

Inspiration from abroad

UKRAINIAN INSPIRATION

Peculiarities of the development of personal traits of students under the conditions of an inclusive educational space

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The need for communication is one of the main social necessities. With age, this need becomes more widespread and conscious. When a child enters a training team, their individual development becomes closely linked to the group. Therefore, fostering effective communication, a positive classroom atmosphere, and developing and maintaining a friendly relationship and sense of belonging are important tasks of inclusive education ([Giangreco, 2003](#)).

The introduction of inclusive education in Ukraine has certain difficulties: insufficient development of a normative framework and underperformance of existing legislative instruments; unpreparedness of secondary school teachers to work with students with special needs; lack of technical teaching aids and books printed in Braille; architectural inadaptability of school premises; requirement of extra financing; overloaded academic programs; negative attitude of parents of ordinary students to children with special needs; hyper- or hypo-protection of parents of children with special needs; inadequate attitude of regular students to peers with special needs; lack of psychological support, and so on.

In our opinion, if we do not provide timely correctional and developmental support to students under the conditions of an inclusive educational space, it may result in social misadaptation, which is reflected in the inadequacy of self-perception, immaturity of communication skills and abilities, inability to assert a viewpoint and establish an interaction with the environment, and lack of an ability to self-actualize in different spheres of social life ([Klopota & Klopota, 2017](#)).

Peculiarities of communication among adolescents in an inclusive educational space may also be characterized by such negative manifestations as seclusion, self-doubt, decreased cognitive activity, and an impaired understanding of emotions and their manifestation. Therefore, to improve intercommunion in inclusive classes, it is necessary to develop students' emotional intelligence ([Trainor, 2008](#)).

In the process of joint learning activities, in order to develop mutual understanding between the participants of communication, there comes the need to overcome the stereotypes of perception and behavior, and to consider the positions of partners ([Gudonis & Klopota, 2017](#)). The development of benevolence contributes to these tasks.

The level of anxiety has a significant impact on the success of interaction and, as foreign scientists have noted, when students find themselves in a evaluative situation, comparative and competitive behavior leads to increased anxiety, which prevents them from focusing on what they need to successfully complete their educational tasks and build effective communication ([Zeidner & Matthews, 2011](#)).

Methods

The object of our study is the personal traits of students under the conditions of an inclusive educational space.

The purpose of the article is to conduct an empirical study of personal qualities such as emotional intelligence, anxiety and the benevolence of students taught in inclusive classes.

The hypothesis of the study is that indicators of emotional intelligence and benevolence in students with special needs will be lower than in their peers with typical development, while the level of anxiety will be higher.

The study was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, scientific sources on the subject were analyzed, basic concepts were outlined, personal traits were analyzed, and the traits that most influenced the effectiveness of communication were selected. In the second stage, empirical information was collected. Psychodiagnostic techniques were selected, the study sample was determined, and the techniques were performed. In the third stage, processing of the received information, calculation of results, statistical processing, and analysis of the received data were carried out.

Participants

The study sample group consisted of 240 students (53% boys and 47% girls), 30 of them with special needs (60% boys and 40% girls), who studied in grades from 6 to 10. Their age was from 11 to 16 years. The study involved 14 classes from 7 schools in 4 districts of Zaporizhzhia.

Instruments

To measure the level of development of emotional intelligence we used the Diagnostics of "emotional intelligence" (N. Hall). The methodology consists of 30 statements and contains 5 scales: emotional awareness; managing one's emotions (emotional outgoing emotional irrelevance); self-motivation (just rather voluntary emotions control); empathy; recognizing other people's emotions (more than being able to influence other people's emotional states).

For the diagnosis of anxiety, the technique for detecting anxiety levels in adolescents (after Kondash) was used. The methodology consists of 30 statements and includes situations of three types: 1) situations related to school and communication with teachers; 2) situations that actualize the self image; 3) communication situations. Accordingly, the types of anxiety that are determined by this scale: those related to school, to self-esteem, interpersonal, and general (which is the sum of the three previous ones).

Benevolence Diagnosis (after Campbell's scale) consists of statements of opposite importance. Respondents are asked to choose the statement most appropriate to their opinion. Benevolence in this diagnosis consists of such components as trust in people, mutual aid, and friendliness. The result is low, medium, or high benevolence.

