

**Марія Копчук-Кашецька,**

кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент кафедри початкової освіти,  
Прикарпатський національний університет імені Василя Стефаника (м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна)

**Maria Kopchuk-Kashetska,**

candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor of Department of Primary Education,  
Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)  
*mariia.kopchuk-kashetska@pnu.edu.ua*  
ORCID ID 0000-0003-1671-3710

**Оксана Цюняк,**

доктор педагогічних наук, професор кафедри початкової освіти,  
Прикарпатський національний університет імені Василя Стефаника (м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна)

**OksanaTsiuniak,**

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor of Professor at the Department of Primary Education,  
Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)  
*oksana.tsiuniak@pnu.edu.ua*  
ORCID ID 0000-0002-4573-1865

**Світлана Довбенко,**

кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент кафедри початкової освіти,  
Прикарпатський національний університет імені Василя Стефаника (м. Івано-Франківськ, Україна)

**Svitlana Dovbenko,**

candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor of Department of Primary Education,  
Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine)  
*svitlana.dovbenko@pnu.edu.ua*  
ORCID ID 0000-0003-2316-0579

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## СУЧАСНІ АСПЕКТИ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ АСИСТЕНТА ВЧИТЕЛЯ В ІНКЛЮЗИВНОМУ ОСВІТНЬОМУ СЕРЕДОВИЩІ

**Анотація.** У статті досліджено роль та значення діяльності асистента вчителя в інклюзивному освітньому середовищі для дітей з особливими освітніми потребами. Зосереджено увагу на сучасних тенденціях та викликах, з якими стикаються асистенти вчителя в роботі з цією категорією учнів щодо створення інклюзивного освітнього середовища. Зазначено ключові аспекти ролі асистента вчителя, з-поміж яких: індивідуалізація навчання, сприяння соціальній інтеграції та психосоціальної підтримці. Особлива увага приділяється використанню технологій та інновацій у наданні ефективної підтримки дітям із різними освітніми потребами, а також розглядаються питання доступності технологій навчання для всіх учнів, незалежно від їхніх індивідуальних обмежень чи потреб.

Автори наголошують на взаємодії асистента вчителя з іншими учасниками навчального процесу, такими як батьки, вчителі та інші спеціалісти, і важливість командної роботи та обміну досвідом для досягнення оптимальних результатів у вихованні та навчанні дітей з особливими освітніми потребами. Окреслено виклики та перспективи розвитку інклюзивної освіти в сучасному освітньому середовищі, визначено напрями поліпшення підготовки асистента вчителя, зазначено компетентності, якими повинен володіти асистент вчителя інклюзивного освітнього середовища для роботи з дітьми з особливими освітніми потребами. Результати дослідження слугують важливим джерелом інформації для педагогів, дослідників та практиків, що працюють у сфері інклюзивної освіти.

Зроблено висновки і пропонується перспективи подальших досліджень щодо розвитку методів, спрямованих на оптимізацію ролі асистента вчителя в інклюзивному освітньому середовищі. Автори підкреслюють, що дієве забезпечення навчання та розвитку дітей з особливими освітніми потребами залишається актуальним та важливим завданням сучасної педагогічної науки і практики.

**Ключові слова:** асистент учителя, інклюзивна освіта, дитина з особливими освітніми потребами, освітнє середовище.



## MODERN ASPECTS OF THE ACTIVITY OF A TEACHER'S ASSISTANT IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

**Abstract.** The article explores the role and importance of a teacher's assistant in an inclusive educational environment for children with special educational needs. It focuses on the current trends and challenges faced by teaching assistants in working with this category of students. The key aspects of the role of a teacher's assistant, such as individualization of learning, promotion of social integration and psychosocial support, are indicated. Particular attention is paid to the use of technology and innovation in providing effective support to children with different educational needs, and the issue of accessibility of technology for all students, regardless of their individual limitations or needs, is also addressed.

Emphasizes the interaction of the teacher's assistant with other participants in the educational process, such as parents, teachers and other professionals, and the importance of teamwork and exchange of experience to achieve optimal results in the upbringing and education of children with special educational needs. It considers the challenges and prospects for the development of inclusive education in the modern educational environment, identifies ways to improve the training and support of teacher assistants. The study serves as an important source of information for educators, researchers and practitioners working in the field of inclusive education.

