

Ensuring accessibility of vocational (vocational and technical) education for persons with special educational needs: regulatory discourse

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Annotation. The beginning of the 21st century is characterized by the intensification of integration processes, which are implemented under the influence of trends in the development of international economic relations, deepening international cooperation and internationalization. Today, the world community pays significant attention to the development of inclusiveness, which is based on the use of new tools to ensure equal opportunities and rights for all citizens without exception. The effective application of the concept of inclusive growth involves achieving a high level of employment, investing in education, combating poverty effectively, and modernising labour markets, among other key objectives. The European vector of Ukraine's development requires the development of effective mechanisms for ensuring opportunities for obtaining vocational (vocational and technical) education for persons with special educational needs, which is considered a key factor in promoting political, economic, and social stability within society. The purpose of our article is defined as follows: to analyse the possibilities of ensuring the accessibility of vocational (vocational and technical) education for people with special needs through the prism of regulatory documents.

Keywords: regulatory documents, vocational (vocational and technical) education, students with special educational needs, inclusion, training of teachers to work with students with special educational needs, reform of vocational (vocational and technical) education, institution of vocational (vocational and technical) education.

Забезпечення доступності професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти для осіб з особливими потребами: нормативний дискурс

Анотація. Початок XXI століття характеризується інтенсифікацією інтеграційних процесів, що реалізуються під впливом тенденцій розвитку міжнародних економічних відносин, поглиблення міжнародної співпраці та інтернаціоналізації. Сьогодні світове співтовариство приділяє значну увагу розвитку інклюзивності, в основу якої покладено

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використання нових інструментів для забезпечення рівних можливостей та прав усіх без винятку громадян. Ефективне застосування концепції інклюзивного зростання передбачає досягнення високого рівня зайнятості, інвестування в освіту, ефективну боротьбу з бідністю, модернізацію ринків праці тощо. Європейський вектор розвитку України вимагає розробки дієвих механізмів забезпечення можливостей для здобуття професійної освіти особами з особливими освітніми потребами, що розглядається як один із головних чинників розвитку політичної, економічної, соціальної стабільності суспільства. Метою статті визначено наступне: проаналізувати особливості забезпечення доступності професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти для осіб з особливими потребами крізь призми нормативних документів. Дослідженню теоретичних основ та особливостей практики підготовки фахівців у системі професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти присвячені наукові публікації вітчизняних та зарубіжних дослідників, які студіюють проблеми: інтеграції знань, умінь і навичок; методології професійної педагогіки; інклюзивної освіти та професійного навчання; теоретичних основ професійної освіти; управління розвитком професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти; організації практико орієнтованого навчання; застосування традиційних та інноваційних підходів, форм, методів і технологій навчання. Виявлено, що проблеми організації навчання учнів з особливими освітніми потребами в умовах інклюзивного академічного середовища знайшли своє відображення у нормативно-правових документах, державних програмах та стандартах, що покладені в основу функціонування системи професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти. Забезпечення інклюзивності навчання передбачає використання додаткових ресурсів фінансового, технічного, матеріального характеру; готовність педагогів та допоміжного персоналу до роботи з учнями, що мають особливі освітні потреби, основне завдання яких полягає у наданні можливості для реалізації талантів та задоволення потреб учнів з особливими освітніми потребами, всебічного розвитку особистості.

Ключові слова: нормативні документи, професійна (професійно-технічна) освіта, учні з особливими освітніми потребами, інклюзія, підготовка викладачів до роботи з учнями з особливими освітніми потребами, реформування професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти, заклад професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти.

Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century is characterized by the intensification of integration processes, which are implemented under the influence of trends in the development of international economic relations, deepening international cooperation and internationalization. Today, the world community pays significant attention to the development of inclusiveness, which is based on the use of new tools to ensure equal opportunities and rights for all citizens without exception. Effective application of the concept of inclusive growth involves achieving a high level of employment, investing in education, effective fight against poverty, modernization of labour markets, etc. The European vector of development of Ukraine requires the development of effective mechanisms for ensuring opportunities for obtaining vocational (vocational and technical) education for persons with special educational needs, which is considered one of the main factors in the development of political, economic, and social stability of society.