Results

The results of the study of general emotional intelligence showed that low levels of general emotional intelligence prevail in both students with typical development and students with special needs (Table 1). This indicates that schools pay little attention to the development of emotional intelligence. No significant difference was found between girls and boys. Girls with disabilities have a higher high score, which is because having a relationship with other children is of the utmost importance to them. Girls pay more attention to interaction between people, relationships, and establishing friendships.

Table 1

Distribution of responses, by the level of general emotional intelligence, between children with typical development and children with special needs, percent

Overall level of emotional intelligence	Gender	High	Average	Low
Typical development	Male	3.60	29.73	66.67
	Female	3.03	27.27	69.70
Overall		3.33	28.57	68.10
Children with special needs	Male	.00	33.33	66.67
	Female	16.67	16.67	66.67
Overall		6.67	26.67	66.67

Let us consider the results in more detail according to the components of emotional intelligence (Table 2).

Children with special needs have higher scores on the scales: emotional awareness 10% vs 5.24%; empathy level 20% and 13.81% for children with typical development. This indicates that children with special needs have to make greater efforts to join the team. It is necessary to better understand emotions themselves, and to feel the emotions of other children, teachers, and parents. Effective communication is impossible without this.

In children with typical development, the indicators are higher: emotion management is 8.10% vs. 3.33%; self-motivation is 19.05% and it is 13.33% in children with typical development; emotion recognition is 10% vs. 3.33%. Therefore, emotion management and emotion recognition work better in students with typical development. This is due to the inability of children with special needs to assess emotions in the education process adequately. There is also a lack of experience in dealing with typical children.

Self-motivation in children with typical development is higher, since children with special needs are more likely than others to experience hyper-protection, which does not allow for the development of intrinsic motivation.

In total, summarizing the results of all students, the highest indicator is empathy: 16.90% is the high level of development, while the lowest emotion management is 67.14%. Thus, teaching children together promotes empathy. Low levels of emotion management are associated with adolescence. During the formation of an adult, there are often problems with controlling anger, despair, joy, and other emotions.

Table 2

Distribution of responses, by the scale of emotional intelligence, among children with typical development and children with special needs, percent

Scales	Levels	Children with typical development	Children with disabilities	Overall
Emotional awareness	High	5.24	10	7.62
	Average	35.71	40	37.85
	Low	59.05	50	4.52
Managing emotions	High	8.10	3.33	5.71
	Average	24.29	30	27.14
	Low	67.62	66.67	67.14
Self-motivation	High	19.05	13.33	16.19
	Average	34.29	46.67	40.48
	Low	46.67	40	43.33
Empathy	High	13.81	20	16.90

	Average	30.48	43.33	36.90
	Low	55.71	36.67	46.19
Recognition of emotions	High	10	3.33	6.67
	Average	38.57	56.67	47.62
	Low	51.43	40	45.71

Let us consider the difference in indicators, according to the age of the study participants (Table 3.) The lowest overall intelligence is in grade 9 in children with special needs, and in grade 10 and grade 8 in children with typical development. There is a clear tendency, with age, toward a decrease in the high rate of development of emotional intelligence and to an increase in the average rate. The reason for this is that, at an older age, teens begin to evaluate themselves more critically, understanding the need to develop emotion-related skills. With age, the average rate increases, as older teens perceive their skills in a more adequate way.

Table 3

Distribution of responses, by the level of overall emotional intelligence, according to age and inclusivity, percent

Grade	Inclusivity	High	Average	Low
6	Typical development	7.89	15.79	76.32
	Special needs	16.67	33.33	50
7	Typical development	6.45	25.81	67.74
	Special needs	14.29	28.57	57.14
8	Typical development	0	31.25	68.75
	Special needs	0	28.57	71.43
9	Typical development	4.55	36.36	59.09
	Special needs	0	0	100
10	Typical development	0	30.30	69.70
	Special needs	0	50	50

When doing the statistical analysis, a weak positive correlation between the scales of emotional intelligence was detected. Empathy – self-motivation is $p = .52$. This indicates that the better a person feels the emotions of another person, the better they can motivate themselves. That is, such children have a higher level of self-control, of understanding themselves and others. Self-motivation is also related to emotional awareness ($p = .46$), which confirms the conclusion that self-motivation directly affects self-control and emotional awareness ($p = .34$). If a child realizes his emotions better, he also understands his peers' emotions better.

Emotional control and emotional awareness also have a weak positive correlation ($p = .37$). There is no doubt that the better a child understands emotions, the better he/she manages them. The weakest positive relationships were found between empathy and emotional awareness ($p = .27$) and empathy and emotional control ($p = .26$). Understanding and controlling one's emotions affects the understanding of other people's relationships and feelings.

