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## Modern Approaches to the Professional Development of Preschool Education Teachers on Inclusive Education of Preschool Children

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**Abstract.** The relevance of the study is due to the fact that to ensure a high-quality educational process in a preschool institution, it is necessary to prepare educators to work in inclusive groups, that is, to equip them with knowledge and skills to teach and educate children with special educational needs. The purpose of the study is to analyse modern approaches to improving the qualifications of teachers of preschool education institutions on the problem of inclusive education of children and find effective ways of professional development of teachers on this issue in the conditions of the Institute of postgraduate education. The methodological basis of the study was the papers of Ukrainian and foreign specialists in the field of inclusive education. General theoretical methods are used to solve these problems: analysis, induction, deduction, comparison, generalisation of information from theoretical sources, and the typological method. The necessity of implementing a system of approaches to the professional development of preschool education teachers on inclusive education issues is substantiated. The results of a survey of teachers of preschool education institutions in Kyiv, according to which, it was established that the vast majority of participants need special training on the problems of inclusive education and consider the institute of postgraduate education as a place for such training. Effective approaches to improving the skills of educators are identified, in particular, the use of active methods in teaching and the inclusion of practical classes in the educational process based on inclusive institutions. Among the most popular subjects for professional development are the following: organisation of the educational process, cooperation with an assistant, development of didactic equipment, cooperation with parents, psychological support for the teacher. The practical importance of the research consists in informing teaching teams of postgraduate education about the specific features of the needs of preschool teachers in the field of advanced training on inclusive education. This problem is of interest to students, who receive a pedagogical speciality

**Keywords:** pedagogical innovations, professional development, pedagogical speciality, competence approach, children of preschool age, children with special educational needs

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## INTRODUCTION

The number of children with special educational needs increases every year in Ukraine. In the modern world, access to quality education is a necessary condition for the development of a person and their ability to build their life autonomously and consciously. The Law of Ukraine "On Preschool Education" states that preschool age is an important period of development for each individual, so the goal of preschool education is not only the accumulation of a certain amount of knowledge but also the development of basic personal skills in children for the full development in the future [1].

One of the key problems of modern education in Ukraine is the development of new methods of teaching children with special educational needs and the training of special teaching staff. The quality of preschool education is directly determined by the professional readiness of the teaching staff. It is important to understand that in the modern context of innovations in education, new requirements are put forward for the professional and pedagogical skills of the teacher and the level of their professional knowledge, a new pedagogical position is gradually being formed, and

professional development is taking place. Now there is a need for a creative and qualified educator who will be able to develop a modern education system, will be able to integrate personal skills into the development of children with special educational needs.

Modern educational reforms put forward new requirements for all teachers of preschool education institutions. The main task at the present stage is to improve the professional level of educators for successful work in an institution that meets the needs of modern life. The issue of training highly qualified, creative, socially active, and competitive educators who are able to create a developing environment for each child, including for a child with special educational needs, is acute. Therefore, improving the professionalism of teachers and educators is one of the priority areas of modern education.

T. Shestakevych, V. Pasichnyk, and N. Kunanets believe that now Ukraine is opening up new prospects for the development of the education system, which are mainly associated with a new approach to raising children with special needs. The task is to transform preschool education institutions into institutions with large-scale educational spaces that encourage and support not only children with special educational needs but also employees of such institutions [2]. Therewith, a group of researchers led by A. Trofimov considers an important thesis about the possibility of cooperation of preschool institutions with various partners to improve the educational and social environment [3].

In the context of inclusive education in Ukraine, differences between children are seen as resources that contribute to the educational process, and not as obstacles to overcoming. J.P. Bentley et al. cite the main areas of work on creating an inclusive educational environment: the development of the culture of organising an educational institution; the implementation of an inclusive education policy; the introduction of innovative practices in teaching children. Therefore, the strategy for the development of inclusion in preschool education is not only a set of certain proposals for further actions and initiatives for children with special educational needs but also a tool for positive changes in kindergartens in terms of inclusive values [4].

Researchers P. Gäreskog and G. Lindqvist believes that since preschool education is the first integral stage of national education, the rationalisation of the system of professional qualifications of teachers becomes a socially substantial pedagogical problem, and the process of innovation in this system is a means of developing new goals [5].

The purpose of this study is a theoretical examination of approaches to the professional development of preschool education teachers on inclusive education of children in the system of postgraduate education. The scientific originality of the paper lies in the investigation of approaches to training teachers in the context of inclusivity on the example of a higher educational institution in the capital.

