formed, which is confirmed through the assessment of projects, essays and role-playing games.

3. Graduates successfully integrate the principles of inclusion into professional activities, contributing to social well-being, which can be assessed through employer feedback or further career growth.

4. The course experience is successfully adapted for teacher training, contributing to the dissemination of inclusive methodologies in higher education [19, p. 132].

The course will be ineffective if:

1. Students will acquire only theoretical knowledge without practical application, for example, they will not be able to develop real solutions to create a barrier-free environment.

2. There is no interaction with real stakeholders (people with disabilities, civil society organizations), which limits empathetic and practical experience.

3. Assessment does not reflect the real level of competences due to excessive standardization of tests or insufficient attention to individual achievements.

4. The course experience is not adapted to the international context due to lack of translation of materials or insufficient comparative perspective [13, p. 32].

Strengths:

1. Integrated approach that combines theoretical knowledge (international standards, legal frameworks) with practical skills (audits, projects).

2. Use of diverse methodologies (role-playing, simulations, digital tools) that suit different learning styles.

3. Integration of national and international resources that ensures relevance and a global perspective [13, p. 32].

Weaknesses:

1. Limited number of hours for practical classes (30 hours for full-time), which may limit the depth of practical experience.

2. Insufficient involvement of persons with disabilities as co-teachers or regular guests, which could strengthen the empathy component.

3. Lack of international mobility or cross-cultural projects for students, which limits the global context.

Opportunities for improvement:

1. Increase practical hours by introducing internships in community organizations or inclusive institutions.

2. Implementation of modules involving people with disabilities as trainers to increase the authenticity of the experience.

3. Development of international partnership projects to exchange experience with other universities, which will contribute to the adaptation of the course to global standards [13, p. 32].

What would we like to add?

1. Interdisciplinary Projects Module: Add interdisciplinary projects that involve students from other majors (architecture, IT, pedagogy) to co-create inclusive solutions, such as digital platforms or architectural mockups [19, p. 132].

2. Digital Inclusion Training: Expand the course with a module that explores digital accessibility in depth, including the development of accessible websites and applications that meet current needs [20, p. 47].

3. Simulation Labs: Create a lab for simulation exercises (e.g. mental health, virtual reality to gain experience working with people with different types of disabilities) that will enhance students' empathy and practical skills [19, p. 132].

Conclusions and practical recommendations. To conclude we need to delight in what way public can contribute to creation social cohesion and inclusion by providing such courses as “Fundamentals of social inclusion and barrier-free”. So, what aspects we need to extend:

1. Promoting Mutual Understanding and Respect.
2. Reducing Discrimination and Social Tensions.
3. Enhancing Civic Participation.
4. Supporting Inclusive Education.
5. Encouraging Collaborative Problem Solving.
6. Building Social Capital and Trust.

In an era marked by cultural pluralism, inclusive social dialogue in aspect of barrier-free is not a luxury but a necessity. It helps break down the invisible walls that divide communities, paving the way for more inclusive, equitable, and harmonious societies. Governments, educators, community leaders, and citizens all have a role to play in nurturing dialogue, because only through understanding can true inclusion be achieved.

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