



Features of professional training of future specialists in education for children with special needs

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■ **Abstract.** The study aimed to determine the specifics of professional training of future specialists in education for children with special needs. The methodology included student practice, questionnaires, teacher observation and SWOT analysis of forms of work with children with special needs. The study obtained data on the effectiveness of various forms of work with children with special needs in the practical training of students of pedagogical specialities. A systematic comparison of students' self-assessment of professional knowledge and skills with the assessments of mentor teachers was conducted, which was used to identify both objective progress and subjective differences in assessments. The data shows a significant improvement in the level of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, communication competencies and motivation of students. The SWOT analysis of the forms of work with children with special needs (individual and group lessons, use of multimedia technologies and pedagogical observations) provided a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for improvement and potential threats. Pedagogical observations were noted to be effective in analysing student behaviour yet can be subjective. The results confirm that practical training of students significantly increases their readiness for professional activity. The study determined that the introduction of interactive forms of education, strengthening of the interdisciplinary approach and improvement of the material and technical base will contribute to greater efficiency of education for children with special needs. The research findings can be utilised by higher education institutions to improve the training of future professionals working with children with special needs, as well as by educational establishments to implement effective teaching methods and support for such children

■ **Keywords:** educational systems; multidisciplinary teams; interpersonal interaction; innovative methods; inclusive approach

■ Introduction

The professional training of future professionals in education for children with special needs is an important area in the development of educational systems, as it provides adequate support and an inclusive environment for such children. The education of these specialists should include not only special pedagogical and psychological knowledge but also interpersonal skills and the ability to adapt the learning process to the individual needs of students. Given the diversity of types of special needs, professional training should consider

various aspects: from defectology and psychological and pedagogical correction to the use of innovative methods and technologies to develop children's social and communication skills. It is also necessary to develop teamwork skills in future specialists, enabling effective solutions to complex problems associated with the integration of such children into the educational process. However, the problem of insufficient attention to an inclusive approach in teacher training, as well as the lack of a single standard for training specialists in this

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area, requires further research. The impact of different forms of training on practical results in working with children with special needs, as well as the role of technological innovations in the training of such specialists, remain unresolved.

Many researchers addressed the issue of the specifics of professional training for future professionals working with children with special needs. S. Ahmed *et al.* (2021) investigated teacher professional development for disability inclusion in low- and middle-income countries in Asia and the Pacific. The authors created a map of evidence and gaps to identify how professional development can promote inclusive learning in these countries. F. Hellmich & M. Loeper (2019) investigated peer attitudes towards children with special needs. The researchers aimed to determine the role of these factors in shaping children's perceptions of and interactions with peers with learning disabilities. Studies demonstrated that peers' attitudes towards children with special needs may depend on their experience of interacting with them and the influence of parental attitudes. Positive contact with children with disabilities and support from parents can lead to greater acceptance and understanding among peers, which improves their social inclusion. F. Hellmich *et al.* (2019) investigated the role of teachers' attitudes towards self-efficacy beliefs in shaping their daily practice in inclusive classrooms. The study tested the "theory of planned behaviour" as it relates to actions and approaches to inclusive education by exploring how teachers' beliefs about their abilities influence inclusive teaching practices. H. Jeon *et al.* (2022) examined the professional and psychological aspects of teachers' work with children with special needs. In particular, the authors studied the level of professional burnout and psychological stress that affect teachers working with children with special needs. The factors that contribute to stress, including heavy workload, the complexity of working with children with special needs, and insufficient support from colleagues and the education system were investigated. B. Devenish *et al.* (2023) investigated the effectiveness of professional development for staff working with students with disabilities and its impact on the use of evidence-based pedagogical practices in classrooms. J. Fernández-Batane-ro *et al.* (2022) investigated whether primary school teachers are prepared to use technology in teaching children with disabilities. They examined the level of teacher training and identified gaps in the curriculum. K. Forsling & C. Tjernberg (2023) studied how primary school teachers adapt literary practices for students with different learning needs, using flexible teaching approaches.

