

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UKRAINIAN RURAL AREAS: PROBLEMATIC ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE TERRITORIAL COMMUNITY IN THE VILLAGE OF KURLIVKA

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Abstract

The article proposes the definition of the essence of inclusive education and its compliance with the civilizational strategies of the XXI century. In the framework of the research project, the authors analyzed the European and world experience of implementing inclusion in the educational space. The main models and legal aspects of the implementation of inclusive education in Ukraine are considered. The authors of the article identified key issues that hinder the successful integration of inclusive education into the national education system (on the example of the village of Kurylivka) Mechanisms of effective implementation of the inclusive component of the national education system (for example, the village of Kurylivka) are proposed. General and special methods of cognition, namely institutional, systemic, structural-functional, statistical, analytical, comparative and descriptive, became the theoretical and methodological basis for the study of inclusive education in rural areas of Ukraine.

Key words: social inclusion, rural areas, territorial community, tolerance, social policy

INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, the educational system is the basis of intellectual, cultural, spiritual, social, political and economic development of society and the state. Education is an important social institution that reflects social relations functioning in its structure, influences the processes of socialization, social continuity, is responsible for the succession of generations, for training and involving people in full functioning of society, enriches the intellectual, creative, cultural potential of the people, provides cities and rural areas with highly qualified specialists. During the years of independence, the education system in Ukraine has significantly transformed, becoming more open, humanistically oriented, one that develops in line with progressive world trends and is part of the European and world educational space [8]. According to the requirements of time, needs and public

demand, the modern educational paradigm is aimed at ensuring that everyone, regardless of health, physical or intellectual disability, has the right to obtain quality education. This is especially true given the fact that according to the World Health Organization (WHO) only 20% of all born children are considered conditionally healthy, others - whether suffer from mental and physical disabilities, or are in a state between health and disease [18]. Recognition of the rights of children with special needs to education, realization of the right to obtain it at the place of residence, assistance in the process of socialization and choice of professional activity is a key vector of development not only of modern education but also of humanitarian policy in all democratic countries. Under such conditions, inclusive education, which involves the education of a child with special educational needs in a general education establishment, becomes especially important. One of the main tasks of inclusion is to respond to a wide

range of educational needs, both inside and outside the school environment, to create conditions in which all participants of the educational process have equal access to education, including children with special educational needs. After all, inclusion implies active, equal participation in the process of acquiring knowledge, involvement in social life of all categories of people, regardless of their physical, mental, intellectual or other characteristics, thereby reducing the manifestations of social segregation and inequality. Inclusive education is based on the principle of eliminating all discrimination, ensuring equal treatment for all but creating special conditions for people with special needs by developing appropriate curricula, taking organizational measures, developing teaching strategies, arranging premises and surrounding areas accordingly, using government resources and partnerships with urban and rural communities. Thus, the implementation of the principles of inclusive education requires changes and modifications of the content, approaches and structure of educational strategies, taking into account the recognition of equal value of each individual for society, creating conditions for their successful development and self-realization.

In this context, the purpose of the paper is to study the essence and features of social inclusion in the educational space of modern Ukrainian society (on the example of the territorial community of the village of Kurylivka).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

General and special methods of cognition, namely institutional, systemic, structural-functional, statistical, analytical, comparative and descriptive, became the theoretical and methodological basis for the study of inclusive education in rural areas of Ukraine.

The basis of the methodological tools of the study is the legal framework of Ukraine, which aims at supporting and developing rural areas, primarily the Law of Ukraine "On the priority of social development of rural and agro-industrial complex in the national economy" amended by the Order of the

Cabinet of Ministers № 1239 from 14.12.2020 [11], Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of September 23, 2015 № 995-r "On approval of the Concept of rural development" with changes made in accordance with the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers № 1239 of 14.12.2020 [1].

In addition, the regulatory framework of the study is a number of orders, resolutions, decisions and other legislative acts of Ukraine, which regulate the mechanisms of implementation and realization of the national project of the education system reforming in accordance with the standards of inclusive society of the XXI century [22, 25, 19, 24, 23, 20, 13, 12, 15].

The information and statistical resource of the research is the data of the Ministry of Community and Territories Development of Ukraine [16], data of the State Statistics Office [26, 27], as well as information resources of territorial communities [3, 4, 5, 6].