The following tasks were set to achieve the greatest effectiveness in the framework of the study: to clarify the essence of the concept of “inclusive education”; highlight

modern approaches to improving the skills of teachers of the preschool institutions; focus primarily on the professional development of teachers working in inclusive groups; identify the effective conditions for the professional development of teachers on this issue in the conditions of the institute of postgraduate education; justify the need to implement a system of approaches to improving the skills of teachers of preschool education institutions.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of the problem of advanced training of preschool education teachers on inclusive education of preschool children was based on a number of methodological approaches, principles, and rules. The scientific principles of integrity, consistency, and objectivity in covering scientific facts and interpreting them were considered. Through theoretical methods – analysis, synthesis, generalisation, induction, and deduction – the content of research work on the readiness of educators to work in inclusive groups is identified, modern approaches to the problem of preparing educators for such work are clarified, effective methods and techniques that should be used in working with students at advanced training courses are highlighted. The generalisation method allowed for drawing brief episodic totals and general conclusions. Using the analysis method, the scientific literature was analysed, which allowed identifying the main approaches that contribute to improving the skills of educators in inclusive education.

The typological method helped to classify forms and methods of advanced training in the conditions of the institute of postgraduate education, satisfying the interest of teachers of preschool education institutions, including training seminars, supervision, coaching, self-design method, and adaptive pedagogical design.

The method of deduction has contributed to the systematisation of modern approaches to improve the skills of preschool education teachers in inclusive education of preschool children based on the analysed literature. Using the induction method, the forms of work for the professional development of preschool education teachers on inclusive education issues are highlighted.

A survey was conducted of 80 teachers of preschool education institutions aged 25 to 50 years to collect the necessary information. Among the survey participants were 71 women and 9 men. The study was geographically limited, as the only place to conduct the survey was the city of Kyiv.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The modern globalised information society sets new requirements for all areas of humanitarian activity, in particular, for education. An important issue that needs to be addressed today is the education, socialisation, and personal development of children with special educational needs. In this complex process, the problem of training educators in an inclusive education environment is of particular importance. Inclusive education in America and Europe has a longer practice of implementation, it is considered much

broader, in particular, as an opportunity to attract children with special educational needs to the educational and national space. Inclusive education in Ukraine needs to be improved at the normative, social, and economic levels of development, success largely depends on the level of training of the teacher, educator.

Inclusive education in the modern sense appeared only at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The results of the analysis of the current state of inclusive education of preschool children identified the following contradictions: between the modern requirements of society in an effective and inclusive education system and the insufficient development of its theoretical and methodological base, the lack of proper scientific and methodological support; between the importance of social development of a preschool child in the education system and the lack of adequate means of organising this process; between the importance of training qualified specialists to support children with special educational needs and their families and the discrepancy between the content, forms, and methods of such training.

Considering the above, the task is to develop and create conditions for improving the skills of preschool teachers in the field of inclusive education of preschool children. Educators, psychologists, and speech therapists need to master pedagogical practices and technologies on various issues of organising inclusive education because no matter what reforms are conducted in the education system, they are somehow connected with a specific person, that is, the teacher [6]. In this regard, the issue of ensuring proper professional training of teaching staff and creating favourable conditions in the field of education of children with special educational needs arises.

The current education reform puts forward new requirements for the profession of preschool teachers on inclusive education issues. One of the tasks of recent years has been to substantially expand the zone of inclusive education, and against this background, the problem of preparing preschool teachers to work with children in inclusive groups has emerged.

The teacher should think freely and actively, predict the results of their activities, and model the learning process. The main task in the development of competencies at this stage is to improve the skills of preschool teachers in inclusive education that meets the requirements of modern life. There is a growing demand for highly qualified, creative, socially active, and competitive educators who can raise a socialised child in the modern world. Recent studies show that to improve the skills of preschool teachers in inclusive education, it is necessary to find new modern approaches to updating the content, forms, and methods of teaching. The main approach is called practice-oriented learning, which acts as a link between theory and practice, an effective way to enrich and develop the necessary professional skills of preschool education teachers. Among the important principles of organising advanced training of teachers of preschool education institutions are the following: orientation to the subjective professional requirements

of the teacher; considering the existing level of training of the specialist and the needs that arise as a result [7].

