

WHAT COMPETENCIES SHOULD A MODERN SPECIAL EDUCATOR POSSESS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20483979>

Abstract:

This article examines the professional competencies required of a modern special educator, their significance within the inclusive education system, and their impact on the effectiveness of pedagogical practice. The study analyzes the content and importance of communicative, psychological, corrective-pedagogical, innovative, and digital competencies essential for professional activities in special education. Furthermore, the importance of an individualized approach, empathy, stress resilience, and multidisciplinary collaboration in working with children with special educational needs is scientifically substantiated. The findings indicate that the successful implementation of inclusive education largely depends on the professional competence, innovative thinking, and continuous self-development of special educators.

Keywords:

special educator, professional competence, inclusive education, corrective pedagogy, communicative competence, innovative technologies, pedagogical mastery, special educational needs, professional development, assistive technologies.

Introduction

In the era of globalization and digital transformation, the demands placed on educational systems are undergoing profound changes. In particular, the rapid development of inclusive education has generated new professional requirements for special educators. Today, a special educator is expected to function not only as a teacher but also as a psychologist, motivator, corrective pedagogue, communicator, and innovator. Consequently, the question of what competencies a modern special educator should possess has become one of the most relevant topics in pedagogy and special education.

The growing number of children with special educational needs worldwide has intensified the necessity of improving inclusive education systems. According to UNESCO, millions of children currently require accessible, high-quality, and adapted educational services. Therefore, developed countries place significant emphasis on the professional preparation of special educators.

The primary mission of a modern special educator is to identify the potential of a child with special educational needs, design an individualized developmental trajectory, and facilitate successful social integration. Accomplishing these tasks requires a high level of professional competence, broad pedagogical knowledge, and mastery of contemporary educational methodologies.

Lev Vygotsky emphasized the decisive role of pedagogical environments and social interaction in child development. According to his theoretical perspective, appropriately organized educational support can significantly enhance a child's developmental potential.



Consequently, the competence of a special educator directly influences the future development and educational success of learners.

Similarly, Maria Montessori advocated the necessity of considering each child's individual developmental pace and unique needs. Contemporary inclusive education is fundamentally based on the principle of individualized instruction. This approach requires special educators to possess the competence to select appropriate methods and strategies tailored to each learner's characteristics and needs.

Today, theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for professional success. Modern educational environments are increasingly influenced by rapidly evolving technologies, digital platforms, and artificial intelligence tools. In particular, assistive technologies create valuable opportunities for working with children who have hearing impairments, visual impairments, speech disorders, or developmental disabilities. Therefore, digital competence has become an essential component of a special educator's professional profile.

Recent studies demonstrate that educators' communicative competence and emotional intelligence significantly influence the effectiveness of inclusive education. Working with children who have special educational needs requires patience, empathy, emotional stability, and advanced interpersonal skills. In many cases, a simple word of encouragement or a motivational approach from a teacher can positively affect a child's development and self-confidence.

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences emphasizes that every child possesses unique abilities and talents. This theory highlights the importance of identifying and developing each learner's strengths. Consequently, modern special educators must possess diagnostic and developmental competencies that enable them to recognize and nurture individual potential.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the development of inclusive education has been recognized as one of the priority directions of state educational policy. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education," along with presidential decrees and resolutions related to inclusive education, identifies the support and education of children with special needs as a strategic objective. Nevertheless, practical challenges remain, including shortages of qualified special educators, limited practical experience, difficulties in implementing innovative methodologies, and insufficient psychological preparedness among some educators.

In particular, reliance solely on theoretical knowledge no longer meets contemporary educational requirements. A modern special educator must be committed to lifelong learning, open to innovation, and capable of providing individualized support for every child.

Literature Review and Methodology

The development of professional competencies among modern special educators has become one of the most significant research areas in pedagogy, psychology, and special education. The expansion of inclusive education has considerably broadened the professional expectations placed upon special educators. Today, educators are expected not only to possess theoretical expertise but also to demonstrate communicative proficiency, psychological preparedness, technological literacy, and multidisciplinary collaboration skills.

Lev Vygotsky argued that child development is shaped through social interaction and pedagogical influence. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development provides a scientific foundation for individualized instruction. Children with special educational needs often depend on professional guidance and support to achieve their developmental potential.

Maria Montessori emphasized the importance of fostering independence, creating supportive educational environments, and respecting individual differences. These principles require modern special educators to be creative, flexible, and responsive to diverse learning needs.



Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences demonstrates that every learner possesses unique abilities and developmental capacities. This perspective scientifically justifies the necessity of differentiated instruction and diagnostic competence within special education practice.

Contemporary international research identifies the following key components of professional competence for special educators:

- Pedagogical competence;
- Communicative competence;
- Psychological competence;
- Corrective-pedagogical competence;
- Digital competence;
- Innovative competence;
- Social and emotional competence;
- Multidisciplinary collaboration competence.

Reports published by UNESCO and UNICEF emphasize that the quality of inclusive education is directly associated with the professional preparedness of educators. International practices place significant emphasis on practical training, simulation-based learning, and the effective use of assistive technologies in special educator preparation programs.

Furthermore, scholarly literature identifies emotional intelligence as a crucial component of professional competence. Patience, empathy, emotional regulation, and stress resilience are particularly important when working with children who have special educational needs.