The case of the territorial community of Kupyansk district Kharkiv region was taken to analyse the network of Inclusive Resource Centers (IRC) [9], which play a key role in providing comprehensive assistance to children with disabilities, their parents and teachers-assistants, and on the basis of which the strategies of effective. The concept of implementation of inclusion in the educational space of rural areas is in the focus, as according to the obtained results it has strategic importance for the development of the Ukrainian state.

The study analyzed the works by E.Derunov, N.Kireev, O.Pruschak, A.Michael, T.Stoev, M.Shishkov, R.Condei, C.Tindeche, E.Sima, Sh.Kroker, Dzh.Lupart, A.Kolupaieva, O.Taranchenko, S.Carrington, A.Anderson, B.Furlonger, T. Dehtiarenko, S. Lytovchenko, M.Vasyl'ieva, I.Omel'chenko, N. IEsina, O.Strel'nikova and others, who contributed to the identification of problematic aspects of inclusive education in rural areas of Ukraine, and most importantly – contributed to the determination of a strategy of primary and urgent measures to create an inclusive educational space for children living in rural areas.

However, despite the presence of significant scientific achievements on this topic in the academic space, there is a shortage of works that thoroughly and comprehensively study the specifics of the implementation of inclusive projects for rural communities. After all, despite the global trend towards urbanization, for many countries around the world, including Ukraine, a significant proportion of the population living in rural areas remains traditional (30.46% according to the official data of the State Statistical Service of Ukraine) [26]. Romanian researchers [21] also point out this in their research, emphasizing specific recommendations for the inclusion of rural residents in the state program of social inclusion and social equality. “For its implementation, there were established important measures aiming the knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture and rural areas, the promotion and implementation of the modern technologies destined to increase farm viability and competitiveness, the setting up of producers' organization and co-operation in agriculture and forestry, the

reorganization of the food chain and the establishment of new quality systems for the agricultural and food products, the effective use of resources under the climate change conditions, the promotion of social inclusion, the reduction of poverty and the economic development of the rural areas by investing in fixed assets, creating basic services in the local communities and renewing the communes and villages, and increasing the living standard of the rural population”. [21, p.346].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the draft of the Law of Ukraine “On Territorial Infrastructure Planning”, a rural area is an area with clearly defined boundaries and the share of the population (in its total number) that exceeds 15-50%, so it can be argued that Ukraine is a country with a predominance of rural areas [6].

Thus, as of January 1, 2021, the share of the rural population in its total population was 30.4% (Table 1).

Table 1. Population by regional level (at 01.01.2021)

	Population, persons			Share of the population in the total, %	
	Total	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Ukraine	41,588,354	28,959,536	12,628,818	69.6	30.4
Vinnitsya	1,529,123	795,837	733,286	52.0	48.0
Volyn	1,027,397	537,242	490,155	52.3	47.7
Dnipropetrovsk	3,142,035	2,642,094	499,941	84.1	15.9
Donetsk	4,100,280	3,728,069	372,211	90.9	9.1
Zhytomyr	1,195,495	711,127	484,368	59.5	40.5
Zakarpattia	1,250,129	465,330	784,799	37.2	62.8
Zaporizhzhya	1,666,515	1,291,103	375,412	77.5	22.5
Ivano-Frankivsk	1,361,109	605,411	755,698	44.5	55.5
Kyiv	1,788,530	1,109,294	679,236	62.0	38.0
Kirovohrad	920,128	585,056	335,072	63.6	36.4
Luhansk	2,121,322	1,848,299	273,023	87.1	12.9
Lviv	2,497,750	1,526,767	970,983	61.1	38.9
Mykolayiv	1,108,394	761,278	347,116	68.7	31.3
Odesa	2,368,107	1,591,976	776,131	67.2	32.8
Poltava	1,371,529	859,042	512,487	62.6	37.4
Rivne	1,148,456	545,767	602,689	47.5	52.5
Sumy	1,053,452	733,310	320,142	69.6	30.4
Ternopol	1,030,562	472,540	558,022	45.9	54.1
Kharkiv	2,633,834	2,140,944	492,890	81.3	18.7
Kherson	1,016,707	624,661	392,046	61.4	38.6
Khmelnitskiy	1,243,787	718,063	525,724	57.7	42.3
Cherkasy	1,178,266	673,511	504,755	57.2	42.8
Chernivtsi	896,566	388,398	508,168	43.3	56.7
Chernihiv	976,701	642,237	334,464	65.8	34.2
The city of Kyiv	2,962,180	2,962,180	x	100.0	X

Source: SSSU, 2021 [26].

