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## European practices of inclusive education (experience for Ukraine)

### Prácticas europeas de educación inclusiva (experiencia para Ucrania)

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Written by:

**Lemeshchuk Maryna**<sup>35</sup><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7831-1023>**Pisnyak Valentina**<sup>36</sup><https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7833-9192>**Berezan Valentyna**<sup>37</sup><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4999-7898>**Stokolos-Voronchuk Oksana**<sup>38</sup><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0834-9085>**Yurystovska Natalia**<sup>39</sup><https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7688-9462>

#### Abstract

In the era of globalization, there is a process of democratization and openness of society. The value of human beings, their dignity, and their lives are being redefined and given new meaning. Race, gender, gender, social stratum, physical and mental capabilities are no longer “criteria” for being in society. Everyone has the right to exercise his or her rights. Everyone has the right to education, medicine, life, etc. Ukraine is gradually moving towards Europe and over the past five years has been actively implementing a program of inclusive education. Inclusive education is a system of educational activities aimed at overcoming discrimination and exclusion of students with physical and psychological disabilities. This system of education has become in opposition to the boarding school system, where students are cut off from society. For five years, Ukraine has been actively creating inclusive classes and introducing various teaching methods. We can consider Europe as an example as a defender of democracy and human dignity. Therefore, the purpose of our work is to study the European

#### Resumen

En la era de la globalización hay un proceso de democratización y apertura de la sociedad. El valor del ser humano, su dignidad y su vida se están redefiniendo y adquiriendo un nuevo significado. La raza, el género, el estrato social, las capacidades físicas y mentales ya no son “criterios” para estar en la sociedad. Todos tienen derecho a ejercer sus derechos. Todo el mundo tiene derecho a la educación, la medicina, la vida, etc. Ucrania se acerca poco a poco a Europa y en los últimos cinco años ha aplicado activamente un programa de educación inclusiva. La educación inclusiva es un sistema de actividades educativas destinado a superar la discriminación y la exclusión de los alumnos con discapacidades físicas y psíquicas. Este sistema de educación se opone al sistema de internado, en el que los alumnos están aislados de la sociedad. Desde hace cinco años, Ucrania está creando activamente clases inclusivas e introduciendo diversos métodos de enseñanza. Podemos considerar a Europa como un ejemplo de defensa de la democracia y la dignidad humana. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de nuestro trabajo es estudiar las prácticas europeas de educación

<sup>35</sup> Candidate (Ph.D) of Pedagogical Sciences Associate Professor at Department of Special and Inclusive Education Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Faculty of Preschool and Special Education, Ukraine.

<sup>36</sup> Post-Graduate Student, Lecturer of the Department of Professional Methods and Innovative Technologies in Primary School, Faculty of Primary Education, Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University, Ukraine.

<sup>37</sup> Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Special Education and Social Work Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, psychological and pedagogical faculty, Department of Special Education and Social Work, Ukraine.

<sup>38</sup> Cand. of philological sciences, docent Vice-rector for scientific work Andrei Krupynskyi Lviv medical academy, Doroshenko, Lviv, Ukraine.

<sup>39</sup> Candidate of Sciences in Public Administration Vice-rector for educational work Andrei Krupynskyi Lviv medical academy Doroshenko, Ukraine.



practices of inclusive education in Ukraine. For the purpose we used the following methods: observation (throughout the study), interviews with all subjects of the learning process, inductive method, testing to check knowledge. Since the essence of inclusive education is not only the acquisition of knowledge but also comfortable growth in society, we want to pay special attention to this aspect. The results of the study showed that a special role is played by individual development of tasks for students, allowing to involve children even with psychophysiological problems. Also, a special role is played by parents and a teacher's assistant (for example, in Italy), the game form of learning, the change of activities after 10-20 minutes, group work, etc. The novelty of the study lies precisely in the analysis of the implementation and evaluation of European practices in Ukraine. The results of the study can be used in adjusting educational programs of inclusive education, communication of all subjects of training and for their qualitative implementation, as well as acquiring the importance of the role of assistant teacher.

**Key words:** inclusive education, inclusive pedagogy, pedagogy, training, education.

## Introduction

For decades now, the modern world has followed the path of globalization, the openness of some countries to others. Cultural, political, economic integration processes have woven a large social web around the world: between countries, companies, people regardless of gender, race, age. A concomitant feature of this process is the democratization of society and the development of the concept of "open society".