Conclusions are drawn and prospects for further research and development of methods aimed at optimizing the role of the teacher's assistant in an inclusive educational environment are proposed. Effective support for the learning and development of children with special educational needs remains an urgent and important task, and the article makes an important contribution to understanding this issue in the modern educational context.

**Keywords:** teacher's assistant, inclusive education, child with special educational needs, educational environment.

### INTRODUCTION

**The problem formulation.** In the context of European integration changes in the Ukrainian education system, it is important to adopt the positive experience of European countries and adapt it to the Ukrainian national context. Every child in Ukraine has the right to equal access to quality education, which is enshrined in the Constitution and other legal documents. Recognizing this, the country pays special attention to inclusive education, making fundamental changes in the understanding and provision of quality education for children with special needs.

"Inclusive education is a process that aims to meet the diverse needs of all children by increasing their participation in learning, cultural activities and community life. This process involves changes and transformations in the content, approaches, strategies and structures of education. A defining feature is the general concept that it is the regular school system that is designed to educate all children, with special attention paid to those students at risk of exclusion, exclusion and marginalization". Declaration of the World Education Conference (Jomtien, 1990).

An important aspect is to support inclusive education as a means of developing the potential of children with special needs in educational institutions. This contributes to a significant improvement in the quality of their lives and opens up new opportunities for personal growth. An important condition is the adaptation of the educational environment to the individual needs of children and the provision of quality educational services.

In today's educational space, it is important to create an environment where every student has the opportunity to develop their potential and gain knowledge, regardless of their special educational needs. Inclusive education has become a key area that promotes diversity in classrooms and takes into account the needs of each student. However, an effective support system is essential for the successful implementation of an inclusive approach, and the role of a teacher's assistant is very important.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** A large number of scientific studies and publications by Ukrainian and foreign scholars are devoted to the problem of inclusive education: I. Bekh, M. Bratko, M. Vidninchuk, O. Havrylova, O. Dubaseniuk, A. Kolupaieva, T. Lapanik, A. Markova, Y. Naida, L. Savchuk, O. Semenog, S. Sysoieva, N. Sofiy, S. Tyshchenko, J. Raven, I. Khafizullina, V. Khitryuk, and others. However, the role of a teacher's assistant as a specialist capable of facilitating social interaction in different settings and under different circumstances in the system of inclusive education in Ukraine remains insufficiently studied and requires further research.

A teacher's assistant in an inclusive classroom is a professional educator who provides additional support for children with special educational needs. He or she becomes a key player in creating a positive and friendly learning environment where every student feels important and able to succeed. An important aspect is the training and professional development of a teacher's assistant. Knowledge of pedagogical methods, understanding of the developmental characteristics of children with different needs, and teamwork skills are important components of successful work.

In the modern world, technology is becoming an important tool for teaching children with special educational needs. A teacher's assistant must be competent in using various technologies that help individualize the learning process.

### RESEARCH AIM AND TASKS

The purpose of the article is to determine the importance of the role of a teacher's assistant in creating an effective inclusive learning environment. Focusing on the interaction of the teacher's assistant with students with different educational needs, and the impact of this role on the quality of the educational process, as well as taking into account the individual characteristics of each student, contributes to the improvement of learning and development in an inclusive environment, and the use of various pedagogical methods and strategies to provide optimal support to each student.



## RESEARCH METHODS

The research is based on the use of a complex of general scientific theoretical methods. In particular, the methods of theoretical analysis, systematization, comparison of different views on the investigated problem are used. Data obtained from scientific, methodical and special literature are also summarized. This set of methods allows for a deeper understanding and analysis of the selected research topic, as well as to create a conceptual foundation for further conclusions and recommendations.

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol (December 2009) contributed to the acceleration of inclusive education in Ukraine.

