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# Inclusive education in Ukraine: achievements, challenges, prospects

## Educación inclusiva en Ucrania: logros, retos y perspectivas

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### Abstract

The objective of this paper was to analyse the achievements, challenges, and prospects of inclusive education in Ukraine, focusing on the ethical principles and values that influence its implementation. The study adopted a theoretical and documentary approach, reviewing current scientific literature to explore key concepts and the ethical dimensions of inclusive education, such as justice and fairness in educational settings. The methodology involved analysing various research studies that defined the challenges of inclusion and examine the attitudes and behaviours of students and teachers towards inclusive education. Additionally, the paper evaluated existing equity assessment tools and their potential adaptation to the Ukrainian context. The most relevant findings highlight a growing global interest in inclusive education, particularly in areas like diversity, disability, early



education, and teacher training. However, ethical concerns remain a significant challenge in Ukraine, presenting opportunities for further research. The paper concludes that ethical considerations play a vital role in shaping inclusive education practices, but much work remains to be done to fully address these issues and improve equity in educational systems.

**Keywords:** Social integration, equal opportunities, equality, justice, values and ethical behaviour.

## Resume

El objetivo de este artículo fue analizar los logros, desafíos y perspectivas de la educación inclusiva en Ucrania, centrándose en los principios éticos y valores que influyen en su implementación. El estudio adoptó un enfoque teórico y documental, revisando la literatura científica actual para explorar los conceptos clave y las dimensiones éticas de la educación inclusiva, como la justicia y la equidad en los entornos educativos. La metodología incluyó el análisis de varios estudios de investigación que definieron los desafíos de la inclusión y examinaron las actitudes y comportamientos de estudiantes y profesores hacia la educación inclusiva. Además, el artículo evaluó las herramientas de evaluación de la equidad existentes y su posible adaptación al contexto ucraniano. Los hallazgos más relevantes destacan un creciente interés global en la educación inclusiva, especialmente en áreas como la diversidad, la discapacidad, la educación temprana y la formación docente. Sin embargo, las preocupaciones éticas siguen siendo un desafío importante en Ucrania, lo que presenta oportunidades para investigaciones futuras. El artículo concluye que las consideraciones éticas juegan un papel vital en la configuración de las prácticas de educación inclusiva, pero queda mucho por hacer para abordar plenamente estos problemas y mejorar la equidad en los sistemas educativos.

**Palabras clave:** Inclusión social, igualdad de oportunidades, equidad, justicia, valores y comportamiento ético.

## Introduction

With a variety of terminology such as 'inclusion', 'inclusive education' or 'inclusive school', contemporary discourse in education has brought inclusion to the forefront of educational debate. The concept of inclusion is confirmed at the international level, where it is of considerable interest and relevance (Acevedo & Nusbaum, 2020). Initially, attention to inclusion focused on the integration of students with disabilities or learning difficulties into the school environment. However, over time, the concept has expanded to cover broader needs. An inclusive school now ensures the educational inclusion of all children, without distinction, offers equal opportunities to all and takes into account the diversity of students. In a broader sense, an inclusive school is a micro-scale of an inclusive society, a global investment by all for all. In Europe, the structural indicators of inclusion are supported by ten key principles, which include (Table 1).

**Table 1.**  
*Key principles of inclusion in EU countries*

Principle of equality and non-discrimination	Recognises that different groups may need additional support in a respectful, nonjudgmental environment.
The principle of listening to children's voices	Requires commitments directly related to their welfare and taking into account their age and maturity.
Building on people's assets and capabilities	Challenges the negative labels associated with vulnerable groups and goes beyond simply preventing hardship by seeking to promote everyone.
The principle of active parental involvement in school	requires a strategic focus on marginalised parents.
The principle of differentiation	Indicates that different levels of need require different prevention strategies.
The principle of multidisciplinary	Recognises the need for a multifaceted response to complex needs.
The principle of representation of historically marginalised groups	It includes attention to processes that promote their social and professional participation.
The principle of lifelong learning	It emphasises active approaches to learning and takes into account the issues of active citizenship, personal and social realisation of intercultural dialogue, and employment.