An open society carries with it the ideology of equal rights for all people among themselves, can participate and play an active role in society, use all the benefits of modern society: from visiting stores, theaters, museums to studying in schools, colleges, universities. Men and women, children and adults, people with autism and visual impairments, the physically excluded, and the healthy - they are all equal before the law, the state, and the world. But finding people in public and open spaces who have physical and/or psychological problems has been and continues to be uncomfortable and barrier-free. The sphere of education and science for people with disabilities is no exception. Everyone has the right to education, everyone has the right to

inclusiva en Ucrania. Para ello utilizamos los siguientes métodos: observación (durante todo el estudio), entrevistas con todos los sujetos del proceso de aprendizaje, método inductivo, pruebas para comprobar los conocimientos. Dado que la esencia de la educación inclusiva no es sólo la adquisición de conocimientos, sino también el crecimiento confortable en la sociedad, queremos prestar especial atención a este aspecto. Los resultados del estudio mostraron que el desarrollo individual de las tareas para los alumnos desempeña un papel especial, ya que permite involucrar a los niños incluso con problemas psicofisiológicos. También juegan un papel especial los padres y el asistente del profesor (por ejemplo, en Italia), la forma de juego del aprendizaje, el cambio de actividades después de 10-20 minutos, el trabajo en grupo, etc. La novedad del estudio reside precisamente en el análisis de la aplicación y evaluación de las prácticas europeas en Ucrania. Los resultados del estudio pueden utilizarse para ajustar los programas educativos de la educación inclusiva, la comunicación de todos los temas de la formación y para su aplicación cualitativa, así como para adquirir la importancia del papel del profesor asistente.

**Palabras clave:** educación inclusiva, pedagogía inclusiva, pedagogía, formación, educación.

knowledge, but people with physical, mental, psychological disabilities cannot receive an education. The main reason is that educational institutions (of all levels) simply do not have the material and technical base to educate such people, and instead have many barriers. Previously, boarding schools and special classes were opened for children with disabilities. That is, in this way, children were cut off from society, their peers, and normal life. In order to overcome loneliness and to realize the ideology of "society for all", for several decades inclusive education has been actively developed and implemented.

Inclusive education (from Inclusion - inclusion) is a system of educational services guaranteed by the state, based on the principles of non-discrimination, consideration of human diversity, effective involvement, and inclusion in the educational process of all its participants (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, (n.d)). Simply put, that these are classes where normal children and children who have some diseases or defects study.

Examples of quality implementation of inclusive education are the countries of Europe. In particular, Italy (as the first country), Austria, and Germany. In these and other European countries the right to education, protection of persons with disabilities, inclusive education is enshrined in constitutions and a number of international agreements and laws. European countries have material and technical bases, workers and specialists, a variety of pedagogical practices, and assistance centers.

Ukraine joined (ratified) the Salamanca Declaration (Spain) in 1994. This is the document in which the term “person with special educational needs” was formulated for the first time. Such international structures as the United Nations (UN), separately UNESCO, and public organizations also played an important role. Ukraine is on the path of European integration, so it must comply with democratic norms and values, create an “open society” and be a civil society. Involvement of people with special needs in society realizes natural, constitutional human rights and makes the country worthy of the European Union.

Even though over the past 5 years Ukraine has done a lot for the quality implementation of inclusive education, such classes in some areas (and not all over the country), the problem remains that society is not ready to accept such people to itself, and the fact remains that the education system in Ukraine is “different” and it masters the European experience in its own way. That is why the work aims to study inclusive practices (European experience) within Ukraine.

The aim of the work led to the solution of the following tasks: to analyze the situation with inclusive education within Ukraine, to study the European experience in this area. To investigate the comfort and quality of inclusive education practices in Ukraine.