In the regional context, the Kharkiv region, within which the study was conducted, also belongs to the rural area with a rural population of 18.7% of its total number according to these parameters (Table 1).

Rural development is a priority for both the European and Ukrainian communities. Back in 2014, within the framework of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, among the many crucial issues for the Ukrainian state, attention was paid to issues of cooperation in rural development. [10, p. 16]. Ukraine also has a legal framework focused on both support and development of rural areas, including, for example, the Law of Ukraine “On the priority of social development of rural and agro-industrial complex in the national economy” as amended by the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution № 1239 of 14.12.2020 [1], Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of September 23, 2015 № 995-r “On approval of the Concept of rural development territories” with changes made in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution № 1239 of 14.12.2020 (implementation is designed for the period up to 2025) [1]. These regulations are aimed at supporting rural areas in various areas, including the social sphere.

In the context of globalization, there is a redistribution of responsibilities for local development between the state, regions and the community. It is the territorial community that becomes the primary subject in the implementation of social policy on the

ground, in the development of rural areas. Deputy Minister of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine V. Negoda emphasized: “Residents of villages, local business representatives should be maximally involved in the development of territories where they live, be active and feel responsibility for the future of their community”. [Ministry of Community Development].

One thousand four hundred thirty nine territorial amalgamated communities were created as part of the decentralization reform in order to develop local self-government in Ukraine, 56 of them are within the borders of Kharkiv region [3].

In terms of the total population, 2,633,834 people (according to the State Statistics Office [26]), Kharkiv Oblast is one of the largest. For today it consists of 7 districts (Kupyansk, Chuguiv, Kharkiv, Krasnograd, Bohodukhiv, Lozova, Izyum), in which there are 1,746 settlements located on the territory of 31,415 km² [4].

At the same time, in Kharkiv region there are areas where the population density per km² is not very high. This area includes Kupyansk district with a total population of 135,270, which occupies an area of 4,612.9 km². The population of Kupyansk district is united into 8 territorial communities, of which one is urban, three are in small towns and four communities are rural, in general there are 269 settlements (Table 2) [5, 6].

Table 2. Territorial communities of Kupyansk district

Community name	Community type	Population	Number of settlements	Availability of inclusive resource centers
Kupyansk	Urban	55,544	12	+
Kurylivka	Rural	9,766	13	—
Petropavlivka	Rural	5,245	16	—
Shevchenkovo	Settlement	19,392	60	+
Velykyi Burluk	Settlement	14,776	51	+
Vilkhuvatka	Rural	6,107	30	—
Dvorichna	Settlement	16,270	55	+
Kindrashivka	Rural	6,085	32	+

Source: Decentralization, 2021 [26].

Due to this specificity (uneven distribution of population in a certain area) “new regional development policy” is implemented at the

state level, in particular, it is presented in the Regional Development State Strategy for 2021-2027 (hereinafter the State Strategy) [1].

In this strategy, priorities are given to territorial communities, which face the task of strategic development planning, resource management. The main focus of this State Strategy is aimed at ensuring a better quality of life regardless of place of residence – reducing the disproportionate distribution of indicators of both economic development and quality of life, improving partnerships between regions. Today we see a negative trend towards the growth of people with disabilities (Table 3). In the regional context, the highest percentage of children with disabilities in relation to the total number of persons with disabilities is recorded in Zakarpattia, Rivne, Kherson and Chernivtsi regions (9.25%, 8.82%, 8.04% and 7.8% respectively). Against this background, in Kharkiv region, the percentage of children with disabilities in relation to the total number of people with disabilities is 5.63%, which is the “average” indicator [27].

Table 3. Number of persons with disabilities in Ukraine (At 01.01.2021; thousands of people)

	2019	2020	2021
Total	2,659.7	2,703.0	2,724.1
Of these, children	161.6	163.9	162.9

Source: SSSU, 2021 [27].