O. Fushtei *et al.* (2020) studied the psychological and pedagogical conditions for the development of professional competence of future social workers using the global Internet and innovative technologies

such as virtual reality, augmented reality and online learning platforms that provide opportunities for training and interactive courses, promoting the development of professional skills in real-time. A. Gentile *et al.* (2023) investigated how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the resources of parents of children with special needs. Parents adapted to the new learning environment and the resources available to them. The above-mentioned authors have not yet investigated the long-term effects of technological support on the social integration of students with special needs, nor have they focused on comparing the effectiveness of different models of inclusive education. The studies have not covered the issue of financial and administrative barriers to access to quality education for children with disabilities. The study aimed to identify opportunities for improving the educational process and potential threats to their application by future professionals in working with children with special educational needs.

■ Materials and Methods

Three schools within the territory of the Fier Regional Administrative District were selected for the study, namely 4, 9-year schools in Gjirokastra, Fier and rural school in Lushnja. The study included 40 future professionals, including 31 women and 9 men, aged 31 to 35 years. At the initial stage of the study, an introductory training session was held to explain the specifics of working with children with special needs. Particular attention was devoted to an introduction to inclusive education methods, including the adaptation of teaching materials and the use of interactive technologies. Questionnaires were also developed to assess the student's initial level of professional knowledge and skills. The students completed a six-week internship at selected schools. Various education methods were used.

Individual lessons with children with special needs, including the development of communication and social skills. Group classes aimed at integrating children with special needs into the general environment. Use of multimedia technologies for learning, such as interactive presentations and adapted learning games. Pedagogical observations, during which students analysed the behaviour of children and their adaptation to the learning environment.

Before and after the internship, students filled out questionnaires to assess their professional level. The questionnaire was based on the following criteria: theoretical knowledge, which included comprehension of the basic concepts and principles of the profession, knowledge of methods and standards of work; practical skills, which included the ability to apply knowledge in professional situations, perform tasks related to the analysis and solution of practical problems; communication competencies, which included the effectiveness of interaction with colleagues, teachers,

clients or students, as well as the development of teamwork skills; level of motivation, which assessed the attitude to professional activity and readiness to work in a professional environment. The knowledge test was conducted on a 10-point scale, where 1 meant a very low level of knowledge and 10 meant a very high level. The assessment was based on specific criteria that was used to accurately determine the level of respondents' understanding of the material. This scale was used to obtain a detailed assessment of knowledge and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the test participants. A similar assessment of their professional knowledge and skills was carried out by the tutors. They recorded the students' progress using the same criteria, but their assessments were based on observations of the students' work during the practice, their interaction with children, and the overall effectiveness of the tasks. The study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards, including obtaining voluntary consent from participants and protecting their confidentiality and anonymity (The Declaration of Helsinki, 2013). This made it possible to obtain a more objective picture of changes in students' professional training. In particular, the theoretical basis for the study was provided by the research of such authors as H. Yuan (2023), M. Mi-thans (2023), F. Obiakor *et al.* (2024).

The SWOT analysis was used to assess the effectiveness of the forms of work with children with special needs used by students during the practice. Individual and group lessons, the use of multimedia technologies and pedagogical observations were analysed. For each form of work, the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for improving the educational process and potential threats to their use were identified. The data for the analysis were collected through student questionnaires, teacher-mentor observations and analysis of practical work.

■ Results

For a deeper understanding of the concept of children with special educational needs, it is necessary to consider their classification. This category includes children with developmental disabilities that affect their ability to learn, communicate or socialise. By the nature of their disabilities, they are divided into several groups: children with visual, hearing, speech, musculoskeletal, intellectual, emotional and volitional disorders, as well as children with complex disabilities. Each of these groups has its specifics, which are factored into the professional training of specialists (Oliynyk, 2022). Children with visual impairments have a reduced or absent visual analyser, which affects their perception of the world around them. They are worked with using special techniques such as tactile perception training and audiovisual technologies. Children with hearing impairments need methods aimed at developing auditory perception, sign language and