### **Theoretical Framework or Literature Review**

The topic of inclusive education is not new. In the scientific space, there are already a sufficient number of texts on this topic. In Ukraine, to a greater extent, studies are devoted to the definition of the concept of “inclusive education”, related concepts, and the subject of the introduction of education at the legislative level. It would be appropriate to note the work of Prodius Oksana “PECULIARITIES OF MODELS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES” (Prodius, 2019). This theoretical study analyzes the current

situation of inclusive education in Europe and expresses the opinion that the inclusion of people with disabilities in society has positive characteristics for the economy. For example, quality human resources, inclusive classes economic for the creation of special, specialized institutions, etc. Malyshevs'ka Iryna (Malyshevs'ka et al., 2019) studied the socio-philosophical component of inclusive education. The achievement of Western colleagues is more diverse and concerns different subjects of the educational environment. To the general and theoretical works, we can refer the works of Claes Nilholm (Nilholm, 2021) developments that aim to qualitatively influence the practical and methodological teaching of inclusive education through quality theoretical training. Antonio M. Amor (Amor et al., 2019), who with colleagues studied a study of inclusive education based on 2380 articles. The most theoretical article we can consider Yao Ydo (Ydo, 2020), which, in our opinion, has a philosophical purpose in the collective responsibility and comfortable coexistence of people. The work of Lani Florian (Florian, 2019), which questions the relevance of the existence of special inclusive education. The purpose of inclusive education is not only to educate and tutor a child with special needs a “basic program,” but also to give some special knowledge and make a person a certain specialist. But the methods of teaching general and specific subjects are different. Thus, teachers of special subjects are less adaptable to teaching in inclusive classes than the “general” profile of the teacher. A related work is Thinking Inclusive Science Education from 2 Perspectives: Inclusive Pedagogy and Science Education, which deals separately with the possibility of teaching natural subjects.

A special and major role in the success of inclusive education is played by the teacher, who creates the atmosphere in the classroom, influences the adaptation of the child in society, adapts the curriculum, and “leads” students throughout the learning process. Not all teachers agree with the introduction of inclusive classes, not all believe in its success. Therefore, Timo Saloviita (Saloviita, 2020). investigated teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Finland. According to the researcher, gender does not significantly affect the desire to teach in an inclusive classroom, but age plays a small role. Yes, young teachers are more open to such children than mature teachers. Similar work on teachers' reflections is written by Paul S. Hengesteg, Laura Bestler, et al., (Hengesteg et al., 2021).

“Subject matter” consideration of inclusive education is conducted by Michael Braksiek (Braksiek, 2022). His work examines the attitudes of physical education teachers towards starting an inclusive classroom. The respondents of his study were master's and bachelor's degree students just gaining knowledge in the pedagogical field.

A contemporary theme concerns Linda Daniela and Miltiadis D. Lytras (Daniela and Lytras 2019). They studied robotics in inclusive pedagogy. It is known that almost all schools are moving to compulsory computer science and are actively introducing new technologies into the educational environment. Yes, learning becomes more interesting, more diverse, and interdisciplinary. For example, students can program themselves. Only for children with special needs conditions should be created. Due to visual impairments, students may have problems with the aforementioned programming.

The work of Edvina Bešić (Bešić, 2020). in the experience of Austria raises the question of the mistaken belief that inclusive education is education only for people with disabilities, but this is erroneous. Such education opens the door to the world of science and education for refugees, people of a different race, gender, religious or sexual views.

Europe is gradually moving away from the classical type of education and more and more towards STEAM (STEM) education. (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). This system of education aims to develop a harmonious person with interdisciplinary thinking and a broad worldview. In such a system there are no classical subjects, but there are project activities that require analytical thinking on the synthesis of knowledge. Considering that inclusive education also requires a special approach, although these two pedagogical phenomena can be combined. Erin Sanders O' Leary, Casey Shapiro, and others (O' Leary et al. 2020) joined in the analysis of STEM education and inclusive pedagogy. They have studied the use of such a system by teachers themselves and their instruction.

An individualized approach to students can be because of the play form. The issues of play form in inclusive teaching, the role and degree of the teacher in the play process have been addressed - Erica Danniels & Angela Pyle (Danniels & Pyle, 2022)

It will be relevant to mention the work of Luca De Benedictis & Silvia Leoni (De Benedictis & Leoni, 2021) in the Erasmus study of inclusion. Inclusive education should not be confined to a school or university. Being open about everything and engaging students with disabilities in international experiences unlocks doors to new knowledge, experiences, professional development, and communication in general. The study found low rates of involvement of special students and disparities in favor of the female gender.