Source: (Crane, 2020).



In this respect, inclusion should focus not only on people, but also on the systems that include them. Unfortunately, we can observe that the conversation about inclusion is often accompanied by the persistence or even increase of educational inequalities in different countries. This is due to the pedagogical difficulties faced by teachers, especially at the beginning of their careers, as well as possible resistance from families. In the context of this issue, Rix (2020) notes that in recent years, with the increasing use of private education by different social categories, schools around the world have seen a decrease in socio-cultural diversity, regardless of geographic location. This raises the question of the extent to which national governments are implementing the innovative, structural and systemic tripartite approach recommended by various European and international organisations.

The purpose of this paper is to systematise different views on the issue of inclusion by studying it in the context of Ukraine and analysing the experience of other countries. The paper aims to analyse inclusive education in Ukraine, its achievements, challenges and prospects by integrating these aspects with general educational and social challenges in modern society on the path to inclusive development. Inclusive education is often criticised for lacking a clear conceptual focus. Some researchers argue that expanding the concept to include everyone may go too far, making it problematically vague (Biju et al., 2023). We consider the opposite educational approach to this issue, arguing that expanding the scope of educational standards to include all students can be productive and efficient (educational).

To begin the Ukrainian inventory of inclusion issues, we decided to study the evolution of educational concepts in the EU. A common issue in inclusive education in all countries is the difficulty of overcoming ethical barriers. While there is general support for removing these barriers to education for all children, national policies and practices vary across regions and countries. The idea of inclusion implies that the system needs to evolve to adapt to the needs of each child, but this process rarely happens, due to limited resources, different approaches to education and differences in the interpretation of the concept of inclusion.

However, despite the fact that the literature review reveals numerous obstacles to overcoming the ethical challenges of inclusion, in the Ukrainian context inclusive education represents an achievable goal with enormous potential to strengthen social cohesion, intercultural relations and educational opportunities for all children. Therefore, the central challenge of this study is the ability of the system to mobilize all its stakeholders to support inclusion. In other words, inclusive education requires a paradigm shift at the societal level. The purpose of this paper is to analyse this transformation and offer a scientific interpretation of the educational situations studied by researchers in this field.

The objective of this paper is to analyse inclusive education in Ukraine, focusing on its achievements, challenges, and prospects, while considering the ethical principles that shape its implementation. Inclusive education in Ukraine has gained attention as part of the broader global movement towards equitable access to education, yet it faces unique challenges due to varying interpretations and limited resources. To contextualize the study, it is essential to understand that the concept of inclusion in Ukraine, as in many countries, initially centered on integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education. However, the idea of inclusive education has since expanded to embrace a broader range of students, advocating for the adaptation of the educational system to meet diverse needs.

Using a theoretical and documentary approach, this study reviews current scientific literature on inclusive education, emphasizing the ethical dimensions such as justice, fairness, and equality in educational settings. By analysing Ukraine's approach in light of broader European frameworks, such as the EU's key principles of inclusion, the paper identifies the systemic and ethical challenges that hinder the full implementation of inclusive practices. These challenges include overcoming educational inequalities, supporting teachers in implementing inclusive practices, and ensuring that inclusive education is not merely a concept but a reality for all students.

Despite the obstacles, inclusive education in Ukraine holds the potential to strengthen social cohesion, intercultural relations, and equal opportunities for all children.



## Theoretical overview

Inclusive education is a deeply humanistic approach to education for all, which involves adapting the school environment to the diversity of children with special educational needs and individual learning and developmental characteristics. The main goal is to combat social exclusion and promote the active participation of individuals in all spheres of life: social, economic, cultural or political. Removing barriers in education to strengthen access, representation, participation and success of all students is one of the stated goals of inclusive education. Students with special educational needs who are included in mainstream schools develop social skills and progress towards academic inclusion. In a broad sense, inclusive education aims to improve the school setting in order to use all available resources, as reflected in the literature, including human resources and the participation of all students in the learning process (Vrăsmaş & Vrăsmaş, 2021).