The problem of obtaining education in the system of vocational (vocational and technical) education by persons with special educational needs has important social and economic significance, reflected in documents of the international community, including the World social protection report 2014/15. Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice) [27], ILO Implementation Plan 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [28], World employment and social outlook. Trends 2021 [29], Investing in skills for inclusive trade [26].

Relevant developments in providing opportunities and organizing training for people with special educational needs are reflected in the regulatory framework of the educational sector of Ukraine, in particular in the Laws of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education” [7], as well as in the draft of the new Law of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education” (2020), “On Education” [8], “On Professional Pre-Higher Education” [6]; in the Concept for the Development of Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education” [11], the Concept for the Implementation of State Policy in the Field of Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education “Modern Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education for the Period Until 2027” [22], etc.

The analysis of recent research and publications. Today, work continues in Ukraine on the development of state standards for vocational (vocational and technical) education, which are designed to modernize the system of vocational (vocational and technical) education, which is based on a human-centric and competency-based paradigm. Actually, state standards determine the amount of knowledge, skills and abilities, competencies sufficient to begin professional activity and serve as the basis for continuous professional development and successful implementation in the labour market. There are scientific publications by domestic and foreign researchers which highlight the problems of: integration of knowledge, skills and abilities [14]; methodology of vocational pedagogy [25]; inclusive education and vocational training [10]; theoretical foundations of vocational education [5]; management of the development of vocational (vocational and technical) education [4]; organization of practice-oriented training [12]; application of traditional and innovative approaches, forms, methods and technologies of training [9]. However, along with the interest of scientists in the development of vocational (vocational and technical) education, training of specialists, and the specifics of organizing an inclusive academic environment, the problem requires additional study.

The formulation of article purpose. The purpose of our article is defined as follows: to analyse the possibilities of ensuring the accessibility of vocational (vocational and technical) education for people with special needs through the prism of regulatory documents.

Results

The actualization of the problem of providing educational opportunities for people with special educational needs is one of the trends in the international educational space at the beginning of the 21st century. In the countries of the European Union, the development of inclusive education policy and its provision is considered an important factor in the democratization of society, as it provides equal opportunities for education to every citizen, as well as meeting the social needs of the individual. There is an increase in attention to the problem of ensuring social equality and vulnerable groups of the population. All this is due to the fact that earlier, for several decades, many countries of the world adhered to the policy of neoliberalism, which over time created a gap between the rich and the poor. An analysis of world experience indicates a trend in the development of inclusion and an understanding of its role for the national economy and ensuring the economic security of the state. Particular progress in this direction is demonstrated by countries such as Canada, Norway, Sweden, the USA, etc.

According to the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017), education is considered the main driving force of the development of modern society and each person in particular. We are talking about its determining role in the intellectual, physical, spiritual, and cultural development of the individual, which enables his full functioning in society: “The goal of education is the comprehensive development of a person as an individual and the highest value of society, his talents, intellectual, creative, and physical abilities, the formation of values and competencies necessary for successful self-realization, the upbringing of responsible citizens who are capable of conscious social choice and directing their activities for the benefit of other

people and society, the enrichment on this basis of the intellectual, economic, creative, and cultural potential of the Ukrainian people, and the improvement of the educational level of citizens in order to ensure the sustainable development of Ukraine and its European choice” [8].

In the context of the study, we consider it necessary to analyse its conceptual and categorical apparatus, in particular, clarifying the essence of such concepts as “vocational and technical education”, “vocational training”, “inclusive education”, etc.

First of all, let us turn to the regulatory framework that regulates the development and functioning of the education system of Ukraine, in particular its component – vocational (vocational and technical) education. Thus, the Law of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education” [7] states that this system includes various educational institutions in Ukraine, in particular “vocational and technical school of the relevant profile; vocational school of social rehabilitation; higher vocational school; vocational lyceum; vocational lyceum of the relevant profile; vocational and art school; art vocational and technical school; higher art vocational and technical school; school-agricultural company; higher school-agricultural company; school-factory; centre of vocational (vocational and technical) education; centre of vocational education; training and production centre; centre for training and retraining of workers; training centre; other types of educational institutions that provide vocational (vocational and technical) education or provide vocational (vocational and technical) training” [7]. According to statistical data, as of January 1, 2020, the system of vocational (vocational and technical) education in Ukraine included 723 institutions of various types [17, p. 80].