Today creating a single educational space, within which opportunities are formed for the continuous development of professionalism and compliance with basic principles is relevant, namely: a variety of services, forms, and levels of professional development; an individual approach considering the requirements, needs, and opportunities; the desired forms, methods, and content of training; openness and accessibility, which gives freedom to choose an individual option for professional development [8; 9].

Among the various modern approaches to the development of qualifications of teachers of preschool education institutions, it is worth highlighting the competence approach, since it most meets the expectations of society regarding the system of professional development of teachers [10-12]. The analysis of scientific literature allowed identifying the main approaches to the problem of developing the professionalism of preschool education teachers. The first approach is presented as a continuous scientific and methodological support for the professional development of teaching staff through meeting educational needs with a focus on professional experience, the degree of professionalism and individual requests.

This option of improving the skills of preschool education teachers on inclusive education issues may consist of the following forms of work [13]:

1. A system of regular seminars on relevant educational and pedagogical needs, held personally once or twice a month at methodological meetings.
2. A system of seminars for educators organised based on investigating educational needs and difficulties in preschool education institutions.
3. Individual consultations for educators.
4. Association of educators in temporary creative groups to solve relevant pedagogical problems. Such activity of teachers will help them focus on self-development as professionals.
5. Organisation of direct practice for educators based on reference methodological platforms for mastering the best pedagogical experience.
6. Consultation on inclusive education issues at the request of educators and other teachers of preschool institutions.

The second approach to the professional development of preschool teachers on the issues of inclusive education of preschool children can be presented through on-the-job professional development courses. This option is designed to meet the needs of educators with an emphasis on obtaining a state certificate of advanced training and can be conducted in educational institutions licensed to provide educational services.

These options for professional development solve the main problem – the absence of an employee at the workplace. The need to create a flexible system for advanced training courses for preschool teachers requires the development of various options for organising courses: in the morning or afternoon, depending on the shift of the teacher; once a week on a normal day for several months; during

holidays; weekends [14]. This variability allows teachers of preschool institutions not only to choose a convenient way of working but also the opportunity to simultaneously take part in several courses of interest to them without giving up their own professional activities.

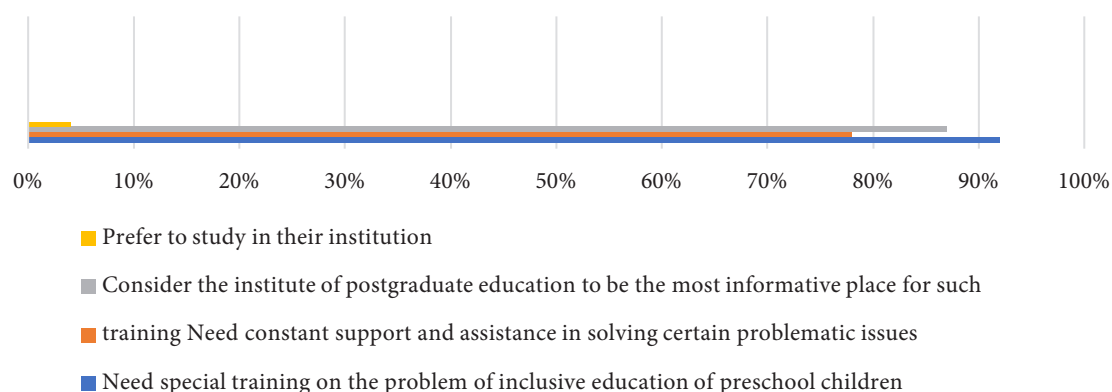
The third approach to organising advanced training of preschool teachers is to meet the special educational needs of leading researchers on inclusion issues. These can include lectures-webinars, distance learning of the course, direct meetings and personal consultations.

The most popular form of professional development in Ukraine is often called advanced training courses in postgraduate education institutes. The advantage of this form is that it is completely free for teachers, the possibility of direct meetings with researchers, and allocating special time for learning in the classroom. The events of recent years have shown the high mobility of such institutions, in particular, the possibility of distance learning on various

electronic platforms. Modern papers show that there are various options for improving the skills of teachers in inclusive education; among the main principles – orientation to the individual needs of teachers, the practice-oriented nature of training, and variability in the forms and methods of teaching.

After analysing the approaches that contribute to improving the skills of educators in inclusive education, it can be concluded that the psychological readiness of a teacher is the most important component of effective education for children with special needs. Psychological readiness includes several factors: emotional acceptance of children with mental development disorders, motivational attitudes, moral foundations, perception of the “other”, personal readiness embodied in personal attitudes toward the child, and internal determination of the activity of the teacher’s personality [15].