Additionally, we studied the Manos Antoninis (Antoninis et al., 2020) report on work in education, information on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. And in the collection “Young Adults and Active Citizenship”.

### Methodology

The study was conducted by the authors of the article in Ukraine during one school term in secondary education institutions. All schools study according to the “New Ukrainian School” (NUSH) concept. Individual plans were developed for children with special development, coordinated with a special commission and the student's parents. It should be noted that the forms of work changed depending on the success of the educational process. Thirty children (1-2 special children per class), 20 teachers, and 20 teaching assistants participated in the study. Teachers had to follow the NUSH curriculum, adapting it for students with special development, as well as using the student portfolio method, changing activities every 10-20 minutes, the game method, working in groups, and working in groups with a leader to help the special student.

Because of the specific topic of the study and the individual characteristics of the students, the authors used several empirical methods: observation (throughout the school semester), interviews with teachers and their assistants before the study and after. We did not formulate specific questions but highlighted certain themes (instruction, classroom atmosphere, use of certain practices, and student reactions). Forms of student control after each topic covered. And interviews with each individual student after each passed topic. Feedback from parents (optional) was also collected. The inductive method and generalization method were used after the results were obtained.

Using the above methods, we want to see not only the quality of learning and mastery of knowledge, but also an assessment of the comfort of learning, the reaction of children with special needs to the educational environment, the relationship with society, and this can be understood by following the students and through personal conversations with teachers, assistants and the children themselves.

### Results and Discussion

During one school term, we used a comprehensive approach to the topic of inclusive education in Ukraine, combining subjective methods (interviews, conversations) and objective (test tasks, a certain assessment of success according to a table of our own design), and methods and forms of teaching were constantly changing. The results of the study are based on the results of each individual student and children's own reflections. We have only generalized them and reduced them to certain opinions.

After conducting the research, we obtained the following results.

- Portfolio Maintenance - 100% All teachers indicate in favor of the portfolio. This is the only practice that was able to collect an absolute score from all respondents. The main advantages of this practice include: collection of all forms of work, possible demonstration to specialists, parents, analysis of work results, and progress in learning. Collecting a portfolio does not take much time and is not complicated in its structure.
- Changing activities every 10-20 minutes - 20% are against this practice and noted that they are not comfortable presenting the material and they do not have time. 40% in favor of such practice but taking into account the student's ability. There were cases where the student's motivation and initiative allowed the form of work to

continue. 40% for such practice. Separately, the results showed: for students with physical disabilities, such practice was necessary. The average activity lasted about 10 minutes.

- Group work. There was a division into strong and weak groups, a group with a leader, and groups of desire. 10% - mark on problems. 90% - for such form of work. Working in groups contributes to the socialization of a child with special needs, and to students (with development without deviation) "fostering" respect for the other. In a supportive environment, the emotional level of the child with disabilities improved, they actively participated in common tasks.

The observation method yielded the following results:

- The special role of the teacher's helper stood out;
- The play form proved to be a method of calming the child and distracting her;
- Saw adequate acceptance of children of a student with certain disabilities; Sometimes "forgetting" that she is not
- Cases of "speech" bullying. use of the word "handicapped," etc.;
- The need to enlarge books in Braille;
- The form of work is difficult to change because of the great interest of the child;
- The need to change the form of work due to lack of interest.
- Increase of students' self-control two months after the training.

In elementary school, grades are formal. There can be no assessments. Therefore, the authors made their assessment methodology based on the objectives of elementary school: reading, expressing own thoughts, the ability to count (arithmetic), the development of creative abilities. Instead of grades subjective assessment of the teacher: "active" learning, "slow", "difficult".