Today, in the context of the development of a draft of the new Law “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education”, discussions are ongoing regarding the inappropriateness of such a variety of vocational (vocational and technical) education institutions. However, we consider it logical to analyse the vocational (vocational and technical) education system, which implements specialist training programs in accordance with the current regulatory framework. Thus, these institutions offer educational and professional programs, the successful accomplishment of which is aimed at mastering a working profession, specialty, as well as the corresponding qualification. This thesis is confirmed by the Law of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education” [7] as amended, which defines Vocational (Vocational and Technical Education) as a component of the education system of Ukraine. “Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education is a set of pedagogical and organizational and managerial measures aimed at ensuring that citizens acquire knowledge, skills and abilities in their chosen field of professional activity, develop competence and professionalism, and cultivate general and professional culture. Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education is obtained in institutions of vocational (vocational and technical) education” [7].

In accordance with current legislation, the system of vocational (vocational and technical education) provides opportunities for training in various forms, including full-time, part-time, and distance learning. Programs for training qualified workers are offered within the framework of evening (shift) training, as well as with or without separation from production. In accordance with Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education” [7], as amended, the opportunity for training in accordance with an individual curriculum is provided.

In September 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine proposed for public discussion a draft of the new Law of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education”. On October 12, 2020, draft 4207 dated 10/12/2020 was registered in the Verkhovna Rada, but as of December 2024, it has not yet been adopted. The draft refers to the use of such a form of education as dual, which is understood as a format of obtaining education that involves combining the training of individuals in vocational (vocational and technical) education institutions (in other educational entities), full-time, with practical training at

workplaces at enterprises, institutions and organizations to acquire a certain qualification based on a contract.

In the study, we use the terms “vocational training” and “vocational education”. As the realities of today show, at the beginning of the 21st century, due to the rapid progress of production and technologies, the problem of human capital development, intensification of its migration and globalization of the labour market is becoming more urgent, which determines the need for training highly qualified specialists. Globalization processes put forward requirements for specialists to constantly update knowledge, form and develop skills and abilities continuously, which form the basis for the development of their “professionalism, mobility, communication, independence, responsibility, mastery of innovative production technologies, readiness for continuous professional training, etc.” [20, p. 6]. This problem is relevant today, since according to the Law of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education” [7], “vocational (vocational and technical) training involves the formation and development of a person’s professional competencies necessary for professional activity in a certain profession in a relevant industry, ensuring their competitiveness in the labour market and mobility, and the prospects for their career growth throughout life” [7].

Analysing the world experience of vocational training, L. Lavrynenko identifies the following features: “continuity of training; approximation of theory and practice; control and coordination of the development of educational programs; introduction of a competency-based approach to the process of training workers, cooperation of heads of organizations, institutions and establishments participating in the training of workers; maintaining the optimal ratio between the training of workers and specialists and managers” [14, p. 328– 329].

Scientists interpret training as “a type of organized (formal and non-formal) training to achieve learning goals defined in research, educational or training program, leading to the acquisition or improvement of qualifications” [23, p. 134]. Regarding vocational training, the results of the analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature indicate that researchers interpret it as a system of organizational and pedagogical measures that ensure the professional orientation of knowledge, skills, abilities and professional readiness of an individual for such activities.

We agree with the definition of the term “vocational training” proposed by S. Goncharenko [3]. According to the author, vocational training should be understood as an in-depth familiarization of a specialist with the scientific foundations and technology of a certain type of work, the formation and development of special skills and abilities, professional values and attitudes that are key to the chosen profession [3]. We believe that in addition to professional knowledge, skills and abilities, professional values and attitudes, today special attention is also paid to general competencies that are formed in the context of vocational training of a modern specialist. In particular, employers attach great importance to such competencies as independence, critical thinking, creativity, decision-making ability, communicative competence and the ability to learn on a continuous basis.