lip reading. Children with speech impairments, such as stuttering or delayed speech development, need the help of speech therapists. Teachers who work with them learn remedial teaching methods that help develop speech, form correct pronunciation and expand vocabulary. Children with intellectual disabilities, who may have mild, moderate or profound mental retardation, require special attention. Teaching such children is aimed at developing adaptive skills, household independence, and stimulating cognitive processes (Tarantino *et al.*, 2022). Children with musculoskeletal disorders, such as cerebral palsy, require a comprehensive approach that includes physical rehabilitation, special gymnastics, adaptive physical education and training with the help of special equipment. There are also children with emotional and volitional disorders, such as autism spectrum disorders or hyperactivity. To teach them, behavioural therapy methods, emotional intelligence and social skills are crucial.

In the process of training specialists, considerable emphasis was devoted to the development of their ability to individualise learning. Every child with special needs has unique capabilities and limitations, so a teacher must be able to adapt the learning process to the needs of a particular child. To do this, it is necessary to learn how to create individual educational programmes, following the developmental features, abilities and interests of the child. Another important aspect of training is parental engagement. Parents of children with special needs often face difficult challenges, and therefore professionals should support them, advise on the upbringing and education of their child, and help them solve social and psychological problems. The professional training of future specialists to work with children with special needs is a multi-level process that includes mastering theoretical knowledge, gaining practical experience, developing emotional and psychological stability and forming ethical consciousness. Thanks to an integrated approach to training, specialists acquire the necessary competencies for teaching, contributing to the development, education and socialisation of children with various forms of disabilities.

Teaching children with special needs is a crucial aspect of modern pedagogy, requiring a distinctive approach, adapted methods and forms of teaching. In the context of inclusive education, the importance of forms of work increases significantly, as they determine not only the effectiveness of learning but also the level of socialisation and integration of children with special needs into society (Oliynyk, 2022). In the study conducted in schools in the territory of the Fier Regional Administrative District, various forms of education were used to assess their effectiveness in the context of modern pedagogy. These included individual lessons, group work, the introduction of multimedia technologies and pedagogical observations. The individual

form of education is one of the most effective for children with developmental disabilities, as it considers their characteristics, learning pace and level of training. In practice in schools in the territory of the Fier Regional Administrative District in individual lessons were aimed at developing communication and social skills in children with various disabilities. Classes were held according to specially designed programmes adapted to the needs of each child. For instance, visual materials, graphic diagrams and sign language were used for children with hearing impairments. In the case of children with mental retardation, the emphasis was on gradual, step-by-step learning with frequent repetition. Children with autism required consideration, for whom students created structured environments that considered their high level of sensitivity to external stimuli. Individual lessons allowed not only for effective learning but also for the development of social skills. For instance, one of the tasks was to teach children how to say hello, thank you, and ask for help, i.e., the basics of social behaviour. This approach improved communication between the children and their teachers and reduced anxiety, which is common among children with special needs. However, the practice also revealed some challenges. The biggest problem for the students was the preparation of individual programmes for children with complex disabilities. In such cases, it was necessary to consider several aspects at the same time: cognitive abilities, the child's emotional state, physical capabilities and ability to perceive information.

Teamwork is also important for the integration of children with special needs into the mainstream. In schools in the territory of the Fier Regional Administrative District, group activities were aimed at developing cooperation skills, social interaction and tolerance among students. One of the key benefits of group classes is the creation of an environment in which children with special needs can communicate with their peers and learn in a shared environment. The student interns organised interactive games, creative activities and group projects involving both children with special needs and their classmates (Hyseni Duraku *et al.*, 2021). For instance, during one of the classes, children created a collage on the theme "My favourite city" to promote teamwork, stimulate creativity, and ensure the inclusion of each participant. Group classes reduced the level of isolation of children with special needs. They experienced themselves as part of a community and became more open and confident. Organising group classes proved to be a challenge for the students. One of the main problems was that children with different forms of disabilities required different approaches, and it was not always possible to address all these features in one lesson. For instance, in groups with children with autism, there were sometimes difficulties due to their low tolerance to noise or difficulties in interacting with other children.