Having analyzed the results of anxiety as a personality trait, in Table 4 we see that adolescent girls have a lower level of overall anxiety than boys do. This is because at this age, girls behave in a more socially expected way, are quieter, and learn better. However, until they have reached adulthood, there are far fewer reasons for concern. For boys, by contrast, adolescence is more difficult. Boys grow up later than their female peers do, so their emotional state is more volatile. They are more likely to conflict with their peers and teachers, and they have worse grades in their studies more often.

Table 4

Distribution of responses, by the level of general anxiety, between children with typical development and children with special needs, percent

Overall level of anxiety	Gender	Normal	Higher	High	Very high	Excessive calm
Typical development	Male	67.57	16.22	5.41	3.60	7.2
	Female	74.75	8.08	5.05	0	12.12
Children with special care needs	Male	50	27.78	11.11	0	11.11
	Female	91.67	8.33	0	0	0

Concerning the distribution of responses on anxiety scales (Table 5) for children with special needs, the level of school anxiety and self-esteem is slightly higher than for children with typical development. 73.33% versus 68.57%, and 70% against 67.72, which is partly due to hyper-protection, and partly to the mental retardation of some of the children surveyed. The lower indicator of the normal level of interpersonal anxiety indicates the problems in interpersonal communication of children with special needs.

The highest level of "Excessive calm" on the scale "Self-rated anxiety" is 13.37%. Such insensitivity is related to a compensatory, protective nature. The student does not realize the negative experience. It is an inadequate attitude towards oneself, a rejection of oneself. This "excessive calm" often hides an increased anxiety about which the student does not want to tell anyone for various reasons.

Table 5

Distribution of responses, by the level of anxiety, among children with typical development and children with special needs, percent

Scales	Levels	Children with typical development	Disabled children	Overall
School Anxiety	Normal	68.57	73.33	70.95
	Higher	15.24	20	17.62
	High	8.10	6.67	7.38
	Very high	1.90	0	.95
	"Excessive calm"	6.19	0	3.09
Self-esteem Anxiety	Normal	67.62	70	68.81
	Higher	9.52	6.67	8.09
	High	5.24	10	7.62
	Very high	3.81	0	1.90
	"Excessive calm"	13.81	13.33	13.57
Interpersonal Anxiety	Normal	57.62	46.67	52.14
	Higher	25.71	26.67	26.19
	High	5.24	16.67	10.95
	Very high	3.33	0	1.66
	"Excessive calm"	8.10	10	9.05

When compared by age, the normal level of anxiety prevails in grades 6, 8, and 9 in children with special needs. Very high rates of anxiety can be found in 7 classes in children with typical development. This is due to the fact that adolescence begins from the seventh grade; in the sixth grade, the adolescent period begins for girls, and in the 7th grade boys are already beginning to grow up (see Table 6).

It is interesting that a high score of "Excessive calm" of 25% is found in grade 10. This is the beginning of early adolescence and the beginning of self-identification; self-recognition becomes paramount.

During this period, there is often a low level of self-esteem. A high result for excessive calm may indicate latent anxiety.

Teenagers who enter early adolescence analyze their childhood, trying to understand themselves, make plans for the future, and begin to decide on a future profession. Targeting negative aspects of the past and perceiving the present in a fatalistic manner are also causes of increased anxiety according to Roşeanu, Marian, Tomulescu, and Pusta (2008).

The analysis revealed a weak positive correlation between self-reported anxiety and school anxiety $p = .53$. This indicates that a student's self-esteem is influenced by their attitude to success or failure in learning. The relationship between school and interpersonal anxiety, $p = .49$, has been identified, indicating that students' attitude toward the learning situation affects their attitude to interactive situations. Therefore, the more effective the interaction is, the lower the anxiety in learning.

The relationship between self-esteem and interpersonal anxiety, $p = .56$, indicates a link between success in communicating and a child's self-esteem.

Table 6

Distribution of responses, by levels of overall anxiety, including age and inclusiveness, percent

Class	Inclusivity	Normal	Higher	High	Very high	"Excessive rest"
6	Typical development	73.68	2.63	5.26	2.63	15.79
	Special needs	83.33	0	16.67	0	0
7	Typical development	77.42	12.90	0	6.45	3.23
	Special needs	42.86	28.37	14.29	0	14.29
8	Typical development	75	7.81	7.81	0	9.38
	Special needs	85.71	14.29	0	0	0
9	Typical development	75	18.18	2.27	0	4.55
	Special needs	83.33	16.67	0	0	0
10	Typical development	48.48	24.24	9.09	3.03	15.15
	Special needs	25	50	0	0	25

Let us turn to the results of the diagnosis of benevolence.