The results of a survey conducted among the Kyiv preschool teachers are presented below (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Results of a survey of teachers of preschool education institutions in Kyiv regarding inclusive education of preschool children, the number of respondents, %

The results of the survey showed that 92% of respondents need special training on the problem of inclusive education of preschool children; 78% – constant support and assistance in solving certain problematic issues; 87% consider the institute of postgraduate education to be the most informative place for such training; 4% prefer to study in their institution. The majority of teachers (81%) are inclined to use active methods in teaching and include practical classes based on inclusive institutions in the educational process.

The survey allowed concluding that, in general, teachers’ understanding of the essence of the concept of “inclusive education” is consistent with modern scientific understanding, but simultaneously, basic knowledge, theoretical training, and practical experience in this field are insufficient. In the conditions of modern education, the professional development of educators is a necessary component of the process of self-improvement and self-development, the development of professional patriotism and competence.

Among other things, respondents’ opinions differ on the contribution of various institutions to the professional development of educators. Every second teacher puts the

institute of postgraduate education in first place in terms of the importance of such contributions.

District methodological associations, heads of preschool education institutions, methodologists, and psychologists are more focused on the needs of teachers of groups of the general development of children, as evidenced by every second respondent. The quality of training and its effectiveness is one of the most pressing issues of modern training in Ukraine. Notably, according to modern Ukrainian teachers and international experts [16-18] on the development of inclusive preschool education, Ukraine has made substantial progress during the past few years. The main role in ensuring the effectiveness of the educational process of preschool education institutions on inclusion issues is played by the teacher and their professionalism. Therefore, the professional development of teachers of preschool education institutions is a priority of educational work that contributes to the professional development of teachers on inclusion issues and activates their creativity.

According to the results of recent studies, about half of the surveyed teachers of Kyiv preschool institutions (46.26%)



have a positive attitude to the education of preschool children in inclusive groups; 41.32% prefer to limit the education of such children to special institutions or special groups of general development ones [19]. Interactive forms of learning are becoming widespread, where teachers are involved in creative activities, dialogues that involve a free exchange of opinions, reasoned conclusions, and the search for ways to solve simulated situations. This approach contributes to the development of creative thinking and the selection of effective non-standard ways out of problem situations when working with preschoolers [20].

Modern researchers [21] define the following pedagogical conditions for successful skill development in the process of advanced training of preschool education teachers: the use of interrelated teaching methods that enable the creation of a holistic structure of professional activity of teachers in the context of inclusive education; a combination of methods of active improvement, training and reproduction of the social context for future work; the use of the potential of subject materials to create positive incentives for inclusive education.

The process of professional development of preschool education teachers is a complex creative process that involves familiarisation with non-conventional technologies of modern education and upbringing of preschool children with special educational needs, the specific features of partnership with parents, and modern approaches to the development and registration of pedagogical documentation [22]. Among the various forms and methods of professional development in the context of the institute of postgraduate education, ones that satisfy the interest of teachers of preschool education institutions are highlighted below:

1. Training seminars. This form is productive if the main focus is not so much on improving the theoretical level, but on practical mastery of inclusive learning technologies. The participants are offered tasks in advance that provide an understanding of the main characteristics of children with special educational needs and the specific features of pedagogical work with them.

2. Training as an effective way to organise the process of adult education in the system of advanced training of teachers. This method contributes to the actualisation of subjectivity and self-knowledge of the individual. A personality-oriented approach, interactive mode, a small number of participants in the group, and a scientific basis are the most important characteristics of training that improve the effectiveness of the learning process. An important component is the search for effective ways of acting in practical situations. Specialists raise the level of knowledge and skills in accordance with changes taking place in education [23].

3. Supervision in the adult education system involves solving professional problems that arise in working with people by discussing a particular problem with a knowledgeable colleague or mentor – a supervisor. Pedagogical supervision is considered as a process of equality in the dialogue, the relationship between the supervisor and the person undergoing supervision. The purpose of supervision is to increase

the level of professional competence through the discussion of professional problems, searching for practical solutions, identifying possible risks, and accepting the final result.

4. Coaching is a productive and rational method that is widely practised in the postgraduate education system. This innovative approach allows changing ordinary learning into an interesting, creative process, identifying the creative activity of the person who is studying. There are many methods of full-cycle coaching as an innovative technology for forming teachers' readiness to work with children who have special educational problems.