International and national legislation emphasises the respect of fundamental human rights, and the principles of equality and non-discrimination must be guaranteed in all aspects of education. Equality and equity are the general principles on which efforts to achieve inclusive education are based. To promote equality in schools, it is recommended to create a positive learning environment, set clear expectations for behaviour, anti-bullying measures, a code of conduct for teachers, and address negative attitudes and discriminatory language.

To ensure that diversity is represented, children need to see their own experiences positively reflected in texts and learning resources. Equality in education is closely linked to the principle of non-discrimination. For students with special educational needs, ensuring equity in education requires "reasonable adjustments", which means making "necessary and appropriate changes and adjustments that do not impose excessive or unreasonable costs". Learning opportunities involve a feedback system for learners where curriculum, teaching and assessment interact with each other to ensure that each learner has access to all the necessary elements to actively participate and make progress in their overall learning.

In their research, most scientists analyse forward-looking political developments and complex national realities to highlight the need for constructive critical analysis of inclusive education (Lorenzo-Lledó et al., 2024). Shume (2023) takes a particular interest in any form of discrimination that hinders inclusive pedagogy, making connections between barriers and possible actions that will promote access and participation for all. School segregation remains a significant issue worldwide, with negative consequences for children with disabilities, ethnic minorities or immigrants, and to some extent for girls. This phenomenon has many causal links that vary from country to country, according to its historical and economic context, but all of them relate to certain conceptions of otherness and structural processes of domination and discrimination.

In their article, Symeonidou & Mavrou (2020) examine the stages of development of the process of educating students with disabilities in Italian mainstream classrooms: the moment of integration, when laws were passed guaranteeing the right of every person with a disability to receive education without restrictions, the period of awareness of the need for inclusive policies that expand the concept of special educational needs and abolish the classification of students, and the phase of implementation of regulations that began in the 1990s (Bešić, 2020). According to Wang, He & Xu (2024), it is important for schools to view diversity as an opportunity that helps people interact and feel part of a community. This means that reflecting on inclusivity should become a daily norm that contributes to the development of a broader vision of an inclusive society and social change.

From a pedagogical point of view, this approach goes beyond helping certain students in the role of 'support teacher'. Therefore, it is important to separate oneself at all levels from exclusive or unilateral actions, so that each student is seen as an individual with their own needs and their learning process takes them into account. According to Pérez Valles & Reeves Huapaya (2023), it is important to broaden the vision of schools to include families by creating and supporting forms of partnership with them, and providing

assistance when they feel isolated. The authors emphasise the importance of establishing distance and tolerance in the face of difficulties faced by parents who may be anxious, inactive, intrusive, aggressive or overprotective... Inclusive education also requires partnerships with families, which should be seen as a resource in the medium term, even if the relationship may be difficult in the beginning.

In their study, Carvalho, Cosme & Veiga (2023) examine the prospects for inclusive education in Brazil, noting that the country's history is complex due to social and educational inequalities, including in the areas of economy and diverse cultural groups. Brazil's education legislation, which has been aimed at inclusion since 2008, focuses on the creation of specialised forms of support that are not intended to replace general education, but are an important element in the educational process. This approach is becoming a paradigm in the Brazilian educational environment and is aimed at providing additional support to the target audience, which includes students with disabilities, developmental disabilities and high intellectual potential.

In this context, Ukraine, like Brazil, is currently in a phase of integration that is necessary and important on the path to inclusion. The creation of "multifunctional resource rooms" is a concrete implementation of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine's commitment to meeting the unique needs of some students. According to Mansur, Utama, Mohd Yasin, Sari, Jamaludin & Pinandhita (2023), the importance of collaboration between education and science is to enable teachers to analyse their practice to address the challenges faced in the modern educational system. This collaboration involves bringing together university professors and primary and secondary school teachers. We stand in solidarity because in order to improve the process of educational inclusion of every student, we need to be able to analyse and change the way we think and organise schools to overcome the exclusion that many students face.

