
SOCIAL INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY



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To cite this article:

Tsymbaliuk, S. (2024). Social inclusion in higher education: assessment methodology. *Education: Modern Discourses*, 7, 80–92.
<https://doi.org/10.37472/2617-3107-2024-7-08>

Abstract. *Implementation of the priority of social inclusion has become relevant for Ukrainian higher education institutions due to some external and internal factors, especially in the context of integration into the EU. The purpose of the article is to conduct a comparative analysis of the approaches of different international organizations and researchers to the elaborating indicators of social inclusion and to develop, based on the analysis, methodological principles and indicators for assessing social inclusion in higher education institutions. The methodology for developing the tools is based on the modern vision of social inclusion in education as the involvement of all students regardless of their characteristics. A comparative analysis of the approaches of different international organizations and researchers to elaborating social inclusion indicators has been performed. Social inclusion indicators for higher education institutions have been developed based on the generalisation of different researchers' approaches and formulated methodological principles. The basic principles of the developing indicators are based on the "input — processes — outcomes" approach. Higher education institutions can use the proposed indicators to assess the implementation of the social inclusion priority at the institutional level.*

Keywords: *higher education; higher education institutions; social inclusion indicators; social inclusion.*

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the context of the destructive impact of external factors on the economic, political, social, environmental and security situation, higher education institutions should become educational, research and innovation centres. In addition, the third mission of higher education institutions — the social mission — is becoming more relevant in the current environment, which involves active participation in the social life of communities and the country as a whole.

The armed aggression of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine has led to an increase in the number of people with not only physical but also mental health problems, which creates barriers to education for students and makes it impossible for those who have

already received an education and profession to continue working in the field of their previous studies. In addition, due to the temporary occupation of part of the Ukrainian territory, and the destruction of housing and businesses, a significant part of the population is forced to change their residence and look for new jobs.

The government and civil society organisations have introduced some programmes and initiatives for the social protection and integration of people affected by the war, including military and internally displaced people. Higher education institutions should play a key role in these processes. Retraining of military staff and civilians, psychological support, training, and assistance in starting a business and integrating into the labour market are important. In this regard, the implementation of the priority of social inclusion should become an integral part of the policies of higher education institutions, along with the quality of education, excellence in teaching, learning and research, and the development of international partnerships.

In recent years, some international and national initiatives have been launched to implement the priority of social inclusion in the academic environment. Among the priorities for the development of higher education until 2030 for the countries of the European Higher Education Area, defined by the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (19 November 2020), is inclusiveness, which provides equal access to higher education for all students and full support in completing their education and training (European Higher Education Area, 2020).

The main goal of the European Higher Education Area is to build more sustainable and inclusive national education and training systems. To make the higher education system inclusive, creating the right conditions for the successful learning of students with different backgrounds is necessary. This goes beyond the issue of providing financial support to socially vulnerable groups, although this is vital for students with low-income backgrounds. To ensure that the students entering and graduating from European higher education institutions reflect the diversity of the European population, access and completion rates for socially vulnerable and underrepresented groups should be improved (European Higher Education Area, 2024).

The priorities for the development of higher education set out in the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022–2032 include inclusiveness, accessibility, equality and diversity. Among the five strategic goals, two are related to the implementation of the social inclusion priority:

- ensuring quality educational and research activities, and competitive higher education that is accessible to different segments of the population;
- effectiveness of management in the socially responsible higher education system (Ministerstvo osvity i nauky Ukrainy, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some researchers emphasise that inclusion and equity can potentially improve the quality of education within a national education system (Ainscow, 2020; Rosado-Castellano et al., 2022).

An analysis of studies on social inclusion in education has shown that some scholars emphasise the importance of educational policies (Magnússon et al., 2019; Nilsen, 2010; Salmi & D’Addio, 2020) and educational management to ensure inclusion (Kugelmass & Ainscow, 2004; López-López et al., 2024; Nikolaesku, 2021).

Nesterova and Orzhel (2023) note that social inclusion plays a key role in overcoming the challenges of societal crises, and, in Ukraine, these are currently the challenges of a full-scale war and post-war reconstruction.