Modern technologies open new opportunities in education for children with special needs. In South Albania, schools actively employed multimedia technologies to create an interactive learning environment. Students used interactive presentations, educational games, videos, and specialised programmes that were adapted to the needs of children. For instance, children with visual impairments, used programmes with enlarged fonts and contrasting colours. For children with speech delays, audio and video materials were used to help improve speech activity. Adapted educational games that combined learning with entertainment proved to be particularly effective. They assisted children in learning the material better, as well as contributed to the development of cognitive skills, attention and memory. One of the games aimed at developing maths skills gave children the opportunity to solve problems in the form of an adventure story, which made them interested and eager to complete the task. The use of multimedia technology also had its challenges. Some children, especially those with sensory impairments or hyperactivity, could not always concentrate on the screen or interact with the computer properly. Certain technical devices required additional adaptation for children with complex disabilities, which required time and effort on the part of the students.

Pedagogical observations were an integral part of the practice, as they enabled students to analyse children's behaviour, their adaptation to the learning environment and their interaction with other participants in the educational process. During the observations, students recorded how children respond to different teaching methods, what challenges they face in interacting with peers and teachers, and what factors contribute to their successful adaptation. At a special education school in Saranda, students observed how children with autism adapted to the new learning environment and identified which strategies were most effective in reducing their stress levels. Observations also helped assess the effectiveness of the implemented methods and forms of work. After the introduction of interactive games, students noted an improvement in children's attention and interest, which confirmed the effectiveness of this approach. However, pedagogical observations also revealed some difficulties. The biggest challenge was that some children showed variable behaviour depending on conditions and factors such as mood, stress or physical well-being. This complicated the analysis and required a longer time for observation. To better understand the impact of the internship on students' professional development, a questionnaire was conducted, the results of which are summarised in Table 1. This table shows changes in the levels of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, communication competencies and motivation of students as assessed by the interns themselves and their teachers.

Table 1. Assessment of students' professional development before and after the internship: self-assessment and teacher evaluation

Criteria	Evaluation of student testing		Evaluation of teachers	
	Before practice	After practice	Before practice	After practice
Theoretical knowledge	6.2	8.5	5.8	8.2
Practical skills	5.8	8.2	5.5	8.0
Communication competences	6.5	8.9	6.0	8.5
Motivation level	7.0	9.1	6.8	8.8

Source: compiled by the author

According to the table, the results of the student's self-assessments and the teachers' assessments show significant changes in their professional skills and knowledge after the internship. An overall improvement in all aspects of professional training is evident, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the practice. Students' theoretical knowledge before the internship was assessed at an average level (6.2 on a 10-point scale). At the end of the internship, students reported a much higher level of knowledge (8.5), indicating a significant improvement in their understanding of the basic concepts and principles of working with children with special needs. The teachers' scores were slightly lower, from 5.8 to 8.2, which may indicate that students were more optimistic about their knowledge than teachers. The increase in scores by both students and teachers confirms that theoretical knowledge has improved. Practical skills also showed a significant improvement. Students rated their practical skills at 5.8 before the course and 8.2 afterwards, indicating a significant improvement in their ability to apply knowledge in practice. Teachers rated this progress from 5.5 to 8.0, which also confirms the improvement in practical skills. The difference between the students' and teachers' scores, although slight, may reflect different levels of self-criticism: students tended to be more self-assessing, while teachers made more objective conclusions based on observations. In terms of communication competencies, students reported a significant improvement in their communication skills, with scores ranging from 6.5 to 8.9. This indicates

an increase in the effectiveness of interaction with students, colleagues and teachers, as well as the development of teamwork skills. Teachers rated the changes in students' communication skills from 6.0 to 8.5, which also confirms the improvement in this area, although the teachers' score was again slightly lower, which may indicate a more reserved assessment by teachers who have more grounds for objective evaluation. As for the level of motivation, students rated their attitude to the profession at 7.0 before the internship, and after it was completed, this indicator increased to 9.1, which indicates a significant increase in motivation and readiness to continue professional development. Teachers rated students' motivation from 6.8 to 8.8, which also confirms the increase in motivation, although with a slightly smaller increase compared to students' self-assessment.

