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## Methodical training of teachers working with schoolchildren with intellectual development disabilities

### Formación metódica de profesores que trabajan con escolares con discapacidad intelectual

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## Abstract

Working with children with special educational needs requires a high level of the teacher's competence and high-quality organizational work to constantly improve the educational process's effectiveness. The purpose of the academic paper is to determine the main features of the pedagogical workers' readiness to work with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities, to study the success factors of this process and to highlight the effectiveness degree of its components. Several general and special methods of studying analytical information were used during the research. As a result the success features and individual characteristics of the pedagogical staff's readiness to work with schoolchildren with intellectual development disorders were determined.

**Keywords:** the pedagogical worker's readiness, inclusion, the teacher's competence, the teacher's scientific and methodical activity, work in inclusive conditions.

## Resumen

Trabajar con niños con necesidades educativas especiales requiere un alto nivel de competencia del docente y un trabajo organizativo de alta calidad para mejorar constantemente la eficacia del proceso educativo. El artículo académico tiene como objetivo determinar las principales características de la preparación de los trabajadores pedagógicos para trabajar con escolares con discapacidad intelectual, estudiar los factores de éxito de este proceso y resaltar el grado de efectividad de sus componentes. Durante la investigación se utilizaron varios métodos generales y especiales de estudio de la información analítica. Como resultado se determinaron los rasgos de éxito y las características individuales de la preparación del personal pedagógico para trabajar con escolares con trastornos del desarrollo intelectual.

**Palabras clave:** preparación del trabajador pedagógico, inclusión, competencia docente, actividad científica y metódica del docente, trabajo en condiciones inclusivas.

## 1. Introduction

Currently, methodical services of various levels are involved in supporting pedagogical workers conducting pedagogical activities with children with intellectual disabilities. It is important to remember that inclusion is contextual. Consequently, there are no universal recommendations for involving teachers in specific forms of work. Teachers, understanding and demonstrating effective teaching and learning methods in an atmosphere of cooperation and support from the education authority, and the local community, achieve the greatest success in implementing inclusive education, creatively solving problems based on proven pedagogical techniques, methods and forms.

The theoretical part of the present research characterizes the concept, components, success factors and individual stages of methodical preparation for working with pedagogical workers dealing with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities.

The practical part of the research reveals the most important factors causing the necessity to intensify the methodological support of pedagogical workers working with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities. It determines the most effective areas of methodical work on training such pedagogical workers, the principal directions of methodical support for teachers working with

schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities, which require priority optimization. It also determines thematic directions of trainings for pedagogical workers' methodical support in inclusive classes, which are the most effective and in demand in practical activities.

Based on the research results, conclusions were made regarding the issues under consideration. It has been established that the main tendencies in society indicating the need to intensify the methodological support of pedagogical workers working with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities are the orientation of the organizational and methodological fundamentals of the educational process in secondary schools towards children with typical development and neglecting the specifics of the pedagogical and cognitive activities of children with special educational needs.

The survey participants identified the most effective directions of methodical work on training teaching staff to work with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities. These are improving the activities of methodological structural units in educational districts and activating partnerships and cooperation with higher educational institutions.

The survey has also shown that the following types of pedagogical workers' methodical support require priority attention: optimization of the methodological framework and organizational and pedagogical conditions of teachers' professional activities in inclusive classes and identification of professional growth factors to provide quality educational services to children with special needs. At the same time, the most popular thematic directions of training in the teaching staff's practical activities are the competency-based approach to improving the teachers' qualifications for implementing an inclusive model of teaching children with special educational needs, training the teaching staff's readiness to work with children with special educational needs, and requirements for cultivating pedagogical and cognitive competence of children with special educational needs.

## 2. Literature Review

Methodical assistance in meeting the professional and social needs of teaching staff working with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities should be conducted considering the innovative development of the educational sphere (Mykyteichuk et al., 2022).