Traditionally, the term “inclusion” refers to people with special needs. Collins (2010) focuses on the desire to offer students an equal and inclusive experience. Keating, Zybutz, &

Rouse (2000), Davydenko (2018), Boiko (2019), Morris, Milton & Goldstone (2019), Potapiuk (2021), Reason & Ward (2022), and Shrestha and Bhattarai (2022) focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities. Although the authors focus on different types of disability, they all use a social model of disability to justify the necessity of implementing inclusive education. Gibson, Clarkson and Scott (2022) focus on students with disabilities studying remotely. Hurenko, Mytsyk, Popova, & Lopat (2023) study how digital technologies can help to implement inclusive higher education. Forsyth a& Evans (2019) explore how inclusive assessment can promote the inclusion of all students in the context of expanding participation.

In recent years, the view of various international organisations and researchers of the education system has changed and inclusion refers to the involvement of all students regardless of their characteristics. Inclusive education, as defined in the Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education, promotes the recognition of the need to work towards “institutions for all” that respect differences, support learning and respond to individual needs (UNESCO, 1994).

According to the Cali commitment to equity and inclusion in education, inclusion is a transformative process that ensures full participation and access to quality learning opportunities for all people, respecting and valuing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination (UNESCO, 2019).

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies defines inclusive education as ensuring the presence, participation and achievement of all students, regardless of status, race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, disability, language, religion or other characteristics, in quality learning (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE], 2023).

According to UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2020, the main objective of inclusion in education is not to leave any student behind. Inclusive education aims to ensure the right of everyone to access quality education throughout their life. An inclusive approach to education means that individual needs are taken into account. Inclusive education aims to identify and remove all barriers towards education and covers everything from curricula to pedagogy and teaching (UNESCO, 2020).

One of the main characteristics of inclusive education identified by UNICEF is changing the system to fit the students, rather than the students to fit the system, as the problem of exclusion lies in the system, not in the individuals or their characteristics (UNICEF, 2014).

Claeys-Kulik & Jørgensen (2019) indicate that inclusion aims to achieve a social profile that reflects society. In addition, inclusion can also refer to the perception of a sense of belonging.

Orzhel & Otych (2024) stress that authorities should support higher education institutions to provide professional training for academic and administrative staff, improve their capacity to work professionally and impartially with diverse students and staff, create an inclusive learning environment, and foster an inclusive institutional culture. External quality assurance systems should assess this capacity, considering how the social dimension, diversity, accessibility, equity and inclusion are reflected in the missions and activities.

A group of researchers led by Kaiser emphasise that career guidance and the admission processes are important for attracting a diverse pool of applicants. In this regard, career guidance, admission and enrolment policies should aim to support underrepresented and vulnerable applicants (Kaiser et al., 2022).

It is important to note that different views and approaches to interpreting social inclusion in education cause difficulties in developing tools for monitoring and assessment. Researchers often use different characteristics and indicators to study social inclusion.

In addition, most organisations and researchers have developed tools for assessing social inclusion in secondary education (Atkinson et al., 2002; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Naida & Tkachenko, 2014; INEE, 2023; Mezzanotte & Calvel, 2023; New..., 2010; Vyrastekova, 2021). At the same time, it should be noted that higher education has its specifics, therefore, some of the indicators that can be used to study social inclusion in secondary schools do not apply to higher education institutions. When formulating indicators, it is important to consider the specifics of higher education, the organisation of the educational process and the contingent of students.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the article is to conduct a comparative analysis of the approaches of different international organizations and researchers to the elaborating indicators of social inclusion and to develop, based on the analysis, methodological principles and indicators for assessing social inclusion in higher education institutions.

The study is of a theoretical and applied nature. The paper analyses the views of international organisations and researchers on the concept of “social inclusion in education”. Based on critical generalisation, methodological principles for developing tools for studying social inclusion in higher education institutions were formulated. The methodology for developing the tools is based on the modern vision of social inclusion in education as the involvement of all students regardless of their characteristics. A comparative analysis of the approaches of different scholars to the development of social inclusion indicators was performed. Social inclusion indicators for higher education institutions were developed based on the generalisation of different scholars’ approaches and formulated methodological principles. The basic principles of the developing indicators are based on the “input — processes — outcomes” approach. The SMART approach was also used to formulate the indicators, according to which each indicator should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. The grouping method was used to assign social inclusion indicators to different dimensions.