A significant improvement was observed in all assessed aspects of students' professional training, including theoretical knowledge, practical skills, communication competencies and motivation. The teachers' assessments were slightly lower than the students' self-assessments, indicating that they were more objective in their assessment of progress. This may indicate that students rated themselves higher than they were, which is typical for self-assessment, especially in the context of such an intensive experience as practical work with children with special needs. For a more detailed analysis of the implemented forms, a SWOT analysis was conducted, the results of which are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. SWOT-analysis of forms of work with children with special needs during students' practice

Form of work	Advantages	Disadvantages	Possibilities	Threats
Individual lessons	Personalised approach to each child	High demands on training and time	Opportunity for deeper development of children's communication and social skills	This may cause an excessive workload for teachers and students
	Ability to focus on individual needs and problems of children	Students may experience difficulties in developing and implementing individual plans	Development of individual abilities of students	Possibility of lack of material and technical base for the implementation of personalised methods
Group classes	Supporting interaction and integration of children with special needs into the general group	Could be difficult to adapt the material to the level of all students	Creating conditions for the socialisation of children with disabilities	Possible conflicts and negative reactions from other students if the group is not properly integrated
	Promotes the development of social skills and teamwork	Could be difficult to manage a group if different learners have different needs and developmental levels	Opportunity to form friendly relationships between students with different abilities	Overloading students in case of difficult group situations

Table 2. Continued

Form of work	Advantages	Disadvantages	Possibilities	Threats
Multimedia technologies	Using modern technologies for interactive learning	Requires additional time to adapt materials and technologies for specific children	Stimulating children's interest through the latest technology and adapted games	Technical problems or unavailability of technological equipment in some schools
	Increases the level of student engagement in the learning process	Could be difficult to provide all students with the resources they need	Using a variety of multimedia resources to enhance learning	The need to constantly update technology and software to support inclusive learning
Pedagogical observations	Can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning process in real-time	Requires considerable time for careful observation and analysis	Improving the learning process based on student observations	Can cause overloading of students or teachers in case of large numbers of children or groups
	Helps students learn to analyse student behaviour and development	The results of observations may be subjective, which affects the objectivity of the assessment	Students have the opportunity to improve their teaching skills and develop the ability to work with children with different needs	There may be insufficient feedback due to limited time or a large number of observations

Source: compiled by the author

According to the results of the SWOT analysis, individual lessons and group lessons are the most effective. Individual lessons demonstrate the best results in developing children's communication and social skills, as each student receives a personalised approach that allows them to focus on their individual needs. These classes require substantial preparation and time, which can lead to an excessive workload for teachers and students, especially with many children. The advantages of this approach outweigh the disadvantages, and they can be extremely useful in achieving deeper development in children with special needs. Group classes, although challenging, in adapting the material to different levels of development, are very effective in integrating children with special needs into the mainstream education process. They create conditions for socialisation and the development of teamwork skills, which is an important aspect for children with disabilities. The main challenge is possible conflicts between students and difficulties in managing the group if students have different levels of training.

Multimedia technologies appear to be less effective, despite their high potential to stimulate children's interest and increase engagement in learning. The use of multimedia resources requires additional time to adapt materials and technologies to the specific needs of children and may be limited by technical problems such as lack of necessary equipment or inaccessibility of software. Pedagogical observations, while providing an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the learning process and improve students' teaching skills, have limitations. They require considerable time for careful observation and analysis and can be subjective, which affects the objectivity of the assessment. With many children or groups, observations can be overwhelming for students or teachers. Therefore, one-to-one and group sessions are most effective as they are best suited to the development of social skills and integration of children with special needs. For maximum

effectiveness, the potential difficulties associated with organising and managing these forms of work need to be addressed. Multimedia technology and pedagogical observation, while having potential, require more careful organisation and additional resources to be effective.