In the context of this trend, it can be argued that among the pressing issues of social security, correlating with the general setting of the State Strategy, is inclusion, namely inclusive education, that is creating of a common approach to teaching a child with special educational needs in an inclusive educational environment [17, 28]. The main responsibility for the implementation of state social policy, including the field of inclusive education, lies with the amalgamated territorial communities. The degree of their responsibility extends to the determination of budget expenditures in this area, management and coordination of educational institutions and government agencies at various levels for the implementation of social support programs for people with special needs (people with disabilities). Given the rather broad concept of inclusive education, and, accordingly, a wide range of its objects –

children with somatomental disabilities, disabled children, refugee children, migrant children, members of national minorities, religious minorities, children from families in difficult life circumstances, homeless children, orphans or children deprived of parental care, etc., in our study we will focus on children with special educational needs who have developmental disabilities (disabled). According to Kharkiv Regional State Administration, at the beginning of 2022 we have the following distribution of children with special educational needs in the districts of Kharkiv region, including Kupyansk disabilities, disabled children, refugee children, migrant children, members of national minorities, religious minorities, children from families in difficult life circumstances, homeless children, orphans or children deprived of parental care, etc., in our study we will focus on children with special educational needs who have developmental disabilities (disabled). According to Kharkiv Regional State Administration, at the beginning of 2022, it was the distribution of children with special educational needs in the districts of Kharkiv region, including Kupyansk district as presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of children with special educational needs by districts of Kharkiv region

Districts of Kharkiv region	Number of children
Bohodukhiv	128
Izium	178
Krasnograd	98
Kupyansk	159
Lozova	194
Kharkiv	531
Chuguiv	162

Source: SSSU, 2021 [26].

Full “inclusion” of these children in the educational environment and public life requires the development of legal framework aimed at supporting children with special educational needs and their parents, the development of specialized institutions and qualified staff. In recent years, we have seen progressive dynamics on this issue. Thus, according to the Directorate of Preschool, School, Extracurricular and Inclusive

Education, in 2018-2019 academic year the number of general secondary education institutions with inclusive classes in Ukraine was 3,790 institutions, then in 2020-2021 academic year there were already 6,394 of

them; the number of inclusive classes also increased – from 8,417 in 2018-2019 academic year to 18681 in 2020-2021 (Table 5) [7, p. 150, 153].

Table 5. Dynamics of inclusive education in Ukraine

	2018-2019 academic year	2019-2020 academic year	2020-2021 academic year
Number of students enrolled in inclusive classes	11,866	18,643	25,078
Number of students with special educational needs enrolled in inclusive classes	1,301	2,404	3,847
% of students with special needs from the total number of students in inclusive classes	11%	12.9%	15.3%
Number of secondary schools with inclusive classes	3,790	5,331	6,394
Number of inclusive classes in secondary schools	8,417	13,497	18,681

Source: SSSU, 2021 [7, p. 150, 153].

A specialized network of services – inclusive resource centers (IRC) – has been established to support and supervise children with special educational needs in Ukraine. These structural units are focused on identifying children with the appropriate status, providing psychological and pedagogical services, supporting both children and parents, and one of the main principles in the functioning of these centers is territorial proximity to the place of residence of this category of children. In this context, our study focused on the Kurilivka Territorial Community, which is consulted on issues that arise with regard to children with special educational needs by Kupyansk and Kindrashiv IRCs. Since the key role in the implementation of social and educational inclusion is assigned to inclusive resource centers, it is considered appropriate to describe the regulatory framework of Ukraine that regulates their activities. It includes Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers № 545 of 12.07.2017, Decision of the CMU № 711-VII of 01.03.2018, Order of the Ministry of Education and Science № 447 of 03.05.2018, Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers № 765 of 21.07.2018, Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers № 617 of 22.08.2018, Order of the Ministry of Education and Science № 977 dated 06.09.2018, Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science № 1/9-498 dated 05.08.2019, Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science № 1/9-495 dated

31.08.2020, Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science № 1/9-638 dated 19.11.2020 on IRCs as to the actions of Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers № 983 of 21.10.2020, Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science on the work of the IRC in connection with the adoption of Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers № 765 of 21.07.2021 [2, 12, 14, 15]. IRC is a unified network of inclusive centers, with an emphasis on territorial accessibility and provision of qualified psychological and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs (SEN) and their parents. Under the auspices of the central authorities of Ukraine and with the assistance of urban and rural communities a large-scale inclusive project was to launch in order to build a national network of IRCs, which as of January 1, 2021 has 633 IRCs (01.01.2019 – 522, 01.01.2020 – 635 IRCs) [7].