The study was conducted based on the principles of scientific rigor, systematic analysis, individualized instruction, humanism, and objectivity. The following research methods were employed:

- Analysis of scientific, pedagogical, and methodological literature;
- Review of psychological and corrective-pedagogical sources;
- Pedagogical observation;
- Interviews and questionnaires;
- Comparative analysis;
- Professional activity monitoring;
 - Statistical and descriptive analysis.

The research investigated the professional activities of special educators working in inclusive educational institutions, focusing on their use of innovative technologies, communicative approaches, and psychological preparedness. The findings revealed that educators who actively utilize digital technologies demonstrate higher levels of effectiveness in working with children. In particular, interactive teaching methods and assistive technologies significantly increased students' engagement and participation in learning activities.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that the role and significance of special educators within contemporary inclusive education systems continue to increase. The effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on the professional competencies, pedagogical skills, and personal qualities of educators working with children who have special educational needs.

The analysis revealed that educators possessing strong pedagogical, communicative, psychological, and corrective competencies achieve significantly better educational outcomes. Such professionals are more capable of identifying learners' individual needs, developing appropriate instructional strategies, and creating supportive educational environments.

One of the most important competencies identified during the research is communicative competence. Effective communication between educators, students, parents, psychologists,



speech therapists, and other specialists plays a crucial role in ensuring successful educational and developmental outcomes. Children with special educational needs often require individualized communication strategies; therefore, educators must possess advanced interpersonal and communication skills.

The study also demonstrated that psychological competence significantly influences the quality of inclusive education. Working with children who have diverse developmental characteristics requires patience, emotional stability, empathy, and resilience. Educators who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are more successful in establishing positive relationships with learners and fostering supportive classroom environments.

Another important finding concerns the role of corrective-pedagogical competence. Special educators must be capable of conducting developmental assessments, identifying learning difficulties, and implementing appropriate corrective interventions. Effective corrective-pedagogical activities contribute to learners' cognitive, social, and communicative development while facilitating their successful integration into educational settings.

Furthermore, the research highlighted the growing importance of digital competence. Modern educational environments increasingly rely on information and communication technologies. Educators who effectively utilize digital tools, interactive platforms, and assistive technologies demonstrate greater success in supporting learners with special educational needs. In particular, assistive technologies provide significant opportunities for children with hearing impairments, visual impairments, speech disorders, and developmental disabilities.

The findings also emphasize the importance of innovative competence. Contemporary educational systems require educators to adopt creative teaching methods, innovative instructional strategies, and flexible approaches that respond to the changing needs of learners. Educators who continuously update their professional knowledge and integrate innovative technologies into their practice are more capable of addressing the diverse needs of inclusive classrooms.

Multidisciplinary collaboration emerged as another essential component of professional competence. Effective cooperation among special educators, psychologists, speech therapists, medical professionals, and parents positively influences children's development and educational achievement. Collaborative approaches ensure comprehensive support and contribute to more effective educational interventions.

Observations conducted during the study revealed that educators who regularly participate in professional development programs adapt more successfully to inclusive educational environments and demonstrate greater confidence in addressing complex pedagogical situations. Continuous professional learning enhances educators' competence and improves the overall quality of educational services.

At the same time, several challenges were identified. These include insufficient practical experience among some educators, difficulties in implementing innovative methodologies, limited methodological resources, and inadequate psychological preparedness. Such challenges may negatively affect the quality and effectiveness of inclusive education.

In my opinion, the most successful special educators of the future will be those who continuously invest in their professional growth, effectively utilize technological innovations, and recognize every learner as a unique individual. Modern education requires the integration of professionalism, humanity, creativity, and lifelong learning.

Another significant aspect is that effective special educators are not defined solely by their methodological knowledge but also by their ability to build meaningful relationships with children. In many cases, children's developmental progress is strongly influenced by educators' trust, encouragement, empathy, and motivation.



Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that the professional competencies of modern special educators represent one of the key determinants of inclusive education quality. Special educators play a crucial role not only in delivering educational content but also in supporting children's psychological, social, communicative, and personal development.

The analysis confirms that contemporary inclusive education requires educators to possess a broad range of competencies, including pedagogical, communicative, psychological, corrective-pedagogical, innovative, and digital competencies. Among these, individualized instruction, empathy, stress resilience, and the effective use of assistive technologies are particularly important.

The study further revealed that educators who actively employ modern technologies and interactive teaching methods achieve higher levels of effectiveness in their professional activities. This finding demonstrates that digital competence has become an essential professional requirement for special educators in the twenty-first century.

Moreover, multidisciplinary collaboration involving educators, psychologists, speech therapists, and parents was found to have a positive impact on children's development and educational success. Collaborative efforts contribute significantly to the creation of supportive and inclusive learning environments.

Several challenges were also identified, including limited practical experience, difficulties in implementing innovative methodologies, insufficient methodological resources, and inadequate psychological preparedness among some educators. Addressing these issues is essential for improving the quality of inclusive education.

In conclusion, the development of professional competencies among special educators represents one of the fundamental conditions for enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive education. Pedagogical practice based on knowledge, innovation, humanity, and professional excellence contributes to the comprehensive development and successful social integration of children with special educational needs.

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