The improvement of such employees' qualifications is fulfilled based on implementing a complex of interrelated organizational-pedagogical, scientific-methodical, and research-experimental activities. With this approach, the teacher is always at the center of the educational process. He systematically raises his professional level (Stebliuk et al., 2021; Goodall et al., 2022).

The pedagogical workers' qualitative methodological competence is a guide to applying the latest approaches in providing quality services in the context of inclusive education development. This makes it possible to ensure education continuity, as well as effectively use available state funds to ensure educational process, assessment and further development of education quality (Raptis & Spanaki, 2017).

The development level of information and communication technologies, in particular, the creation of technical, organizational and methodical opportunities for their use, contributes to improving the teacher's professional skills in the inclusive education sphere (Chupakhina, 2019).

Several directions of using Internet technologies are implemented in the scientific and methodological activities of the state education system for this purpose. These are the exchange of work experience through webinars, workshops, forums, e-mail, etc., information support for the teacher's activity working in an inclusive classroom, expansion of specialists' professional work experience, etc. All these directions contribute to the pedagogical workers' professional development and provide personally oriented informational support according to the needs and chosen direction of each teacher's pedagogical activity in inclusion conditions (Brinton & Fujiki, 2017),

The feature of pedagogical workers' scientific and methodical support is that the relations between the participants occur under the condition of partnership of the state, teachers, and representatives of state and public institutions (Syeda et al., 2021).

The qualitative organization of such methodological work should consider the participants' professional multidisciplinary in the methodological process, the balanced use of different approaches to the problems of developing inclusive education and unequal opportunities of considering their optimal solution.

The formation of an informational, educational environment requires establishing a system of methodical support of the educational process aimed at implementing its basic functions: ensuring education, socialization, intra-district control over implementing education standards. The active use of ICT and distance learning technologies will primarily contribute to the provision of special and additional education for children and adults with disabilities of physical or mental development (Conti-Ramsden et al., 2019).

The implementation of the tasks facing the educational system in the conditions of inclusive education is inextricably linked with the need to update the scientific and methodological support of the psychological service, teachers and educators. In this regard, several necessary measures are being carried out to optimize the system of teaching staff's methodological support in inclusive classes, namely:

- the work of methodical associations of practical psychologists and social pedagogues is organized concerning the problems of psychological-social-pedagogical support of inclusive education involving special education specialists, defectologists, speech therapists, and scientists;
- methodological control over the psychological service specialists' activities participating in the organization of inclusive education;
- organizational support for improving the qualifications of teaching staff on inclusive education issues with the participation of practical psychologists and social pedagogues;
- organizing and implementing educational work by the psychological service's employees in educational institutions towards improving the psychological culture of teachers, parents and students in order to prevent stigmatization and discrimination of children with special educational needs (Bondarenko, 2018).

The purpose of the research is to establish the viewpoint of methodologists and workers in the pedagogical sphere who have experience working with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities regarding the principal aspects of individual components of the teaching staff's readiness to work with education seekers with intellectual disabilities.

### 3. Methodology

Practical studying modern tendencies of the teaching staff's readiness to work with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities was conducted by surveying 711 methodologists and pedagogical workers teaching in 21 educational institutions: general secondary, general special and higher educational institutions in Kyiv (Ukraine). The research was conducted using the Survio service.