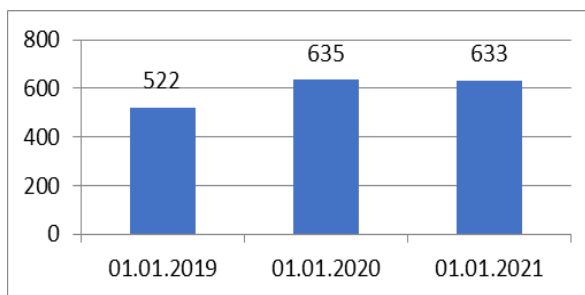


Fig. 1. Dynamics of the number of inclusive resource centers in 2019–2021, units

Source: Education in independent Ukraine: development and competitiveness: information-analytical collection, 2021 [7].

There are 35 IRCs in Kharkiv Oblast, 5 of which are in Kupyansk District.

The work of Kupyansk IRC is a structural unit with highly qualified personnel and material resources, which offers residents of 8 territorial communities of Kupyansk district, Kharkiv region, a catalog of educational services that allow to solve problems of

timely assistance to children in general education system and have special educational needs. For example, there is a set of correctional and developmental classes (services) for children with special educational needs who have musculoskeletal disorders [9].

Table 6. Correctional and developmental program for children with SEN who have musculoskeletal disorders

Basic educational services	Additional educational services	Specialists
Development correction	Development of cognitive activity Art correction Sensorimotor development Lego design Formation of graphic skills in children Montessori therapy	Defectologist, speech therapist
Speech development	Fairy tale therapy	Speech therapist teacher
Rythmics	Logarithmics Breathing exercises Dance movement therapy Music therapy	Rhythm teacher, physical education instructor
Exercise therapy	Correction of deficiencies in physical development; Correction of movement disorders (coordination disorders, spatial orientation, accuracy in movement, balance, etc.); Elimination of shortcomings in the development of motor and other functions (strength, speed, coordination, endurance, flexibility, etc.); Correction and development of psychomotor skills; Formation of a healthy lifestyle and further socialization.	Physical education teacher, exercise therapy instructor

Source: Kupyansk IRC, [9].

There are 26 children registered with Kupyansk IRC of Kupyansk City Council Kharkiv Region (7 people are of preschool age, 19 people are of school age, 9 people with special educational needs who are attending correctional and developmental classes).

Additional educational services are a powerful methodological tool for children with special educational needs, their parents and teachers/assistants who work with these children.

These services aimed at corrective development of cognitive, emotional and volitional spheres, positive personality traits, which would allow the most of children with special educational needs to study in a secondary school, to form an active child's

personality, able to learn about the environment, develop, acquire knowledge and skills, play and practical skills, accessible and interesting for a particular child, taking into account his age and individual development.

Regarding the number of educational institutions, as of January 28, 2022, there are 322 general secondary education institutions in Kharkiv region, which include inclusive classes for people with special educational needs.

In particular, there are 34 general secondary education institutions in Kupyansk district Kharkiv region, which have inclusive classes for children with special educational needs, 5 of which belong to Kurylivka amalgamated territorial community (Fig. 2).