The results of the analysis of scientific and pedagogical literature on the research problem indicate that scientists study the professional training of qualified specialists in the system of vocational (vocational and technical) education and consider it as a system that includes interconnected components. Scientific researches are devoted to highlighting the problem of standardization of vocational training of specialists and the application of a competency-based approach to its implementation. The mastery of a certain amount of knowledge, the formation and development of relevant skills and abilities, the development of the ability to communicate, as well as responsibility and autonomy are declared in the National Qualifications Framework, which was amended under the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 519 of June 25, 2020 [18].

Analysing the experience of the European Union countries in ensuring the accessibility of vocational education and training, researchers identify the prerequisites necessary for its

development. These include attractiveness and inclusiveness, which involves attracting highly qualified teaching staff to the vocational education system, applying innovative teaching methods, developing the material and technical infrastructure of the vocational education and training institution, ensuring that educational offers meet the needs of the labour market, and taking into account the need for continuous professional development of specialists [2]. We are convinced that the problem of ensuring the quality of training of specialists in the vocational (vocational and technical) education system is also of great importance, since it is considered by students as an alternative that allows for the simultaneous accomplishment of general secondary school education and mastering a specialty.

The list of key concepts of the study includes “inclusive education”. We consider it necessary to dwell on its interpretation. According to the Law of Ukraine “On Education” [8], “inclusive education is a system of educational services guaranteed by the state, based on the principles of non-discrimination, taking into account human diversity, effective involvement and inclusion in the educational process of all its participants” [8]. The same Law refers to ensuring conditions for the education of persons with special educational needs in accordance with an individual development program and taking into account their individual needs and capabilities [8]. According to the Law of Ukraine “On Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education”, “a person with special educational needs who has completed a course of vocational training at a vocational (vocational and technical) education institution of the first certification level and has successfully passed the qualification certification is assigned the educational and qualification level “skilled worker” in the acquired profession of the corresponding category and is issued a certificate of assignment of working qualification” [7].

We consider it necessary to briefly describe the system of vocational (vocational and technical) education, within which the training of qualified workers is implemented in Ukraine, in the context of regulatory and organizational discourse.

The results of the analysis of the regulatory framework for the development and functioning of the vocational (vocational and technical) education system indicate that today the reform is underway, which is confirmed by the adoption and approval of a number of regulatory documents that determine the directions of reform. In particular, in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 12.06. 2019 No. 419-r, the Concept for the Implementation of State Policy in the Field of Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education “Modern Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education for the Period Until 2027” was approved [22]. The Concept states that the implementation of the reform is aimed at “decentralization of management and financing in the field of vocational (vocational and technical) education”, which includes, in particular, “creating conditions for a person to obtain vocational qualifications throughout his life, taking into account inclusive learning” [22].

Among the ways and means of solving the problem of “the mismatch between the training of qualified personnel and the needs of the individual, the national economy and society” is also highlighted: “optimization of the network of vocational (vocational and technical) education institutions by creating centres of vocational excellence taking into account inclusive learning” [22]. It is expected that the implementation of the proposed Concept will contribute to “professional self-realization of the individual and the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning taking into account gender equality and inclusive learning; increasing the attractiveness of vocational (vocational and technical) education, increasing its competitiveness and quality following international standards; increasing the social status of pedagogical workers of vocational (vocational and technical) education institutions; strengthening cooperation of vocational (vocational and technical) education institutions with employers and business partners; meeting the needs of the labour market, society and the state of qualified personnel; sustainable development of the national economy and society” [22].

Such vectors of reform are determined on the basis of the achievements of theorists in the field of vocational (vocational and technical) education, analysis of the experience of

practitioners, requirements of employers and the labour market, interests of students and requests of society in general. We agree with the statement of V. Radkevych, who emphasizes that today, for graduates of institutions of the vocational (vocational and technical) education system, not only vocational competencies, but also soft skills are important. After all, today the rapid development of technologies is displacing human labour and requires employees to master the skills and abilities necessary for time management, critical thinking and decision-making, management of complex systems, and implementation of innovations, which necessitates the formation of readiness for creativity, adaptation, flexibility, self-organization, entrepreneurship and initiative [21]. This thesis is supported by L. Bazyl, who emphasizes that the “National Vision of Ukraine until 2030 provides for the use of the creative potential of the individual as a “key driver”, encouraging the entrepreneurial initiative of each citizen, creating a “comfortable business climate” and ensuring freedom to implement business ideas. According to information and analytical data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, at the end of 2019, 81.2% of small businesses and 14.3% of medium-sized businesses were successfully operating in our country” [1, p. 45].