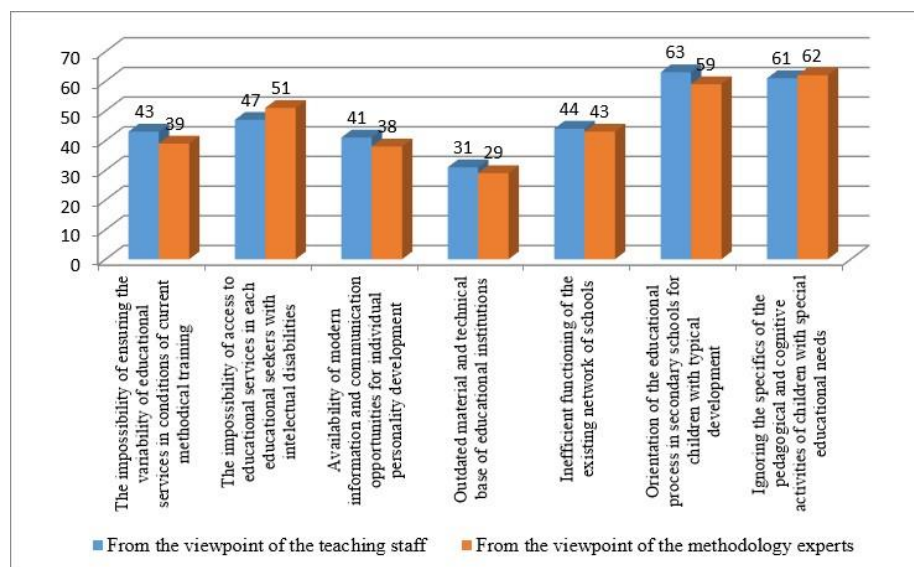
### 4. Data Analysis and Results

According to the survey participants' standpoint, currently, in the conditions of increasing the world's attention to people's needs with developmental disabilities, education requires particular attention on the part of society. At the same time, the first and foremost important activity direction of scientists and leaders of the educational system is to improve the quality of pedagogical workers' methodical support working with education seekers suffering from intellectual development disorders.

According to the survey participants' viewpoint, the main trends in society indicating the need to intensify the pedagogical workers' methodical support working with schoolchildren with impaired intellectual development are as follows (Figure 1).

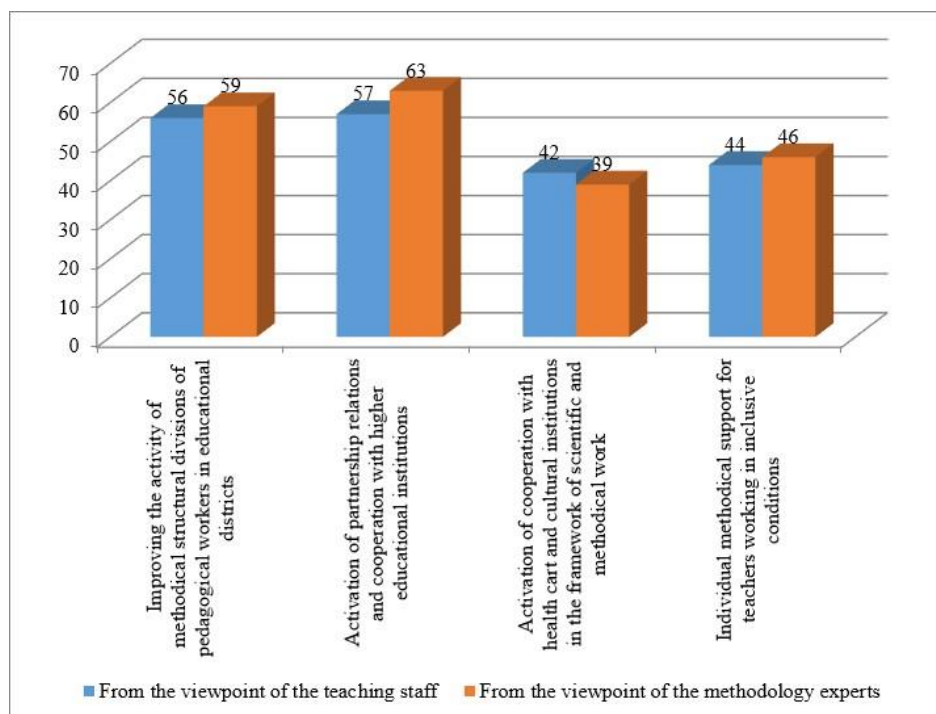
The survey has shown that such factors primarily include the orientation of the organizational and methodological fundamentals of the educational process in secondary schools on children with typical development and neglecting the specifics of the pedagogical and cognitive activities of children with special educational needs.