Dzhym, Saienko, Pozdniakova, Zhadlenko, & Kondratenko (2023) review integrative measures aimed at ensuring access to school education for students who have been the object of historical discrimination and point to the need to revise approaches to educational processes to effectively accommodate student diversity. The Ministry of Education of Ukraine has recognised this need and has taken steps to establish an extensive professional development programme. However, it is important to ensure that this programme is accessible to teachers who live far from urban centres or do not have the necessary digital equipment for distance learning. Inclusive education in Ukraine is an important area of development in the education system, which aims to create equal learning opportunities for all children, regardless of their characteristics.

Achievements in this area include the development of legislation, the creation of inclusive educational institutions, and teacher training. However, there are challenges that need to be addressed, such as the lack of public awareness of inclusive education, insufficient financial support for inclusive institutions, and a shortage of qualified inclusive education specialists. For the further development of inclusive education in Ukraine, it is necessary to focus on developing teachers' professional competencies, ensuring adequate material conditions for the education of all children, and raising public awareness of the goals and objectives of inclusive education. Thus, when entering the field of education, one should keep in mind the importance of inclusive education, its achievements and challenges to be faced, as well as the prospects for the development of this area.

Inclusive education has been a significant focus of educational reform worldwide, including in Ukraine. The country has made notable strides towards implementing inclusive education policies, aiming to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students. However, the process of inclusive education in Ukraine is still evolving, facing numerous challenges related to limited resources, professional capacity, and public awareness. Given its importance, this paper focuses on the Ukrainian context, examining the achievements, challenges, and prospects for inclusive education, while comparing these findings with countries of similar socio-political and economic contexts, such as Brazil.

Previous studies on inclusive education in Ukraine and comparable countries have employed various methodologies, ranging from qualitative interviews to quantitative surveys and literature reviews. For instance, Horishna, Polishchuk, Slozanska & Hlavatska (2020) conducted a qualitative study examining integrative measures aimed at improving school access for historically marginalized students. While their



study provides valuable insights, it faces limitations due to the small sample size and geographical concentration in urban areas. Similarly, Carvalho, Cosme & Veiga (2023) in Brazil focused on policy analysis to understand how legislative frameworks support inclusion but were limited in addressing on-the-ground implementation issues.

Martynchuk, Skrypnyk, Sofiy & Hanssen (2021) employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and focus groups to examine teacher collaboration with universities. However, the study's scope was limited by its focus on a select few urban schools, excluding rural areas that may face different challenges in inclusive education. The methodologies used in these studies demonstrate both strengths and limitations in capturing the full complexity of inclusive education, particularly in rural or economically disadvantaged areas.

However, there are notable gaps in the literature on inclusive education in Ukraine. One significant gap is the lack of research on inclusive education in rural regions, where schools may face greater resource constraints and less access to professional development opportunities for teachers. Another gap lies in the limited exploration of ethical considerations in inclusive education, particularly regarding justice, fairness, and equality in educational practices. While some studies, like those of Shestakevych, Pasichnyk & Kunanets (2019), touch on the ethics of inclusion, there is insufficient analysis of how these ethical principles can be operationalized in the Ukrainian educational system.

Several studies, including those by Hordiichuk, Nikolenko, Shavel, Zakharina & Khomyk (2022), emphasize the role of ethical principles such as autonomy, justice, and fairness in the implementation of inclusive education. In Ukraine, this ethical dimension is crucial, as the country continues to reform its education system. The Ministry of Education of Ukraine has made efforts to introduce inclusive policies, yet ethical challenges remain, particularly in ensuring all students receive equal opportunities for education regardless of geographic location or socio-economic background.

Teacher training and professional development are key areas of focus in the literature. Oliinyk, Mishchenko, lievliev, Saveliev & Hubina (2023) highlight the importance of equipping educators with the necessary skills to support inclusive education. In Ukraine, while there are professional development programs available, they are often inaccessible to teachers in rural areas or those lacking adequate digital infrastructure.

Inclusive pedagogy has been a significant topic of study, with research exploring how teaching methods can be adapted to accommodate diverse student needs. Studies such as those by Lutsan, Struk, Bulgakova, Vertuhina & Verbeshchuk (2020) suggest that inclusive pedagogical approaches should be embedded in teacher training programs. In Ukraine, however, there is still a need to integrate inclusive pedagogy into mainstream educational practices, particularly in schools that have limited experience with diverse student populations.