When comparing the results of the diagnosis among children with typical development and children with special needs (Table 7), the difference in results is small, i.e. the level of benevolence development is independent of nosology. Children who are enrolled in inclusive classes are as supportive as their typical peers.

Overall, the average benefit development rate is 65.71%. Therefore, in the process of learning, the education of a child's personality and the development of benevolence takes place, but 10% of low levels of development indicates that it is not sufficient.

Table 7

Distribution of responses, by the level of benevolence, between children with typical development and children with special needs, percent

Inclusivity	High	Average	Low
Normal development	24.76%	64.76%	10.48%
Special needs	23.33%	66.67%	10%

Regarding the gender distribution of responses (Table 8), a high level of development of goodwill, 27.93%, was found in girls, versus 21.71% in boys. Girls make more contact than boys do, they are more often responsive, and their social contacts are wider. Nevertheless, they also have a higher

percentage of low level, namely 14.41%. Most likely, this has to do with emotionality. Most girls are likely to answer the question in a sharper way.

Table 8

Distribution of responses, by the level of benevolence, considering gender

Gender	High	Average	Low
Male	21.71%	71.32%	6.98%
Female	27.93%	57.66%	14.41%

Regarding age (Table 9), adolescents with typical development have a higher level of benevolence by 35.48% and a lower level by 16.13% in grade 7. This difference in answers is due to the fact that in the seventh grade the relations between peers become more important for children, conflicts are not infrequent, some students' perceptions in the collective do not occur, and phenomena such as bullying occur during adolescence.

Children with disabilities have a high level of benevolence – 48% in grade 10. This is due to the fact that in early adolescence children have already overcome the main difficulties of adolescence. But the high percentage of low indicators shows that there are difficulties in interaction between peers, parents and teachers.

It is interesting that the correlation between goodwill and self-motivation is $p = .14$. This leads to the conclusion that the attitude of children towards others influences their attitude towards themselves. If a child has a low level of benevolence, he or she has a low level of self-motivation. However, children who are more sensitive and are tolerant to others can motivate themselves better. There is an obvious connection between the attitude towards oneself and the attitude towards others.

Table 9

Distribution of responses, according to the levels of benevolence, taking into account age and inclusivity

Class	Inclusivity	High	Average	Low
6	Typical development	28.95	65.79	5.26
	Special needs	33.33	66.67	0
7	Typical development	35.48	48.39	16.13
	Special needs	14.29	71.43	14.29
8	Typical development	18.75	71.88	9.38
	Special needs	0	85.71	14.29
9	Typical development	20.45	68.18	11.36
	Special needs	33.33	66.67	0
10	Typical development	27.27	60.61	12.12
	Special needs	48	27	25

Conclusions

Having analyzed the results of the study of the features of the development of personal traits of students in an inclusive educational space, we found that the hypothesis that children with special needs have lower scores in terms of emotional intelligence, kindness and anxiety as compared to children with normal development has not been confirmed. In fact, these children have even higher scores by some factors. As for the development of emotional intelligence in children with special needs, there are strengths, more developed empathy, especially in girls, and emotional awareness. Children with disabilities have a higher level of anxiety, and their level of benevolence is equal to that of children with typical development.

In general, all children had a low level of emotional intelligence. According to anxiety, students showed an increased level of "excessive calm", which indicates a hidden anxiety, rejection of themselves, and

low self-esteem. We also found that for benevolence, the average level prevails, but a low level, on average, is found in almost 11% of students.

Analyzing correlational relations, we identified a relationship between emotional intelligence scales, anxiety scales, and benevolence and self-motivation. We found that successful communication affects attitudes and learning success. Self-esteem is influenced by attitudes to other people. If a child understands his emotions better, then he also understands his peers' emotions better.

Therefore, creating an atmosphere of productive, friendly communication is an important task. There is an obvious need to develop the communication skills of all children in inclusive classes in secondary schools. A resolution to the problem can be facilitated by the development and implementation of specific trainings in communicative competence for inclusive classes.

This research could be useful for special psychologists, educators and social workers, and applied for further research on the topic.

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