**Table 1.**  
*Assessing students in relation to their own progress.*

Skill	First month	Second month	Third month	Fourth month
Reading	“Active” - 11 out of 30	“Active” - 11 out of 30	“Active” - 15 out of 30	“Active” - 16 out of 30
	“Slowly”-14 out of 30	“Slowly”-14 out of 30	“Slow” - 11 out of 30	“Slow” - 10 out of 30
	“Difficult”- 5 out of 30	“Difficult”- 5 out of 30	“Difficult”- 4 out of 30	“Difficult”- 4 out of 30
Expression	“Active” 12 out of 30	“Active” 12 out of 30	“Active” - 12 out of 30	“Active” - 16out of 30
	“Slowly” 8 out of 30	“Slowly” 8 out of 30	“Slow” - 8 out of 30	“Slow” - 7 out of 30
	“Difficult” - 10 out of 30	“Difficult” - 10 out of 30	“Difficult”- 12 out of 30	“Difficult”- 7 out of 30
Arithmetic	“Active” - 10 out of 30	“Active” - 10 out of 30	“Active” - 11 out of 30	“Active” - 11 out of 30
	“Slowly” 13 out of 30	“Slowly” 13 out of 30	“Slow” - 13 out of 30	“Slow” - 13 out of 30
	“Difficult” - 7 out of 30	“Difficult” - 7 out of 30	“Difficult”- 6 out of 30	“Difficult”- 6 out of 30
Creativity	“Active” 23 out of 30	“Active” 23 out of 30	“Active” - 25 out of 30	“Active” - 25 out of 30
	“Slowly” - 3 out of 30	“Slowly” - 3 out of 30	“Slow” - 2 out of 30	“Slow” - 3 out of 30
	“Difficult” - 4 out of 30	“Difficult” - 4 out of 30	“Difficult”- 3 out of 30	“Difficult”- 2 out of 30

**Author's development**

- \* of the 30 students, six were visually impaired. But the necessary facilities were provided.
- \* all learning progress was put in relation to each student individually. The curriculum and practices were adjusted.

Based on the results of the training and interviews with teachers, we can draw the following conclusions:

- Gradual progress in learning due to the mixed form of work.
- Creative tasks were much better for the children. Teachers did not interfere with the tasks. Only teaching assistants helped children who needed it. But physical ability did not affect motivation to engage in creative work.
- Arithmetic was the hardest to do and produced the least results. Teachers changed tasks, played games, and divided into groups, but there were no meaningful configurations in the results.

The best result was in reading. As a skill to be mastered. There was more interest in reading new things. Helping each other played a big role. Which was not the case with arithmetic.

Expression depended on reading and creativity. Children worked actively in groups, which influenced higher scores.

The history of inclusive education in Ukraine has a long way to go. Even before 1994 and the Salamanca Meeting. It has gone from the help of church ministers, patrons, and philanthropists to constitutional recognition and acceptance of people with special needs. Taking European practices of inclusive education as a model, we should remember that the Ukrainian educational system differs from the European one. Therefore, full implementation is impossible. A positive factor was the New Ukrainian School, which set itself the goal of educating full citizens and people capable of critical thinking. In such a

concept, the existence of inclusive education is possible.

We have investigated the practices of inclusive education through its main subjects of interaction - students (with different disabilities), teachers, and assistants. The results are subjective, but it is acceptable and the main thing in our study. Even through the Ukrainian educational system, the introduction of European practices is possible.

The portfolio method used showed its absoluteness because of the convenience and similarity to the characteristics in the individual plan of each student. Firstly, it is a cancellation of work for the bureaucratic system and reports. Secondly, a set of reports for special assistance cells, which are also active participants in the educational process of people with disabilities. It is “normal” for European education that different organizations with specialists “lead” unusual children and help teachers adapt them. This practice exists both in Europe and in Ukraine.

The practice of changing activities every 10-20 minutes has undergone a large percentage of criticism due to the inability of the teacher to present all the material. But it should be noted that other respondents had time to expound the material. And everyone was in the same conditions (had 1-2 students for the whole class) and had helpers nearby. Many teachers switched to play-based learning and regained the attention of their students. Erica Danniels (Daniela & Lytras, 2019) in her study of play in kindergartens also examined the teacher's role in the play. There were two: free play and guided play. At the time of our study, the guided role was the one that was performed the most. For teachers taught the child autonomy, self-regulation and

did not interfere in the relationship with other participants in the game. A special role was played by the teacher's assistants who helped students who could not perform the tasks quietly because of deficiencies. Because of the game, it was necessary to show the importance of knowledge and its relevance to the child. The issue of importance and relevance of knowledge was raised in *Thinking Inclusive Science Education from 2 Perspectives: inclusive Pedagogy and Science Education*. The authors were convinced that the child needs to apply the knowledge he or she gained from his or her own experience, needs to look at the world around him or her in a useful way, and that is why using life experiences to solve the tasks at hand.