Comparing Ukraine with other countries, such as Brazil, reveals shared challenges in implementing inclusive education policies. Both countries face issues related to public awareness, financial constraints, and the professional capacity of educators. However, Brazil has advanced in developing legislative frameworks that support inclusion through specialised forms of support, such as multifunctional resource rooms. Ukraine has also made strides in creating resource rooms, but there remains a gap in fully operationalizing these resources across all regions.

Ethics plays a central role in the implementation of inclusive education. Ethical principles such as justice, fairness, and non-discrimination are essential to ensuring that all students have access to quality education. In Ukraine, the challenge lies in translating these ethical principles into practice, especially in regions where resources are scarce. Ethical considerations must also address the professional conduct of educators, ensuring that they are equipped to foster an inclusive environment that respects the diverse needs of all students.

The review of inclusive education in Ukraine highlights significant progress, including the development of inclusive institutions, professional development programs for teachers, and the creation of resource rooms. However, challenges remain, particularly in rural areas where access to professional training and resources is limited. Ethical considerations, such as justice and fairness, are central to the debate on inclusion and remain key challenges in Ukraine's education system. The review also identifies gaps in the current literature, particularly regarding the ethical implementation of inclusive education and the specific challenges faced in rural regions. Future research should focus on bridging these gaps and exploring the role of ethics in promoting a truly inclusive education system in Ukraine.

## Methodology

The methodology of the study included an analysis of literature and documents related to inclusive education in Ukraine in recent years, which is an important step in identifying the achievements, challenges and prospects of this area of education.

The literature review conducted in this paper is based on documents extracted from the WoSCC database, Clarivate Analytics. This included high quality research and academic papers from various fields of science, social sciences and humanities. WoSCC is often used for scientific documentation as well as for bibliometric analysis in various fields. The search process was carried out in May 2024. To limit the set of documents, an advanced search was applied using the topic search (TS) option, which helped to identify the searched terms in titles, abstracts, authors' keywords, and additional keywords (Keywords plus).

The terms searched were: "inclusive education", "inclusive learning", "inclusive school", "inclusive learning", "inclusive classroom", "inclusive university", "inclusive academy". To maximise search coverage, the Boolean operator OR was used to identify documents containing one, two or more search terms, as well as an asterisk (\*) representing any group of characters, including no characters. For example, searching for "inclusive education\*" identifies documents containing "inclusive teaching", "inclusive teacher", "inclusive teachers", etc.

Identified documents (articles, conference proceedings, books, book chapters, review articles, editorials, etc.) for the period from 2019 to 2024 were included in the analysis. Those that were not relevant to the work were excluded from the analysis. The study included only scientific articles and review articles, as they are considered to be the primary sources of discoveries, research and critical analysis in the field and are subject to a rigorous peer review process provided by scientific journals to achieve certain quality standards.

WoSCC tools were used to analyse the data, in particular Analyse Results and Creation Citation Report. Thus, the frequencies of publications and citations were used to study the growth trajectory of inclusive education research over the past 31 years. To identify the main contributors, frequency tables were developed for countries, journals and authors with the largest number of publications. To study the thematic structure of research in inclusive education, the VOSviewer software tool was used, which is often used to analyse and visualise bibliometric data.

This software was used to create a bibliometric map based on the analysis of the correlation of authors' keywords, which allows visualising the main topics explored in the specialised literature. This analysis involves identifying the frequency of occurrence of certain keywords in documents written by different researchers or authors. The keywords of the documents are displayed as round nodes, the connected nodes are marked with lines and grouped into clusters of different colours. The more often keywords appear together in one publication, the higher the degree of their correlation. The formed clusters indicate the leading topics in research in the field of inclusive education.

## Results and discussion

Today inclusive education is an important component of the education system in Ukraine. It involves providing learning opportunities for all children, regardless of their characteristics, needs and capabilities. The main principles of inclusive education are acceptance, participation, accessibility and quality of education for all children. A number of key issues can usually be identified in the documents and literature studied in the course of the analysis. These include the state of the infrastructure for inclusive education, teacher training, curricula and methods of working with students with special needs, support for families and students in need of inclusive education, and the introduction of changes to education legislation.