In parallel with the radical transformations in the process of integrating children with special educational needs into the educational environment, Ukraine has needed to revise and adopt a number of regulations that clearly define the role of the teacher's assistant in the educational process. These legislative changes take into account the importance of the assistant's role in creating an effective inclusive environment for children with special needs, namely: The Law of Ukraine "On Education" of September 5, 2017, No. 214S-VIII Article 19: "Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs", Article 20. "Inclusive education"; Order of the State Committee of Ukraine for Consumer Protection and Public Utilities of 28.07.2010 No. 327, according to which the Classifier of Professions was supplemented with the position of assistant teacher of inclusive education; Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of December 06, 2010, No. 1205, on the basis of which the position of teacher's assistant is provided for in the Standard Staffing Standards for General Education Institutions; Resolution No. 872 of August 15, 2011 "On Approval of the Procedure for Organizing Inclusive Education in General Education Institutions" states that "the personality-oriented direction of the educational process is provided by a teacher's assistant who participates in the development and implementation of individual curricula and programs, adapts teaching materials to take into account the individual characteristics of the educational and cognitive activities of children with special needs;" Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 635 dated July 18, 2012, according to which the position of "assistant teacher of a general education institution with inclusive and integrated education" was included in the List of positions of pedagogical and scientific and pedagogical staff; Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 665 dated 01.06.2013, which approved the qualification description, the position is classified as a specialist in the field of education (code of the classifier of professions - 3330).

Thus, on the basis of the above-mentioned normative legal documents of Ukrainian legislation and based on the study of the experience of practical work of a teacher's assistant in educational institutions of Canada, the USA, and the UK, we will determine the qualification requirements and features of teacher's assistant training; consider in more detail some aspects of the organization and content of the teacher's assistant's activity (Lapin, 2014). A teacher's assistant (tutor, assistant) is an equal member of the teaching staff of the institution, participates in the educational process in accordance with his or her duties (letters of the Ministry of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine dated 25.09.2012 No. 1/0-675 "On the job duties of a teacher's assistant" and No. 1/9-694 "On the introduction of the position of an educator (teacher's assistant) in general education institutions with inclusive education" dated 28.09.2012).

The analysis of regulations and personal practical experience in the field of inclusive education has helped to clarify the qualification criteria that are necessary for a teacher assistant. This review of standards identifies key aspects of the competencies and skills that are essential for an assistant to participate effectively in an inclusive learning environment (Lapin, 2014): complete higher pedagogical education; obtain a diploma or certificate confirming the qualification of a teacher's assistant and training in working in an inclusive environment; possess the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to perform the functions of the position held; high level of professionalism, initiative, creativity; perfect knowledge of effective forms and methods of working with children with special educational needs; general culture, high moral qualities; developed communication and organizational skills, conflict resolution skills; physical and mental health condition allows to perform professional duties in the educational institution; participation in trainings and educational courses on special services.

An analysis of the recommended job descriptions (Letter of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports No. 1/9-675 of 25.09.12 "On the Job Duties of a Teacher's Assistant") allows us to identify the key functions of a teacher's assistant (Manevychi, 2016).

**Organizational:** assists in organizing the educational process in an inclusive classroom; assists students with special educational needs in organizing the workplace; observes the child to study his or her individual characteristics, aptitudes, interests and needs; helps to concentrate attention, promotes the formation of self-regulation and self-control of the student; cooperates with specialists who work directly with a child with special educational needs and participate in the development of an individual development program. The teacher's assistant ensures, together with other employees, healthy and safe conditions for learning, education and work. Maintains the established pedagogical documentation.

**Educational and developmental:** the teacher's assistant, working with the classroom teacher, provides educational services aimed at meeting the educational needs of students; provides social and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs, takes care of professional self-determination and social adaptation of students. Promotes the development of children with special educational needs, improving their psycho-emotional state. Stimulates the development of children's social activity, promotes the identification and disclosure of their abilities, talents, and gifts through their participation in scientific, technical, and artistic creativity. It creates educational situations, an environment of optimism and confidence in their abilities and future.



Diagnostic: together with a group of specialists who develop an individual development program for children with special educational needs, assesses the academic achievements of students; evaluates the implementation of the individual development program, studies and analyzes the dynamics of student development.

Prognostic: based on the study of the actual and potential development of the child, participates in the development of an individual development program.

Advisory: constantly communicates with parents, providing them with the necessary advisory assistance; informs the class teacher and parents about the student's achievements. Adheres to pedagogical ethics, respects the dignity of the child's personality, protects him/her from any form of physical or mental violence.

By constantly improving their professional level, developing their pedagogical skills and improving the overall culture, teaching assistants actively contribute to the formation of a positive atmosphere in the student body and stimulate the development of self-esteem in all students. Drawing on the experience of teachers in inclusive education, it is important to note that teaching assistants regularly explore the capabilities and needs of each child, study the dynamics of their development, and assist teachers and staff in effectively supporting students.