The use of individual and group classes significantly contributes to the training of future specialists in the field of inclusive education, forming their key pedagogical competencies. Individual classes allow students to learn how to adapt educational methods to the specific needs of children, which requires a deep understanding of the individual characteristics of students. This develops the ability to analyse behaviour, develop effective teaching strategies and use creative approaches to achieve educational goals. Such classes also contribute to the development of future teachers' emotional intelligence, as working with children with special educational needs requires high empathy and self-control. Group classes help future professionals master the skills of managing the learning process in a team, resolving conflicts and ensuring equal opportunities for all group members. Students learn how to adapt learning materials to multi-level groups, create an inclusive environment and effectively manage group dynamics. Students master practical skills for integrating children with special needs into the general educational environment. As a result of this experience, future teachers are prepared for the challenges of inclusive education and have a deeper understanding of the practical aspects of their future profession.

Based on the results of the analysis of students' practical activities in schools in the territory of the Fier Regional Administrative District, several recommendations for educational institutions were developed. They are aimed to improve the educational process, enhance the quality of practical training of future professionals and provide more effective support for children with special needs. One of the key recommendations is to expand the use of interactive technologies in the

training of future professionals. The results of the practice demonstrated that multimedia technologies help to engage children in the learning process, increase their interest and improve their understanding of the educational material. In this context, it is advisable to integrate more courses into educational programmes that focus on working with interactive platforms, adapted games and other multimedia resources. It is important to ensure that students have access to modern technological equipment during their internships. Educational institutions should develop special training for teachers and students to increase their competence in working with interactive tools. This will allow for more effective use of technology in working with children, based on their individual needs. Practical training is an integral part of developing the professional competence of future specialists. Experience has shown that students make the greatest progress in knowledge and skills when working directly with children with special needs. It is recommended to increase the number of hours allocated to internships and include them in the curriculum at an early stage. Educational institutions should enter into more cooperation agreements with specialised schools and rehabilitation centres. This would allow students to interact with different groups of children, study their needs and practice using different techniques. It is also necessary to provide systematic support for internships from experienced teachers who will help students analyse their work and improve their professional skills.

Effective education of children with special needs requires the involvement of specialists from different fields, including teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, social workers and doctors. It is recommended to develop an interdisciplinary approach in the process of training students, teaching them to work as part of such teams. Educational institutions can organise joint training, seminars and workshops with the participation of specialists from different disciplines. This will help students to develop teamwork skills, share experiences and better understand the relationship between the pedagogical, medical and social aspects of supporting children. Since teaching children with special needs requires a high level of training, it is recommended that individualised training programmes be implemented for students. These programmes may include additional courses aimed at in-depth study of specific aspects of the work, such as inclusive education methods, communication techniques with children with developmental disabilities, or adaptation of educational materials. It is also important to conduct regular monitoring of students' professional development, which will include an assessment of their theoretical knowledge, practical skills and motivation. This will help to identify weaknesses in training and adjust the learning process in time. The survey results showed that the level of student motivation increased significantly after the

internship. To maintain this interest, educational institutions should offer a variety of incentives, such as teaching competitions, presentations of successful practices, or the possibility of further study through international exchange programmes. One of the main threats identified during the practice is the insufficient material and technical base, which makes it difficult to use modern methods and technologies.

■ Discussion

Professional training of future professionals to teach children with special needs is one of the key aspects of inclusive education. This study identified several important trends and aspects that determine the effectiveness of such training. This section discusses the significance of the findings, their relationship to existing research, and the prospects for further research. The results of the study indicate the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in the training of future professionals. In particular, the integration of psychological, pedagogical and social components into the curriculum is critical to ensuring their ability to work effectively with children with special needs. This is confirmed by B. Zenelaga *et al.* (2024) and S. Romadhon *et al.* (2024), highlighting the need to create support systems for students with special needs at universities, which also requires proper training of teaching staff. The study emphasises the importance of the practical component in professional training. Practical classes aimed at developing empathy, understanding of individual characteristics of students, as well as the ability to communicate with parents of children with special needs, contribute to the formation of a stable professional position of future teachers. A study by A. Paloniemi *et al.* (2021) confirmed that the development of positive attitudes, supported by real-life experience, is a crucial factor in increasing teachers' confidence in implementing inclusive practices. Practical training also allows students to experience the real-life challenges of an inclusive environment and develop skills to overcome them effectively.

