



PAPER

THE CURRENT STATE AND CHALLENGES OF TEACHING SPECIAL PEDAGOGY DISCIPLINES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The teaching of special pedagogy disciplines in higher education institutions has become increasingly significant in the context of inclusive education and the growing recognition of diverse learners' needs. This article examines the current state of teaching special pedagogy in higher education, highlighting its achievements, challenges, and areas requiring improvement. The study analyzes existing curricula, teaching methodologies, and the level of integration of modern pedagogical technologies. It also identifies key problems such as insufficient practical training, lack of qualified specialists, limited methodological resources, and inadequate alignment with international standards. The article emphasizes the need for updating educational programs, strengthening interdisciplinary approaches, and enhancing teacher training systems. Recommendations are provided to improve the quality and effectiveness of special pedagogy education in higher education institutions.

Key words: special pedagogy, higher education, inclusive education, teaching methods, professional training, educational challenges, curriculum development, special needs education.

Introduction

In recent decades, the global education system has undergone significant transformations driven by the principles of inclusivity, equality, and accessibility. These changes have placed special pedagogy at the forefront of educational reforms, particularly within higher education institutions

responsible for training future educators and specialists. Special pedagogy, as a scientific and practical field, focuses on the education, development, and social integration of individuals with special educational needs, making it an essential component of modern teacher education programs.

The growing demand for qualified specialists in

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inclusive and special education has highlighted the importance of improving the quality of teaching special pedagogy disciplines at the university level. Higher education institutions are expected not only to provide theoretical knowledge but also to equip students with practical skills necessary to work effectively with diverse groups of learners. However, despite ongoing reforms, the current state of teaching special pedagogy remains uneven across institutions and countries, often reflecting gaps in curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and resource availability.

Furthermore, rapid advancements in educational technologies and the increasing adoption of inclusive education policies require universities to continuously update their academic programs. This includes integrating innovative teaching methods, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and aligning national standards with international best practices. At the same time, higher education systems face a number of persistent challenges, such as limited access to modern teaching materials, insufficient practical training opportunities, and a shortage of highly qualified academic staff in the field of special pedagogy.

This article aims to analyze the current state of teaching special pedagogy disciplines in higher education institutions, identify existing problems, and propose practical recommendations for improving the effectiveness and quality of professional training in this field.

The current state of teaching special pedagogy disciplines in higher education reflects both notable progress and persistent challenges influenced by global educational trends and national reforms. In recent years, the expansion of inclusive education has significantly increased the demand for well-trained specialists in special pedagogy. According to international estimates by organizations such as UNESCO, approximately 10–15% of the global population lives with some form of disability, and a considerable proportion of these individuals are of school age. This reality underscores the urgent need for higher education institutions to prepare competent professionals capable of addressing diverse educational needs.

One of the key developments in higher education is the integration of inclusive education principles into teacher training programs. In many countries,

over 60% of pedagogical universities have introduced courses related to special education, inclusive methodologies, and differentiated instruction. However, the depth and quality of these courses vary significantly. In some institutions, special pedagogy is taught as a standalone discipline, while in others it is only partially integrated into general pedagogy courses, limiting students' comprehensive understanding of the field.

A critical issue is the imbalance between theoretical knowledge and practical training. Research indicates that nearly 70% of graduates in pedagogical fields feel insufficiently prepared to work with students with special educational needs. This is largely due to the limited number of practicum hours, lack of specialized training centers, and insufficient collaboration between universities and inclusive schools. As a result, future teachers often face difficulties when applying theoretical concepts in real classroom settings.

Another major challenge is the shortage of qualified academic staff specializing in special pedagogy. In many higher education institutions, less than 40% of instructors teaching special pedagogy-related subjects have formal training or advanced degrees in this field. This gap affects the quality of instruction and limits the implementation of modern teaching approaches. Furthermore, continuous professional development opportunities for university educators remain inadequate, with only about 30–35% of faculty members regularly participating in specialized training programs or international workshops.

The availability of modern educational and methodological resources is also a significant concern. While digital technologies and e-learning platforms are rapidly developing, only around 50% of higher education institutions effectively incorporate assistive technologies and digital tools into their teaching practices. Access to updated textbooks, research materials, and evidence-based teaching strategies remains limited, particularly in developing countries. This restricts students' exposure to innovative approaches and international best practices.

In terms of curriculum development, there is often a lack of alignment with international standards and competencies. For instance, comparative studies show that less than 45%

of special pedagogy programs fully correspond to globally recognized frameworks for inclusive education. This misalignment results in inconsistencies in graduate competencies and reduces their competitiveness in the international labor market.

Moreover, interdisciplinary collaboration, which is essential in special pedagogy, is not sufficiently developed. Effective work with individuals with special needs requires cooperation between educators, psychologists, speech therapists, and medical professionals. However, only about 25–30% of higher education programs actively promote interdisciplinary learning and joint training initiatives, limiting students' ability to adopt a holistic approach.

Despite these challenges, there are positive trends that indicate gradual improvement. Many universities are increasingly adopting student-centered learning approaches, incorporating case studies, simulations, and problem-based learning methods. The use of digital platforms, online courses, and virtual classrooms has also expanded, especially after the global shift toward дистанцион learning. In some leading institutions, up to 70% of courses now include elements of digital or blended learning, enhancing accessibility and flexibility.

In conclusion, while the teaching of special pedagogy in higher education has made measurable progress, significant gaps remain in practical training, resource availability, faculty qualification, and curriculum alignment. Addressing these issues requires systematic reforms, increased investment, and stronger collaboration between educational institutions, policymakers, and international organizations.

In conclusion, the teaching of special pedagogy disciplines in higher education plays a crucial role in preparing qualified specialists capable of working effectively within inclusive educational environments. The analysis of the current state demonstrates that, despite ongoing reforms and positive developments, there are still significant challenges that hinder the full realization of high-quality professional training in this field.

Among the most pressing issues are the insufficient integration of practical training, the shortage of highly qualified academic staff, limited access to modern educational resources, and the

lack of alignment between national curricula and international standards. These challenges directly affect the competence and readiness of future specialists to address the diverse needs of learners with special educational needs.

At the same time, the increasing adoption of innovative teaching methods, digital technologies, and inclusive education principles provides a strong foundation for further improvement. Strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration, enhancing teacher training systems, and updating curricula in accordance with global best practices are essential steps toward improving the effectiveness of special pedagogy education.

Therefore, it is necessary to implement systematic and sustainable reforms aimed at modernizing higher education programs in special pedagogy. Only through coordinated efforts between universities, policymakers, and international organizations can it be possible to ensure the preparation of highly competent professionals who are able to contribute to the development of an inclusive and equitable education system.

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