Special attention in the scientific and pedagogical literature is devoted to the coverage of the problems of vocational (vocational and technical) education is given to the training of pedagogical workers and masters of industrial training, whose high qualification is considered as one of the main factors in ensuring the quality of education. Thus, V. Kruchek emphasizes that today “the master is increasingly becoming the organizer of vocational and practical training of students, the main task of which is to promote the development of cognitive activity and independence of students. The professional competence of masters of industrial training covers the necessary level of their professional and pedagogical preparedness, which creates opportunities for the effective implementation of labour functions, taking into account modern educational technologies and trends in the development of the production sphere” [13, p. 72]. Confirmation of this opinion is found in the work of S. Maslich, who emphasizes: “today, a master of industrial training cannot stop in his professional development, because production technologies, service methods are constantly changing, and the future qualified worker must be prepared for these changes” [15, p. 304]. The author emphasizes that the modern academic environment of vocational (vocational and technical) education is characterized by a tendency to introduce changes both in the content of training and in the forms of organizing the educational process, and in the complex application of traditional and innovative teaching methods. Accordingly, the functions of teachers are diversifying, who not only perform the duties of a teacher, but also a mentor, facilitator, which undoubtedly serves as the basis for continuous professional development of teachers.

Another document that deserves research attention is the Strategy for the Development of Vocational (Vocational and Technical) Education, approved in 2020 by the Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for the period until 2023. “It provides for four main areas of development of the industry: building an effective management and financing system; improving the content and quality of vocational education; developing public-private partnerships; popularizing the field” [16]. It is worth noting that the problem of bringing the vocational (vocational and technical) education system into line with the needs of the labour market and the interests of personality and society has been reflected in scientific publications by domestic and foreign researchers. Thus, L. Gren studies the mechanisms of state management of vocational education, distinguishing between regulatory and legal, financial and economic, personnel and motivational, and organizational, emphasizing the need for their improvement. The author is convinced that “the mechanism of public administration is a structured unity of subjects of public administration and their influence on objects of public administration in order to implement the functions of the state and achieve the goals of its functioning”, and the defined “normative and legal, financial and economic, personnel and motivational and organizational mechanisms of public administration of vocational and

technical education in complex application contribute to the effective development and functioning of this important component of the national education system” [4, p. 43].

The importance of the problem of ensuring the quality of vocational (vocational and technical) education and establishing its effective functioning is evidenced by the Decree of the President of Ukraine “On priority measures for the development of vocational (vocational and technical) education”, signed on March 30, 2021 No. 130/2021. It concerns the development and approval of the state target program “for the development of vocational (vocational and technical) education for the period until 2027, aimed at modernizing the system of vocational (vocational and technical) education” [24].

Conclusions

From what has been said, the following conclusion can be drawn: the problem of organizing the education of students with special educational needs in the conditions of an inclusive academic environment of a vocational (vocational and technical) education institution is of scientific interest to modern researchers. Scientific works highlight the issues of integration of knowledge, skills and abilities; methodology of vocational pedagogy; inclusive education and vocational training; theoretical foundations of vocational education; management of the development of vocational (vocational and technical) education; organization of practice-oriented training; application of traditional and innovative approaches, forms, methods and technologies of education. Documents of international organizations substantiate the relevance, demand and expediency of the development of vocational (vocational and technical) education and ensuring its accessibility for persons with special educational needs from an economic and social perspective. In Ukraine, the development of regulatory documents, state programs and standards, and the reform of vocational (vocational and technical) education aimed at ensuring its full functioning still continues. It has been proven that ensuring inclusive education involves the use of additional financial, technical, and material resources; the readiness of teachers and support staff to work with students with special educational needs, the main task of which is to provide opportunities for the realization of talents and meeting the needs of students with special educational needs, and comprehensive development of the personality in the conditions of the vocational (vocational and technical) education system.

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