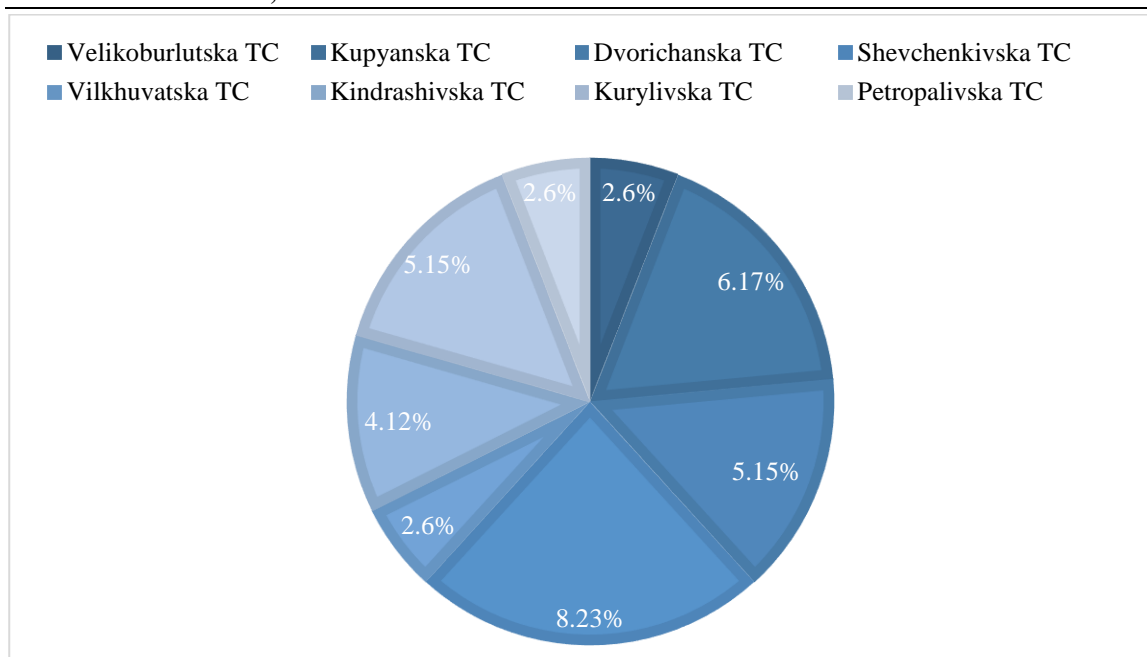


Fig. 2. Distribution of schools with inclusive education by amalgamated territorial communities of Kupyansk district
 Source: SSSU, 2021 [27].

There are 7 general secondary education institutions on the territory of Kurylivka ATC (as of January 28, 2022), which provide services for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills to 1,148 people. Approximately 2% (20 people aged 8-18) of the total number of children obtaining general secondary

education in general secondary educational institutions of Kurylivka territorial community are people with special educational needs. The distribution of persons with special educational needs by educational institutions and classes is shown in Fig. 3.