Working in groups yielded very different results and showed all subjects of interaction. Yes, we saw the children's desire to be useful to each other. A child felt responsibility for his or her work to others. We saw that children did not care about the "vices" of their classmate or classmate, and they were perceived as normal and ordinary children. Many thanks for this to the teachers who create the atmosphere in the classroom. Responsibility for facilities, regulations, etc. are the business of the school, and only the teacher and parents can create an atmosphere of tolerance. There have been cases of bullying, but this is more due to illiteracy in the topic of tolerance. For example, in calling a child "disabled". It would be appropriate to note that the word "disabled" has not existed in Ukraine for several years. It was abolished due to its excessive use and offensive "background".

The teachers noted the combination of two practices - play and group work. Which also gave a beautiful emotional background to the child. Especially, in our opinion, it was necessary to get rid of the feeling of competition, so that there was no "who is better than the other". A real education system should be as tolerant as possible for everyone.

Separately, let us mention the factor of "child's interest". During the study, there were many cases of emotional instability of the child, excitement, and displays of nervousness. Assistants did their best to calm the children down and distract them. Already the practice of play helped children to calm down, pull themselves together, and start the task in a new way. That is why we can say that play is a distraction from the problem and a way to overcome obstacles.

Even though the elementary school has no right to grade students, especially children with disabilities, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has created guidelines for evaluating children. This is the concept of "assessment without assessment". The evaluation system is based on competence-based, activity-based, subject-subjective approaches and provides for partnership interaction between the teacher, students, and their parents or other legal representatives. The main functions of assessment are motivational, diagnostic, corrective, developing, learning, educational, social. (MON). Thus, when assessing students, it is not important what grades they received, but how they showed motivation during learning, how they responded to difficulties, what progress they made, etc. That is why we also moved away from the grading system. Teachers gave each child a comment and a grade for each month of instruction on basic, basic skills.

Creative tasks and creative-cultural development, in general, showed the best results. Many students wanted to follow the rules, but half went the creative route and moved away from standard thinking.

The ability to read during the educational process became a skill that could be acquired through practice and constant work. It also had an influence on the expression of one's own thoughts. Emotional background in the classroom played a special role, as we noted.

The results of our study show the special role of the teacher's assistant, who ensures the physical performance of tasks by the child, who calms the child, who is a certain connection of the child with the environment. By the way, the age of the teacher and the assistant does not play a role when teaching in an inclusive classroom. Timo Saloviita (Saloviita, 2020) and Michael Braksiek (Braksiek, 2022) came up with similar results. The results of our study through observation and interviews provide the impetus for exploring a more substantive and better role for the teacher aide.

Best practices, tasks, games, forms of group work could be collected and published as methodological recommendations, "Compendium of tasks", etc.

Because of the individual approach, Ukrainian inclusive education can accept and try to adapt other practices in the way of an "open society". We agree that educational systems are different from the beginning. But because of the individual

approach, practices will still change, and new horizons in working with children need to be opened.

We studied inclusive education in Ukraine in the context of an already running system that works and is still gaining momentum. Therefore, the legislation to us has had some success. Legal legislation is the basis for the existence of inclusive education. Without a steam system, recognition of all actors and their responsibilities, the provision of power, and a system of control, there will be no inclusive education.

### Conclusions

Globalization gave impetus to the democratization of the environment, which led to the dominance of the ideology of an open society. Ukraine, which is on the way to European integration, should adopt the ideology of an “open society,” the ideas and values of Europe. In Soviet times, people with disabilities of body and soul were cut off from the “ordinary” world, were isolated in “special educational institutions,” but this carries a sense of detachment, loneliness, and powerlessness.

European countries of the world are among the first to introduce inclusive education. Now Ukraine is on the way to inclusive education, and after the war, this topic will become even more relevant.

Having conducted our research, we can assert that such European practices as: the introduction of a portfolio for each student, changing activities after 10-20 minutes, working in groups, and the support of the teacher and his assistant have a positive impact on inclusive education.

Using the following practices: students will gradually make progress in learning, they will actively communicate with peers, and peers will perceive such students as “normal” and equal. A special role deserves teacher assistants who accept the child's care so that all of the teacher's attention does not go to one student. It is also necessary to be especially careful to form an individual plan of the child with special needs and to adjust certain tasks in teaching.

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