Particular attention is paid to assisting in the organization of medical and personal care, as well as ensuring the safety of children's behavior. Thus, all the activities of a teacher's assistant are focused on achieving the main goal - social adaptation and integration of a child into society. Due to the absence of universal instructions for the work of a teacher's assistant in inclusive education and the availability of only recommendations, it is impossible to foresee all possible options that may arise in their practical activities. For this reason, we consider it appropriate to highlight the main practical skills that teacher assistants should have: involve students in activities aimed at improving their learning and development; to motivate and encourage students to actively participate in educational and school-wide activities; provide support to students and ensure successful movement throughout the school day; to assist students in organizing and collecting information, meeting deadlines and conditions of assignments; support the learning process by providing explanations, demonstrating skills and modeling appropriate classroom behavior; help students resolve interpersonal conflicts and develop social interaction skills; create positive relationships and an environment conducive to effective learning; encourage students' independence and use supportive strategies to help them develop; foster an atmosphere of safety and respect in the learning environment; communicate effectively with students, using appropriate language and tone, taking into account specific situations and conditions of students; interact with school staff in a manner that promotes positive collaboration and fosters a supportive atmosphere; collaborate with other professionals in developing individualized education plans for students; organize and coordinate daily activities to ensure successful completion of assignments; define work requirements and deadlines for completion of tasks, providing advice; collect, organize and create materials as directed by the teacher; observe the student and objectively record information about the performance of tasks and behavior, informing the teacher about it; work with special tools, equipment and technologies, facilitating their use by students and ensuring compliance with safety requirements; use equipment at the professional level necessary to perform various tasks effectively.

In view of the above, the role of a teacher's assistant is extremely important and includes not only providing assistance to children with special educational needs and their parents, but also active participation in teamwork with other professionals (educator, social worker, speech and language therapist, psychologist). The main purpose of this team of specialists is to combine various efforts to successfully integrate such children into school life. Children with special educational needs often have special requirements that require the cooperation of experts in various fields. Taking into account the experience and analyzing the work of specialists in the field of inclusive education, it can be argued that the work between European teachers, specialists, parents and teacher's assistants is a key element in planning and implementing educational programs for children with special educational needs. This collective approach ultimately has a positive impact on the learning success of students with special needs, contributing to their successful adaptation in the educational environment (Kolupaieva, 2012) This interaction between members of the professional team proves to be effective in addressing the individual needs of each child. The joint efforts are aimed at creating an inclusive environment where every student has the opportunity to reach their potential and develop in accordance with their characteristics. The teacher's assistant is a key intermediary between the child with special needs, the teacher and other specialists. Their task is not only to provide specific assistance to the student, but also to promote mutual understanding and effective communication throughout the team. The success of this joint work is manifested in the achievement of positive changes in the learning and behavior of students with special needs. Individually designed curricula, support from a psychologist, work with a speech and language therapist, and active parental involvement create optimal conditions for the development and self-realization of each child in the educational process.

The interaction of this team becomes the basis for successful inclusive education, where every child has the opportunity to feel part of the educational environment, receive the necessary support and grow as a person.

Cooperation between a teacher and a teaching assistant is an integral part of a differentiated team. Together, they interact, clearly defining their role in the learning process, and complement each other harmoniously. The assistant, as a team member, should not only have appropriate training, but also constant support and assistance from the teacher.

Effective communication between a teacher and a teaching assistant is a key aspect of their collaboration. It requires important listening skills and the exchange of information needed to solve various problems. It is also important to receive negative information and use it to create a positive working atmosphere in the children's team. This approach increases the effectiveness of the team and improves the overall climate in the learning environment.

In order to be effective in the classroom, it is important that the assistant is familiar with the teacher's goals, which are included in each student's individualized learning plan. It is also important that the assistant be able to track student



progress and recognize when certain outcomes have been achieved. Knowing how to report observations to the teacher is also a key element of an effective teaching assistant. Appropriate training of the assistant successfully fulfills the role of ensuring student safety and increasing student productivity.

Coordinated cooperation between the teacher's assistant and the teacher himself or herself is essential to the effectiveness of the educational process in an inclusive institution. In addition, the teacher's assistant's cooperation with the team of specialists and parents plays an important role in improving the quality of education. The assistant takes into account the advice of specialists, provides information about the child, and maintains constant contact with the parents of students, involving them in the planning and implementation of the program. The assistant's presence at lessons, extracurricular activities, and during additional classes allows him or her to observe and consult with specialists if necessary, which helps to resolve important issues in the learning process.