The study findings confirmed the conclusions of international scholars who emphasise the importance of developing specific competencies in future teachers for successful work with children with special needs. S. Hassani *et al.* (2020) emphasised that the effectiveness of school interventions aimed at the integration and active participation of students with special needs directly depends on the level of professional training of teachers. Highly qualified professionals should be proficient in modern methods of inclusive education, including adaptive technologies and the ability to consider the individual needs of students, as well as provide emotional support, which is critical for the development of children with special educational needs. N. Cooc (2019) and Z. Hyseni Duraku *et al.* (2021) highlighted the practical obstacles faced by educators in the implementation of inclusive education. One of the main

problems is the lack of proper professional training for teachers, which often leads to uncertainty in working with students with special needs. This is especially true for teachers who do not have sufficient experience or knowledge of inclusive education. A lack of material and technical resources, such as specialised teaching materials or adaptive devices, is often observed, which are necessary for effective work with such children. Another important aspect is the lack of adequate support at the level of schools and the education system, which makes it difficult to create an inclusive environment. The study confirms that these challenges can be overcome through systematic professional training of future professionals. This should include not only basic training during education but also regular in-service training for teachers throughout their professional careers. Such in-service training should include the development of specialised training and the introduction of a mentoring system that allows young teachers to gain practical knowledge and support from experienced colleagues. An important component is the development and implementation of programmes to adapt curricula and resources for children with special needs, which will ensure more effective integration of such students into the general educational process.

Despite a significant overlap with previous studies, some aspects of the research show discrepancies with international findings, which reveals new perspectives for further analysis. The study highlighted the pedagogical competencies of future professionals and their ability to create an inclusive educational environment. The study considered teacher training as a key basis for ensuring a quality educational process, including the introduction of adapted teaching methods, psychological support and an individual approach to students. This approach is relevant for ensuring equal access to education for all children, including those with special needs. However, it also points to a certain limitation of the study's focus, as it did not cover aspects of children's personal development, including life skills, which are an important component of educational programmes. Such a discrepancy between the focus of research and works such as N. Kotilainen & M. Takala (2024) opened new perspectives for further research that would allow for a deeper exploration of the role of teacher training in the development of life skills in children with special needs. Addressing this aspect will be an important step in ensuring a comprehensive approach to inclusive education, which aims not only at learning but also at the full socialisation and self-realisation of children, which in turn will contribute to their successful integration into society.

The specifics of professional training for future professionals involved in teaching children with special needs is a significant topic that requires special attention in the context of inclusive education. Such training should be holistic and integrated and account for

a wide range of aspects, including psychological, pedagogical, social, cultural and technological factors. One of the important areas is to study the impact of cultural and social factors on the effectiveness of professional training. As noted by J. Kauffman *et al.* (2022), the future of inclusive education depends on the adaptation of teaching methods to the specific contexts of different countries and cultures. This calls for more intercultural research to better determine how different social and cultural contexts can affect the development and learning of children with special needs. Cultural competence is becoming an important aspect for educators, as it can be used to teach children from different ethnic, linguistic and social groups, ensuring access to quality education. An important aspect is the introduction of digital technologies in the educational process of teacher training. M. Oliynyk (2022) emphasised the importance of using innovative technologies to improve professional training, allowing future professionals to master modern methods of working with children with special needs. Digital tools and platforms open new opportunities for creating individual learning paths, distance learning, and interactive methods that facilitate interaction with children with different needs. Intercultural cooperation is also an integral part of professional training, which can be used to employ the experience of other countries. E. Grigorenko *et al.* (2020) showed that international exchange of experience plays an important role in developing effective strategies to support children with special needs. International cooperation programmes open opportunities to learn from successful practices and adapt them to national education systems. The professional training of future professionals in education for children with special needs should be multifaceted and innovation oriented. It should include a deep understanding of social, cultural and technological aspects, as well as support for intercultural exchange of experience. Such an integrated approach will help to prepare professionals who can effectively contribute to diverse cultural and social environments and use modern technologies to develop inclusive education.