In the process of the questionnaire, the respondents identified the following most effective directions of methodical work on training the teaching staff to work with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities (Figure 2):



**Figure 1.** Prerequisites for activating the teaching staff's methodical support working with schoolchildren with intellectual development disorders, %

Source: compiled by the authors



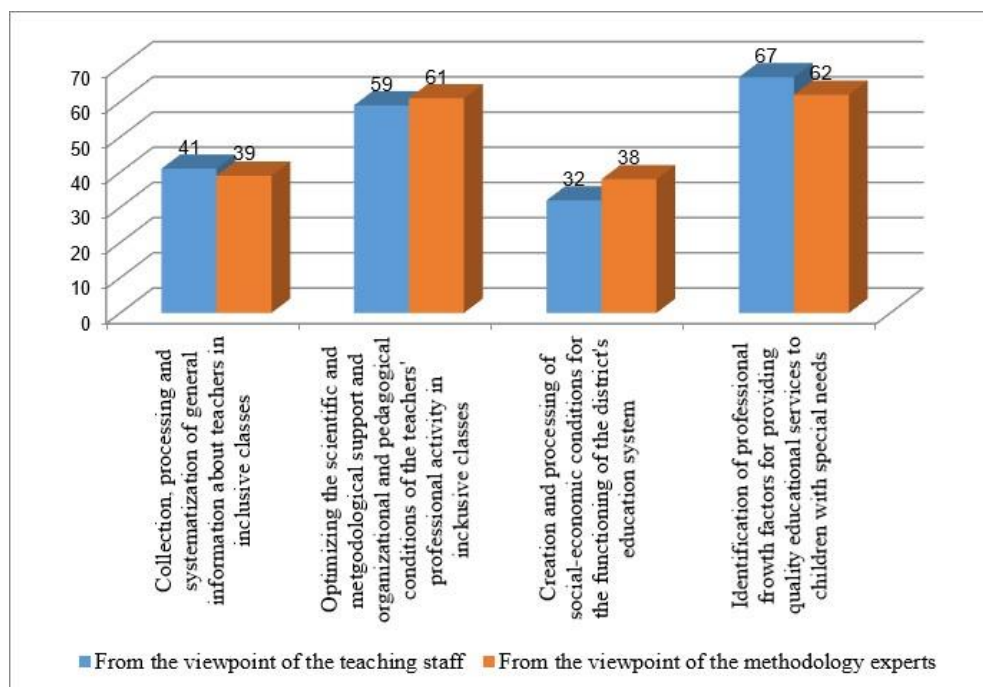
**Figure 2.** The most effective directions of methodical work on training the teaching staff to work with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities, %

Source: compiled by the authors

As can be seen from Figure 2, the respondents consider that the most effective areas of methodical activity in this sphere are improving the activity of methodical structural divisions of pedagogical workers in educational districts and activating partnership relations and cooperation with higher educational institutions.

During the survey of methodologists and pedagogical workers, the types of activities carried out in an insufficient amount or of insufficient quality for methodical support of this category of teachers were clarified. They require primary attention in terms of optimizing the development procedure, applying new approaches to fulfilling or systematically reviewing the execution of this type of work (Figure 3).

As can be seen from Figure 3, such directions are optimizing scientific and methodological support and organizational and pedagogical conditions for teachers' professional activity in inclusive classes and identifying professional growth factors for the provision of quality educational services to children with special needs. Determining the most important directions of work on optimizing methodological support can be used in choosing the forms and content areas of teachers' training during advanced training and during the inter-certification period.

