



# Progress in Education



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# Progress in Education

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**Roberta V. Nata**

Editor

# **Progress in Education**

**Volume 72**



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## Chapter 2

# Current Trends in the Training of Specialists in Special Education to Understand and Meet the Educational Needs of Pupils with SEN in the Context of Building the New Ukrainian School

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### Abstract

Today in Ukraine, general secondary education is being reformed in the context of the implementation of the New Ukrainian School concept, which envisages the active introduction of inclusive education. Active development of inclusive education in Ukraine was also supported through the implementation of the social program “Inclusive education - the level of consciousness of the nation.” Despite strong political support

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of inclusive education and the development of a new system of providing educational services to children with special educational needs in the general education space, there is currently a large gap between understanding of the concepts “inclusive education,” “children with special educational needs” and their implementation in national educational practice. This is evidenced by a number of studies conducted by Ukrainian (O. Martynchuk, T. Skrypnyk, N. Sofiy, etc.) and foreign scientists to conduct an expert assessment of the implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine. The results of monitoring by international and national experts indicate the need to develop effective mechanisms and conditions for the implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine. One of such conditions is the support of education of children with special educational needs in the general education system by special education professionals who understand the educational needs of children, create conditions for their provision and actively cooperate with the general education teachers.

However, the current system of training in Ukraine is generally focused on the training of special education professionals according to the medical model of the understanding of disability, in other words, to work with children with disabilities in special educational institutions and other institutions that specialize in providing educational and correctional (therapeutic, rehabilitative) services to children with various mental and physical disabilities. This is explained by the fact that national special pedagogy (defectology) is still influenced by the legacy of the Soviet epoch, which was characterized by deep-rooted systems of categorization, diagnosis and correctional work, and in national educational systems there is still a professional qualification “teacher-defectologist.” However, today, Ukrainian realities testify to the existing demands of modern society for a position of special education professional, capable of successful professional work within an inclusive educational environment. Therefore, there is a need to analyze the international pedagogical experience, especially the experience of the USA, where there are successful practices of collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers, and to develop their own research concepts that allow them to develop holistic and convincing ideas about special education professionals in higher education; to help to clarify the content, structure and pedagogical management of the process of professional development of the future special education professionals, capable of successful professional activity in a modern inclusive educational environment.

As mentioned before, there is no position of “special pedagogue” yet in Ukrainian legislation, therefore there are no professional standards for this position. However, there is a general name for this position – special education professional – which means specialists who provide support for persons with special educational needs (speech therapists,



correctional pedagogues) and who should be experts on the issues of learning and development. At the same time, there is a standard on special education which should be a guide for these experts in their work, both at the special schools as well as at the inclusive schools. Therefore, there is a need to compare the requirements which exist for experts who provide support to persons with special educational needs in Ukraine (Standard of higher education of the first (bachelor) level for the specialty “Special education” – further – “Standard of higher education “Special Education”), and the requirements of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) – Initial Special Education Professional Preparation Standards for special educators, далі – Special Education Preparation Standards).

**Keywords:** providing special educational needs of children, beginning special education professionals, special educators, Professional Preparation Standards, competence of a special educator, professional training of special educators

## Introduction

Purposeful integration of Ukraine into the European Union with all necessary transformational processes promote active reforms in the educational system of Ukraine, which take place according to current democratic social transformations and priorities which testify to the right of every child to a quality education which is relevant to his/her learning opportunities.

The modern Law on Education, which was adopted in September 2017 [24] became the legal basis for national educational reform. The law considers education as the main instrument for comprehensive development of human personality as the highest society`s value, his/her talents, intellectual, physical and creative abilities; development of values necessary for successful self-realization of his/her competencies. The Law on Education fixed the basic principles of the educational system`s functioning – person-centered approach, equal access to education without discrimination, wholeness and continuity of education, academic virtue and inclusive education at the legal level. The essence of educational reforms includes introduction of the following innovations:

- New structure of school education, which includes three levels – primary, basic secondary and high secondary education and provides

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