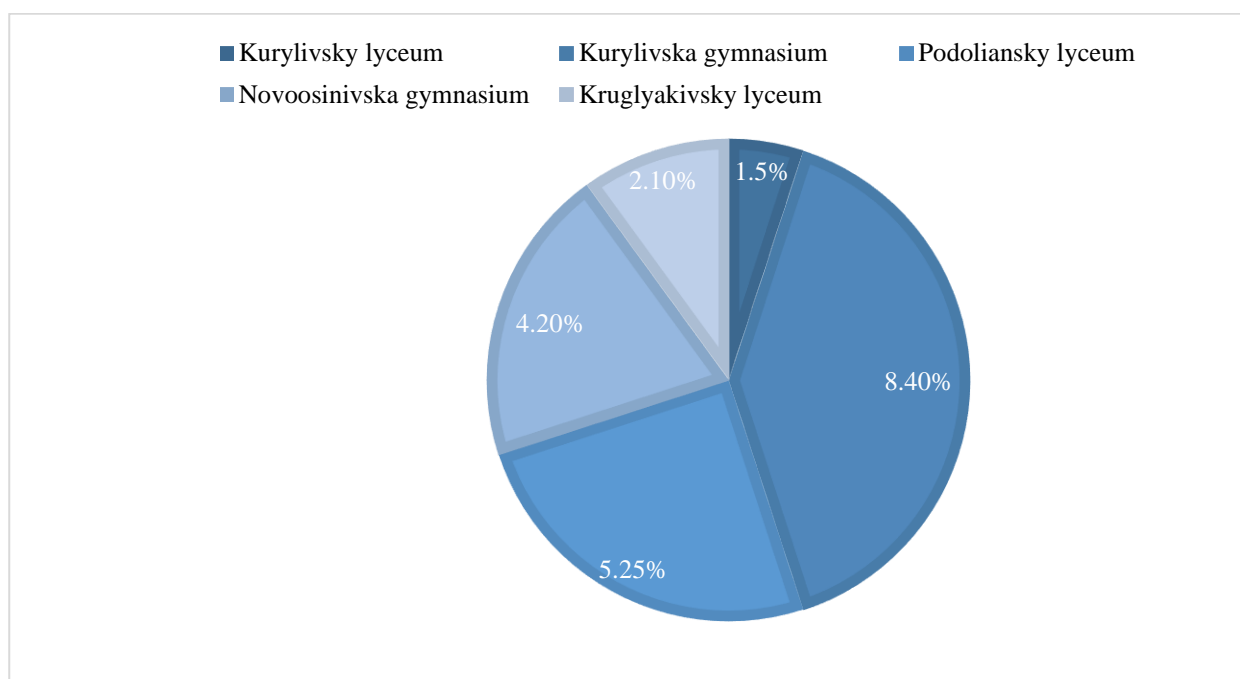


Fig. 3. Distribution of persons with special educational needs in secondary educational establishments of Kurylivka territorial community
 Source: SSSU, 2021 [27].

Twelve teaching assistants provide assistance to school staff and parents of children with disabilities during their studies in general secondary education institutions. Other specialists, such as a rehabilitation specialist, speech pathologist, speech therapist, etc., are not available at all in Kurylivka community. Therefore, referring to the findings of leading Western and Ukrainian researchers, it should be emphasized that the involvement of highly specialized and highly qualified specialists in the inclusive spectrum is a primary and effective tool for working with children with special educational needs in general education institutions. As amalgamated territorial communities is becoming one of the main actors of implementing social inclusion through primary education, any assistance in the implementation of their functions, such as national support, socially responsible business, grant projects, etc., becomes extremely important locally. Therefore, in order to create an effective educational system that can meet the needs of all applicants, regardless of their level of psychophysical development, it is necessary to provide general secondary educational institutions with various assistance (logistical, informational and advisory, etc.), which would fully enable the rights of all applicants to education, personal development, professional activity, participation in public life, etc.

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, it should be noted that social inclusion is not a new phenomenon for Ukrainian society. The need to comprehensively promote the involvement of every member of society in active life, to ensure and create equal conditions for such activities in all spheres of society, was realized in the early 2000s. As of today, the most common in the Ukrainian scientific discourse is the attempt to explain the essence of the concept of «social inclusion» through the availability of education for all citizens of Ukraine. Access to education is an urgent task at all levels of acquiring knowledge and skills, starting with preschool and covering all

others, and throughout the country, in cities and in rural areas. In this sense, social inclusion is in fact identified with educational inclusion.

In 2008, with the approval of Regulations on Special School (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine of September 15, 2008, №852) by the Ukrainian state, significant changes were made in the process of acquiring education by each member of society. This process is based on universal and personal values, namely on humanity, democracy, personal orientation of education and its accessibility, which takes into account the needs and abilities of each person seeking education. The analysis of the legal framework showed that in modern Ukrainian society there are quite a number of laws («On Education», «On Complete General Secondary Education», «On Preschool Education», «On Vocational (Technical) Education», «On Higher Education», etc.) and a number of resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which enable the organization and implementation of the process of education in preschool, vocational (technical), higher and extracurricular education on the principles of equality and accessibility.

The analysis of statistical and theoretical materials allowed us to state that the creation of appropriate conditions, preparatory measures for society's acceptance and direct acceptance of all its members on the principles of equality and humanity, with equal opportunities for education, is characteristic of all levels of the Ukrainian education system and is carried out both in cities and in rural areas. It is found out that one of the most effective models of inclusive education is the model of cohabitation of persons with special educational needs and persons without such needs, which should further be transformed to an inclusive society, providing equal access to material and social benefits, ability to engage in certain professional activities, to be fully involved in all spheres of society, etc. for each of its members. The creation of any other, different, "special" conditions threatens the realization of the child's rights to education, and in the

future the realization of general human rights in whole.

Thus, social inclusion in modern Ukrainian society acquires the features of a certain mechanism, a tool aimed at overcoming restrictions and barriers to social welfare, which radically changes the existing state policy. In fact, social inclusion can be defined as a desirable situation in which all members of society, regardless of the presence or absence of special needs, living in urban or rural areas, etc., have sufficient resources and opportunities for equal participation in all spheres of society life. Social inclusion is inherent in all social processes and in fact contributes to the establishment of social equality in modern Ukrainian society, which corresponds to the civilizational strategies of the XXI century.

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