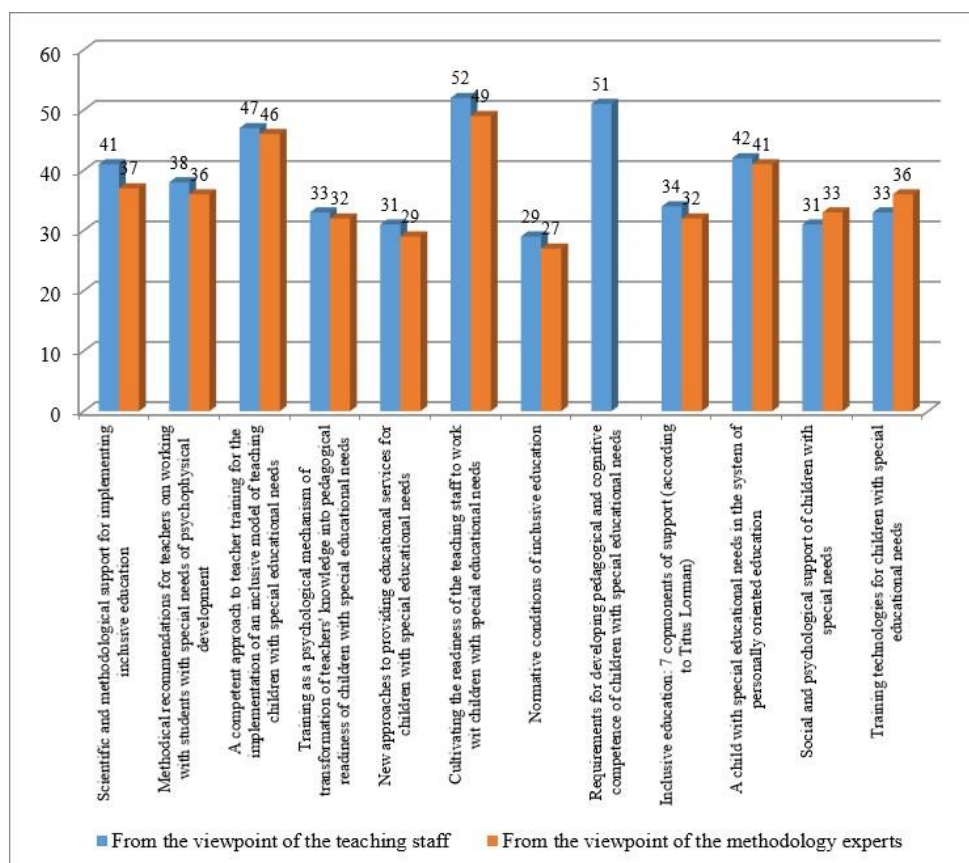


**Figure 3.** The main directions of teaching staff's methodical support working with students with intellectual disabilities that require priority optimization, %  
 Source: compiled by the authors

During the research, respondents were asked to identify the thematic directions of methodological support trainings. They are most in demand in the pedagogical workers' practical activities with schoolchildren with impaired intellectual development. These directions are as follows (Figure 4):

As can be seen from Figure 4, such thematic directions are primarily a competency-based approach to improving the teachers' qualifications for implementing an inclusive model of teaching children with special educational needs, cultivating the pedagogical staff's readiness to work with children with special educational needs and requirements for developing pedagogical and cognitive competence of children with special educational needs.

Trainings in inclusive classes are evaluated equally by both teaching staff and methodologists. The average difference is 2-3%. However, methodologists do not perceive and do not understand approaches to the development of pedagogical and cognitive competence of children with special educational needs. Both teachers and methodologists pay the greatest attention to the requirements of the teaching staff who will work with children with special needs. This can be explained by the fact that the entire system of inclusive education with children with special educational needs depends on this factor. Therefore, this factor was noted at the level of 51%. Accordingly, the preparation of teachers for teaching children with special needs is the next important factor, which is directly related to the previous factor. It is also worth noting the role and attention of the child in the learning process. Attention is also paid to scientific and methodological support.



**Figure 4.** Thematic directions of trainings on the teaching staff's methodical support in inclusive classes, which are the most effective and in demand in practical activities, %

Source: compiled by the authors

Thus, we determined that the main role in the provision of educational services for children with special needs belongs to the pedagogical team and each teacher, in particular, with the appropriate scientific and methodological support.