The teacher's assistant actively assists parents of children with special educational needs, helping them to establish a productive dialog with the teacher. He or she takes into account the reasons for the child's conflict behavior, helps parents cope with anxiety and doubts, teaches them to match their expectations of learning success with their child's real capabilities, and supports the joy of even minor achievements.

Thus, the teacher's assistant acts as an important member of the team that brings together professionals and parents, contributing to the key role in the education and socialization of students with special needs. Their participation provides person-centered guidance in the educational process. It is important to pay attention to the cooperation between the teacher's assistant and the child. The assistant should establish and maintain a positive relationship with the student, creating a favorable climate for effective learning and development (Chornoboi, 2012): treating children with respect and recognizing their dignity, taking into account their physical, social and psychological development; showing respect for the child's strengths and concerns; maintaining effective and cooperative relationships; demonstrating appropriate responses to child-initiated interactions.

The key element in the assistant's work is the report study of information about the child, his or her current level of development, knowledge and skills. The teacher's assistant studies an extract from the PMPC protocol, psychological diagnostics by a psychologist, diagnostics by a social pedagogue, results of a defectologist's examination (speech therapist, sign language therapist, oligophrenic therapist, typhlopedagogue) and receives information from parents. For two weeks, the assistant observes the child's learning in different classes, studies his or her behavior during lessons and breaks, and communicates with parents of students with special educational needs. The ability to communicate effectively is a key feature in the work of a teacher's assistant with a child.

The teacher assistant is required to be patient, attentive, calm, flexible and adaptable, and to be able to fulfill different social roles simultaneously, being among adults (parents and professionals) and among students. The teacher's assistant is in a unique position where he or she needs to interact effectively with other groups. The results of observations, comprehensive examinations and discussion of their results by the teacher's assistant serve as the basis for determining specific teaching strategies and approaches to the education of a child with special educational needs. The teacher's assistant has a significant impact on mobilizing children's individual capabilities, stimulating their knowledge formation, development of communication skills. Maintaining competition in the work of a teacher's assistant clearly understand the entire scheme of inclusive education, plan daily and long-term activities of students, monitor the outcome of the educational process and make adjustments to the work with the student, taking into account the observations and detailed analysis of the activities of all participants in inclusive education.

This approach to inclusive education, which is based on the active role of the teaching assistant and his/her cooperation with all participants in the process, contributes to the creation of a true environment of support and development for children with special educational needs.

Thus, a teacher's assistant, in fulfilling his or her duties, becomes a necessary link in the interaction of all participants in the educational process. Their work is based on an individual approach to each student with special educational needs. Through the common interests and efforts of the teacher, assistant, and parents, they together contribute to the formation of an optimal environment for the development of each child. The teacher's assistant not only chooses effective teaching strategies, but also interacts with students, creating support and hope for success. Through their ability to communicate effectively and analyze in detail, the teacher's assistant contributes to the improvement of the education and upbringing of each child in an inclusive environment. His/her participation in the work with students with special educational needs is an invaluable component of the successful functioning of inclusive education.

It is also important to note that throughout the school year, the teacher's assistant is obliged to systematically study methodological literature, gain experience, interact with educational and rehabilitation centers, participate in district and regional seminars, and take their own professional development courses. To further their self-educational growth, teacher assistants should initiate participation in trainings and courses focused on various aspects, from inclusive education and student characteristics to maintaining the learning environment, behavior management, and professional development.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH**

To summarize, we can conclude that the active implementation of inclusive education in the educational space becomes possible only with the participation of a teacher's assistant as a member of a professional team. Professional experience, practical skills, and the ability to effectively organize special work professionally play a role in assisting teacher assistants in implementing the educational process for children with special educational needs.

In my opinion, one of the key roles of a teacher's assistant is to teach a child with special educational needs to learn independently and to create a favorable educational environment for them. The teacher's assistant should be



defined as a reliable friend for the child, always ready to help and understand his or her words, thoughts, views, feelings, and inner state. These important aspects only outline the wide range of significance of the role of a teaching assistant in inclusive education.

These aspects, while important, do not cover the full significance of the role of the teacher assistant in inclusive education. Thus, they encourage further research and analysis of issues related to the coherence of regulations aimed at improving social interaction in the educational environment.

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