5. The method of self-design involves the development of professionalism of a specialist as a process of working on one's own personality, acquiring certain qualities, or getting rid of undesirable ones, and consciously transforming oneself. Self-design is an effective means of professional development for the teacher, which performs the functions of self-regulation, socialisation, optimisation, and self-actualisation in this process. This is active professional self-improvement, the realisation of creative potential, and productive executive-pedagogical reflection.

6. Adaptive-pedagogical design is a tendency to subordinate professional work to external circumstances by performing algorithms for solving problems, rules, and norms.

All of the above approaches are effective methods of improving the skills of educators in inclusive education, which will help to better unlock the potential of the teachers and better implement the educational process.

## CONCLUSIONS

Theoretical analysis of the literature considered on the readiness of teachers for the inclusive education of preschool children shows that today inclusive education of preschool children is understood as an innovative process, and therefore requires special professional retraining from modern teachers. Professional development of teachers of preschool education institutions is a priority of institutes of postgraduate education and an important part of continuing education of teachers, as it contributes to the development of personality and activation of creative abilities of educators, the development of highly qualified specialists.

The study analyses modern approaches to the professional development of educators as an attempt to respond to the modern needs of preschool education institutions of Ukraine in qualified educators on inclusive preschool education as the main force of education in modern society. The authors believe that modern approaches to improving the skills of preschool teachers do not deny conventional methods and approaches, but rather identify and develop them in new variations. It should also be noted that there are positive features in the optimal combination of all these approaches to improving the skills of preschool teachers who have identical or similar characteristics.

All modern approaches to improving the skills of teachers of preschool institutions on the issues of inclusive education of preschool children ensure the self-realisation of the creative and professional potential of the teacher, the

acquisition of competitiveness and mobility in the modern educational space; high quality and efficiency of the teacher's activities; the ability to set goals and solve problems in the conditions of inclusive education in preschool institutions.

A well-built and developed system of interactive forms and approaches to improving the skills of preschool education teachers in inclusive preschool education will

lead to an increase in the quality of educational work in the context of inclusive education and unite the collective of educators. In the future, studies of inclusive education programmes for preschool institutions located in provincial areas of the country can be effective, considering the specific features of training personnel and providing children with the necessary equipment.

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### **Сучасні підходи до підвищення кваліфікації вихователів закладів дошкільної освіти з питань інклюзивного навчання дошкільників**

**Анотація.** Актуальність дослідження зумовлено тим, що для забезпечення якісного освітнього процесу в закладі дошкільної освіти необхідно підготувати вихователів до роботи в інклюзивних групах, тобто оснастити їх знаннями та вміннями здійснювати навчання та виховання дітей з особливими освітніми потребами. Мета статті – проаналізувати сучасні підходи до підвищення кваліфікації вихователів закладів дошкільної освіти щодо проблеми інклюзивної освіти дітей та знайти ефективні шляхи професійного розвитку педагогів з цього питання в умовах інституту післядипломної освіти. Методологічну основу дослідження склали праці українських та іноземних спеціалістів в області інклюзивної освіти. Для вирішення поставлених завдань використано загальнотеоретичні методи: аналіз, індукцію, дедукцію, порівняння, узагальнення інформації з теоретичних джерел і типологічний метод. Обґрунтовано необхідність реалізації системи підходів з підвищення кваліфікації вихователів закладів дошкільної освіти з питань інклюзивної освіти. Викладено та проаналізовано результати опитування педагогів закладів дошкільної освіти м. Києва, за якими встановлено, що переважна більшість учасників мають потребу в спеціальному навчанні з проблем інклюзивної освіти та розглядають місцем для такого навчання Інститут післядипломної освіти. Виявлено дієві підходи до підвищення кваліфікації вихователів, зокрема застосування в навчанні активних методів та включення в навчальний процес практичних занять на базі інклюзивних закладів. Серед найбільш затребуваних тем для підвищення кваліфікації зазначаються такі: організація освітнього процесу, співпраця з асистентом, розробка дидактичного обладнання, співпраця з батьками, психологічна підтримка педагога. Практична значущість дослідження полягає в інформуванні педагогічних колективів післядипломної освіти щодо специфіки потреб педагогів-дошкільників в царині підвищення кваліфікації з питань інклюзивної освіти. Ця проблема становить інтерес для студентів, що здобувають педагогічну спеціальність

**Ключові слова:** педагогічні інновації, професійний розвиток, педагогічна спеціальність, компетентнісний підхід, діти дошкільного віку, діти з особливими освітніми потребами