Achievements in the field of inclusive education in Ukraine include an increase in the number of institutions providing inclusive education, improved learning environments for children with special needs, the development of inclusive curricula and work with teachers working with such students. However, inclusive education in Ukraine faces a number of challenges, including the ethical aspect, which is highlighted in this paper and has not been studied much. The prospects for inclusive education in Ukraine lie in the further development of programmes and teaching methods for all students, professional development of teachers in the field of inclusive education, and the harmonisation of legislation with international standards in this area. Thus, the analysis of literature and documents on inclusive education in Ukraine allows us to reveal the current state, achievements, challenges and prospects of this field, which will become the basis for further improvement of the education system for the benefit of all students.

Research shows that educational discrimination continues to exist in Ukraine, leading to inequality in access to quality education for different social groups (Chaika et al., 2024; Carrington & Kimber, 2020). This jeopardises the very existence of political and social equality in the country. Research findings suggest that additional measures are needed to address this problem and ensure equal opportunities for all Ukrainian citizens. In this context, Dubiaha & Shevchenko (2022) point to the need to develop (non-artificial) intercultural contacts in education. They model these encounters as follows: those based on coexistence and interpersonal similarities that insist on a common belonging to humanity; those animated by the creation of joint projects aimed at transcending the distinctive and defensive identity of each group; those based on the possibility of confronting existing points of view, in particular the minority point of view; and finally, those focused on storytelling, through which the telling and mutual exchange of experiences and suffering allowed for the development of empathy.

The Ministry of Health supports learning opportunities in inclusive education contexts through the ethical principles of equity for all persons (Order No. 585-2003-p, 2003). It is believed that without equal learning opportunities, students with special educational needs may experience lower social and academic achievement. They may not realise their full potential, which puts them at a disadvantage both in childhood and in adulthood. Shevchuk, Mokhonchuk, Lysodyed & Mamonova (2020) emphasise that additional elements are needed to create real learning opportunities for students with special educational needs, such as (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Additional elements for creating conditions for students with special needs. Source: Sasse (2020).

The introduction of new terminology such as 'additional support needs', which in some countries has replaced the term 'special educational needs', was primarily about destigmatisation (Ioannidi & Malafantis, 2023). Thus, all children and adolescents, including those in Ukraine, can request additional support at a certain stage of their education, and local authorities have a duty to provide this additional support when necessary. In summary, the Ukrainian education system is gradually shifting from 'special needs' to the concept of 'learning for all'.

Support for children with educational needs also requires effective collaboration with their parents. Strong communities of students, teachers and parents foster the consensus and commitment needed to realise the universal values of inclusion and equity (Wang, He & Xu, 2024; Hodkinson, 2020). A very acute challenge is the issue of ethics and equity in inclusive education. Equity in education is the subject of a significant number of international documents and projects. Semigina & Chystiakova (2020) define equity in education as “the right to an equitable and inclusive education system that provides high quality education and opportunities for personalised learning, personal and social development”. This highlights six dimensions of equity in education (Table 2).

**Table 2.**  
*Equity dimensions in education*

Dimensions	Examples
Access	Equity in education means ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to access high-quality education, regardless of their background, location, or socioeconomic status.
Resources	Equity in education involves providing each student with the resources they need to succeed, such as well-trained teachers, up-to-date instructional materials, and support services.
Support	Equity in education requires providing students with the support they need to overcome barriers to learning, such as language barriers, disabilities, or trauma.
Diversity and Inclusion	Equity in education means valuing diversity and promoting inclusion in the classroom, ensuring that all students feel welcome, respected, and represented.
Achievement	Equity in education involves closing achievement gaps between different student groups and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to excel academically.
Opportunities	Equity in education means providing all students with the same opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, advanced placement courses, and other enriching experiences.
Accountability	Equity in education requires holding schools, districts, and policymakers accountable for addressing inequities and ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.

Source: Authors' own development.

Depending on the project objectives, each of the above dimensions is linked to a specific perspective: systemic, meaning how the school understands and implements systemic norms, system regulation, how the school is organised and managed to achieve these dimensions, or individual, meaning that the school's actions are focused on student learning.