## 5. Discussion

In general, the work of methodical and pedagogical support of inclusive education can be outlined as:

- methodological support toward protecting and providing the rights and freedoms of a child with special educational needs in the conditions of an educational institution and during the child's staying in the family;
- regulatory and methodological assistance in providing recommendations to the teacher on creating a positive microclimate in the children's collective;
- disseminating information about the inclusive education's principles among teachers, parents and children with the aim of forming a friendly and non-judgmental attitude towards a child with special educational needs;
- providing information to a child with special educational needs and his parents about the infrastructure of out-of-school educational institutions in the district, promoting the child's



participation in groups, sections taking into account his capabilities (Accardo et al., 2019; Anctil et al., 2008; Bettencourt et. al., 2018).

The content of psychological and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs in the conditions of the educational district allows increasing the child's adaptation capabilities, developing communication skills, emotional sphere, reducing the level of anxiety, overcoming fears, minimizing aggressive behavior, increasing the children's self-esteem (Cage & Howes, 2020).

The computerized innovative educational space promotes developing methodical services aimed at enriching and updating the methodical work's forms in educational districts, creating a variable, multifunctional scientific and methodical environment. This ensures the advancing the teachers' professional experience in the inclusive education sphere, the formation of a new social philosophy, and a positive attitude towards children with psychophysical development disorders (Collins et. al., 2019).

Psychological diagnostic tools and correctional programs developed and used by pedagogues working with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities, as a rule, always require adjustment (changes in the method of presenting the material without changing the content or conceptual complexity of the task), or less often, correction on the features of the child's individual development (Forber-Pratt, Lyew, Mueller & Samples, 2017).

In this regard, a database of diagnostic methods for working with children with special needs is formed in the district framework. Methodological recommendations are developed for practical psychologists, social pedagogues, teachers and educators to work in an inclusive environment (Grimes et al., 2020).

A significant direction of consultative and methodical assistance is educational and campaigning work to improve psychological culture in educational institutions and families, individual work with children and school youth (Hong et al., 2018).

The solution of the following social problems occupies an important place in the work of specialists on methodical support of the educational process in institutions of general secondary education, namely:

- social-psychological support of families, pedagogical work with parents;
- creation of conditions for the social and psychological comfort and safety of children;
- establishment of a normative and methodological basis for the development of children with psychophysical disabilities, as well as children of the "risk group" and children of socially weak categories (Li et al., 2021; Shamshiri-Petersen & Krogh, 2020).

In order to provide high-quality educational services, a close cooperation of a defectologist consultant, a teacher's assistant, a practical psychologist, a medical worker, a social pedagogue, etc. should be established (Moriña & Orozco, 2022).

## 6. Conclusions

Therefore, the survey results show that the analysis of regulatory documentation and scientific developments on the research topic, comprehensive methodical work with pedagogical personnel

working with schoolchildren with intellectual disabilities is aimed at increasing the level of the teacher's professionalism and improving the overall effectiveness of the educational process. At

the same time, it is extremely significant to identify problematic points, develop the organizational and pedagogical conditions for teachers' professional activity in inclusive classes, and to identify individual factors of professional growth in order to provide quality educational services to children with special needs.

In general, the survey noted that high school remains the priority system of education. At the same time, teachers should not be emotional about children's characteristics, but should perceive them as full-fledged children who can and are obliged to follow the secondary school curriculum. At the same time, the material and technical base has the least impact on inclusive education for children with special needs.

The effectiveness of inclusive education for children with special educational needs directly depends on the cooperation of teachers with institutions of higher education. After all, this forms the motive and perspective of further independent improvement of children and acts as a social guarantee of their life and activities. A particularly important factor is the mutual understanding of pedagogical workers and prompt response to everyday challenges and processes in secondary school. In addition, the effectiveness of inclusive education directly depends on the identification of professional factors that determine the quality of providing educational services to children with special educational needs. The use of pedagogical approaches implemented by individual teachers was also noted.

Thus, inclusive education aimed at children with special educational needs requires increased attention of pedagogical workers regarding the relationship with children as "teacher-student" and "pedagogical team - classes". An important element in this system is the system of social guarantees and motives regarding the possibility of further education and obtaining higher education according to the interests and inclinations of such schoolchildren.

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