■ Conclusions

The study determined that a variety of forms of training should be provided during student internships to help develop key professional skills and competencies necessary for working in inclusive education. The practice enables future specialists to explore different methods of interaction with children, including group and individual activities, the use of innovative pedagogical technologies, as well as the development of communication and organisational skills. In addition, the internship develops the ability to adapt teaching materials to the needs of children with special educational needs, which is an important aspect of inclusive pedagogy.

It is important to emphasise that these forms of teaching have a direct impact on students' professional

development. For instance, planning lessons that take into account the different levels of children's needs develop students' skills in differentiation and individualisation of learning. When interacting with children, students gain practical experience in building positive relationships, developing empathy and the ability to resolve conflict situations. Considerable attention should be devoted to reflective methods of practice that allow students to analyse personal actions, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adjust their professional activities. This approach provides not only a deeper understanding of working with children but also the formation of a holistic professional identity for the future specialist. The study developed recommendations for Albanian educational institutions aimed at improving the training of students in the field of working with children with special needs. It is recommended to introduce interactive teaching methods, expand the practical training of students in specialised schools, and create interdisciplinary teams to support children with special needs. This will allow for more effective development of the professional competencies of future teachers and ensure better integration of children into educational activities. At the same time, the study revealed certain limitations. One of the main limitations was that the assessment of the effectiveness of the practice was based on students' self-assessments, which can be subjective. The teachers' assessments were more objective, but

they could also be limited by certain external factors, such as the amount of teaching time or the number of students. Limitations in the use of multimedia technologies and the material and technical base of educational institutions may affect the effectiveness of teaching.

Further research should address the impact of different teaching methods on the long-term developmental outcomes of children with special needs, as well as the introduction of new technologies in inclusive education. It is also important to conduct research aimed at assessing the impact of interdisciplinary teams on the quality of the educational process and support for children with special needs, as well as improving cooperation between teachers and other professionals. The results of the study emphasised the importance of developing effective methods of working with children with special needs that meet the requirements of inclusive education and confirm the need for continuous improvement of the pedagogical training of future professionals. The recommendations developed in this study can become the basis for further changes in educational institutions working with children with special needs.

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■ Conflict of Interest

None.

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Особливості професійної підготовки майбутніх фахівців з освіти дітей з особливими потребами

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■ **Анотація.** Метою дослідження було визначення специфіки професійної підготовки майбутніх фахівців до роботи з дітьми з особливими потребами. Методологія дослідження включала практику студентів, анкетування, педагогічне спостереження та SWOT-аналіз форм роботи з дітьми з особливими потребами. У результаті дослідження отримано дані щодо ефективності різних форм роботи з дітьми з особливими потребами у практичній підготовці студентів педагогічних спеціальностей. Проведено систематичне порівняння самооцінки студентами професійних знань та вмінь з оцінками викладачів-менторів, що дозволило виявити як об'єктивний прогрес, так і суб'єктивні розбіжності в оцінках. Отримані дані свідчать про значне покращення рівня теоретичних знань, практичних навичок, комунікативних компетенцій та мотивації студентів. SWOT-аналіз форм роботи з дітьми з особливими потребами (індивідуальні та групові заняття, використання мультимедійних технологій та педагогічні спостереження) дав чітке уявлення про їх сильні та слабкі сторони, можливості для вдосконалення та потенційні загрози. Педагогічні спостереження виявилися ефективними в аналізі поведінки студентів, але можуть бути суб'єктивними. Результати підтверджують, що практична підготовка студентів значно підвищує їхню готовність до професійної діяльності. У ході дослідження визначено, що впровадження інтерактивних форм навчання, посилення міждисциплінарного підходу та покращення матеріально-технічної бази сприятиме підвищенню ефективності освіти для дітей з особливими потребами. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані закладами вищої освіти для вдосконалення підготовки майбутніх педагогів, які працюватимуть з дітьми з особливими потребами, а також освітніми установами для впровадження ефективних форм навчання та підтримки таких дітей

■ **Ключові слова:** освітні системи; мультидисциплінарні команди; міжособистісна взаємодія; інноваційні методи; інклюзивний підхід