### Arguments for and against inclusive education from different ethical theories

Ethical theories define different approaches and analyses of educational practices. Utilitarian theory focuses on the outcomes or consequences of our actions, analysing the relationship between the moral value of an action and its consequences. From a utilitarian perspective, changes in education seem to be driven by utilitarian calculations. Utilitarians in education weigh the costs and benefits of individual education, such as care, protection and realistic expectations, against the overall peace of education and conclude that the weight of the good falls on a system of relative withdrawal that provides the appropriate environment with the educational capacity to protect a child with educational needs from the harsh conditions of school life.

Another argument of utilitarians who support the separation of children with special educational needs is the teacher's time in the regular classroom. Children with educational needs require more effort and longer time from the teacher, who may take a hostile stance to inclusion (Suri, 2020). In contrast to utilitarian theory, deontological theory focuses on the extent to which good and evil are inherent properties of a moral act in itself, regardless of how that act evolves (Shestakevych, Pasichnyk, & Kunanets, 2019). Deontologists believe that it is morally wrong to harm an innocent person even if this action leads to saving the lives of any other persons, i.e. to use a person as a means to an end, a conclusion that is not supported by utilitarians (Kozibroda, Kruhlyk, Zhuravlova & Chupakhina, 2020; Olena et al., 2022). Deontologists argue that by embracing inclusion, they are fulfilling their moral obligation to the national economy, the educational system, or persons with disabilities (Table 3).

**Table 3.**  
*Equity dimensions in education*

Advantages	Disadvantages
Encouraging inclusion in all areas of society allows every individual to feel valuable and important.	Some individuals may feel insecure or uncomfortable in situations where they interact with others with different needs or abilities.
Supporting inclusive culture enhances trust and cooperation among people from different social and cultural groups.	Implementing inclusion on a large scale may require significant financial, time, and organizational efforts for businesses and institutions.
Providing equal opportunities for all leads to the creation of a more just society.	It may not always be possible to achieve full inclusion in all areas of life as inclusive measures may encounter stereotypes and social limitations.

Source: Authors' own development.

Integrity ethics highlights the character of decision makers. The most important task from the perspective of virtue ethics is to consider character traits, virtuous qualities that lead a person to morally right actions. Analysing inclusive education from the perspective of virtue ethics, Horishna, Polishchuk, Slozanska, & Hlavatska (2020) believe that this is the most appropriate approach to building a general ethics of inclusive education. Patience, organisation, creativity, acceptance, intuition and calm resilience are considered essential virtues for teachers in inclusive education. These are complemented by courage, kindness, honesty, perseverance, compassion, integrity, humour, enthusiasm, optimism and wisdom.

Care ethics is another ethical theory that is being incorporated into inclusive education. Yıkımsı (2022) defines care as "a set of relational patterns that promote mutual recognition and achievement, growth, development, protection, enhancement, and social, cultural, and empowerment". According to Anderson (2020), a classroom based on an ethic of care should include the following characteristics (Table 4).

**Table 4.**  
*Characteristics of care ethics*

Condolences	Creating an environment where all students feel welcome and accepted.
Friendliness	Providing each student with what they need to learn effectively.
Presence	Mental and emotional accessibility of teachers to their students, self-assessment of design and correct assessment of students' strengths and weaknesses.
Interdependence between classmates	Recognition of the mutuality of responsibilities and connections between all class members.
Relationships	Starting with recognising the dignity of every student, including those with severe or profound disabilities, and acknowledging situations where a student without a disability may be placed in a group with a student with a disability, the latter being able to assist their non-disabled friend at certain points.
Authenticity	The teacher's willingness to acknowledge and accept responsibility for mistakes and openness to trying something new.

Source: Authors' own development.

## Barriers and ethical aspects of inclusive education

There are many studies that analyse the barriers to inclusive education. Hornby & Kauffman, (2024) identify the following categories of barriers: barriers that manifest themselves in the school context and in perceptions; resource-related barriers; barriers that manifest themselves in the response of the educational process; barriers related to gender, age and level of training (Anderson, 2020).

We assess that from an ethical perspective, principles such as the achievement of inclusion, equality and justice, cooperation, compassion, beneficence, dignity and trust between parties are at risk. The category of barriers related to resources includes situations where facilities and services in educational centres are not accessible to students with disabilities, some educational institutions do not have adequate resources and support for students with disabilities, information is not provided in different ways for students with functional diversity, and technology is not used to meet the needs of students.

According to Kovalyshyn, Vivcharenko & Gryshko (2020), inadequate working conditions for support teachers, including the lack of special rooms for interventions and therapy in secondary schools, as well as insufficient material support, such as lack of ramps, accessible furniture and toilets, or low financial status of families, make it difficult to access the necessary resources. These aspects create significant barriers and violate ethical principles such as equity, accessibility, well-being, presence, interdependence and cooperation among classmates.

The response of the Ukrainian educational system does not always meet appropriate standards due to the use of undifferentiated and low-productive teaching methodologies, low levels of student motivation to learn, and the lack of organisational or curricular strategies that promote interest in diversity. Insufficient cooperation of teachers working in inclusive education with colleagues in the school and other educational institutions calls into question the ethical principles of autonomy and independence (Sarancha et al., 2022).

The absence of learning opportunities for children with or without special educational needs points to ethical aspects related to their acceptance of difference or compassion for their contribution to the social fabric of an ethical society (Hrabovets et al., 2020; Pokharel et al., 2024). Mu (2021) notes the existing dilemma between the principle of equality that applies to all students in the classroom and the provision of individualised support for students with special needs, and questions the extent to which educators' support for students with special needs helps them learn something about their contribution to the social fabric of an ethical society, and whether colleagues without special needs learn anything about inclusion and acceptance.

Other ethical aspects of inclusive education are noted as creating hierarchical barriers, but the main problem here is the lack of educational resources, increased training efforts for multi-level learning activities, classroom management issues and the low quality of educational activities in inclusive settings for students with special educational needs (Pokharel et al., 2024).

Based on the proposed general equity analysis framework for the evaluation and self-evaluation of teachers working in inclusive education, Bulakh (2020) identifies that most of its sub-sections can be integrated and adapted in the Ukrainian education system. This selection includes equity analysis criteria such as the right to education and participation, consideration of the individual needs of students with special educational needs in inclusive education, gifted students, new students, and aspects related to gender, ethnicity, and interculturality, in line with international standards of inclusion.

## Conclusions

The study identifies several key ethical principles and challenges in implementing inclusive education in Ukraine. Among these, the most prominent are the principles of equality, non-discrimination, justice, and the creation of equitable learning opportunities. The research demonstrates that inclusive education is supported by positive values such as a sense of belonging, acceptance, meaningful student participation,

visible learning outcomes, and positive attitudes from key stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, and school management. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of collaboration, compassion, dignity, and mutual trust as vital for fostering an inclusive educational environment. Conversely, barriers to inclusion include a lack of professional capacity, inadequate material resources, and a limited understanding of inclusion principles by some teachers and stakeholders.

Ukraine has made considerable progress in establishing inclusive educational frameworks, evidenced by the development of inclusive institutions, professional development programs for teachers, and legislative initiatives. Resource rooms and professional development opportunities have been introduced to help address the specific needs of students with disabilities.

The study highlights several ongoing challenges, particularly the lack of public awareness about inclusive education, insufficient funding, and the uneven distribution of resources, particularly in rural areas. Teacher training and professional development are often inaccessible to educators in remote regions, leading to inconsistent application of inclusive practices across the country.

The future of inclusive education in Ukraine holds great potential. Further development depends on enhancing public understanding, securing financial support, and expanding teacher training programs to reach all regions. Moreover, the ethical dimensions of inclusion—such as fairness, justice, and equity—must be embedded into all aspects of the educational system to ensure the long-term success of inclusive practices.

In conclusion, the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the ethical principles, values, and barriers affecting inclusive education in Ukraine, offering a framework for future research and practice. Addressing these ethical challenges will be crucial for strengthening inclusive education and ensuring equal opportunities for all students.

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