MAIN RESULTS

To explore the issue of inclusion, it is important to differentiate between this concept and other inter-related concepts, such as “diversity” and “equity”.

According to a European University Association study, diversity is a multi-dimensional concept that often refers to, but is not limited to, underrepresented, disadvantaged or vulnerable groups.

The term “equality” is linked to the idea that everyone has the same rights and should thus enjoy equal treatment and non-discrimination. Equity includes needs-based support to level out the relative disadvantage. It thus often comes along with measures such as positive action or positive discrimination (Claeys-Kulik et al., 2019).

UNICEF outlines the differences between traditional and inclusionary approaches to education (Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of traditional and inclusionary approaches to education

<i>Traditional approach (which may include integration)</i>	<i>Inclusionary approach</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Focus on student ⇒ Assessment of students by specialist ⇒ Diagnostic/prescriptive programme ⇒ Placement in appropriate programme ⇒ Needs of ‘special’ students ⇒ Changing/remediating the subject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Focus on the classroom ⇒ Examine teaching/learning factors ⇒ Collaborative problem solving ⇒ Strategies for the teachers ⇒ Adaptive and supportive regular classroom environments

Traditional approach (which may include integration)	Inclusionary approach
⇒ Benefits to students with special needs of being integrated ⇒ Professional, specialist expertise and formal support ⇒ Technical interventions (special teaching, therapy)	⇒ Rights of all students ⇒ Changing the school ⇒ Benefits to all students including all ⇒ Informal support and expertise from mainstream teachers ⇒ Good teaching for all

Source: UNICEF, 2014.

The OECD project “Education for Inclusive Societies” covers six main dimensions of social inclusion: migration; ethnic groups, national minorities and Indigenous peoples; gender; gender identity and sexual orientation; special education needs; and giftedness. The project provides for two generalised factors that can cause differences in educational outcomes and affect the inclusiveness of educational systems, — socioeconomic status of students and their geographical location (OECD, 2024).

In this regard, the implementation of the priority of social inclusion in the academic environment involves creating conditions for fair representation of students with different backgrounds in higher education institutions, including social, economic, ethnic, gender, age, and physical characteristics.

The minimum standards for inclusive education developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, which identify key actions and improve the quality of education, cover five areas:

- foundational standards (community participation, resources, coordination, assessment, response strategies, monitoring and evaluation);
- access and learning environment (equal access, protection and well-being, facilities and services);
- teaching and learning (curriculum, training professional development support, instruction and learning processes, assessment of learning process);
- teachers and other education personnel (recruitment and selection, work conditions, support and supervision);
- education policy (law and policy formulation, planning and implementation) (INEE, 2023).

To identify areas for implementing the social inclusion priority in the academic environment, it is necessary to develop assessment tools and indicators. Indicators are a mandatory tool when setting goals for implementing social inclusion priorities. Such indicators are important for assessing the achievement of the goals. Indicators focus on priority areas, procedures and performance metrics. Indicators are necessary for educational institutions’ self-assessment of implementing social inclusion priority. Based on the assessment results, educational institutions identify areas for improving policies, processes, procedures, etc.

According to UNESCO, while focusing on data collection on diverse groups does not automatically lead to their inclusion, monitoring the degree of their involvement in education draws attention to them and the barriers they face (UNESCO, 2020).

According to some researchers, the indicators can be used not only to track the progress of higher education institutions in implementing the social inclusion priority but also for comparison with other institutions (Kaiser, 2022).

The OECD proposes the “inputs — processes — outcomes” approach as the methodological basis for developing indicators. Inputs include policy, material and financial resources, curriculum, teacher education and continuous professional learning, and leadership. The main elements of the processes are climate, teaching and pedagogical practices, collabora-

tion and support to individuals. The interaction between inputs and processes leads to outcomes. The main outcomes are educational outcomes (active participation, dropout and repetition rates, achievement) and well-being (Figure 1) (Mezzanotte & Calvel, 2023).

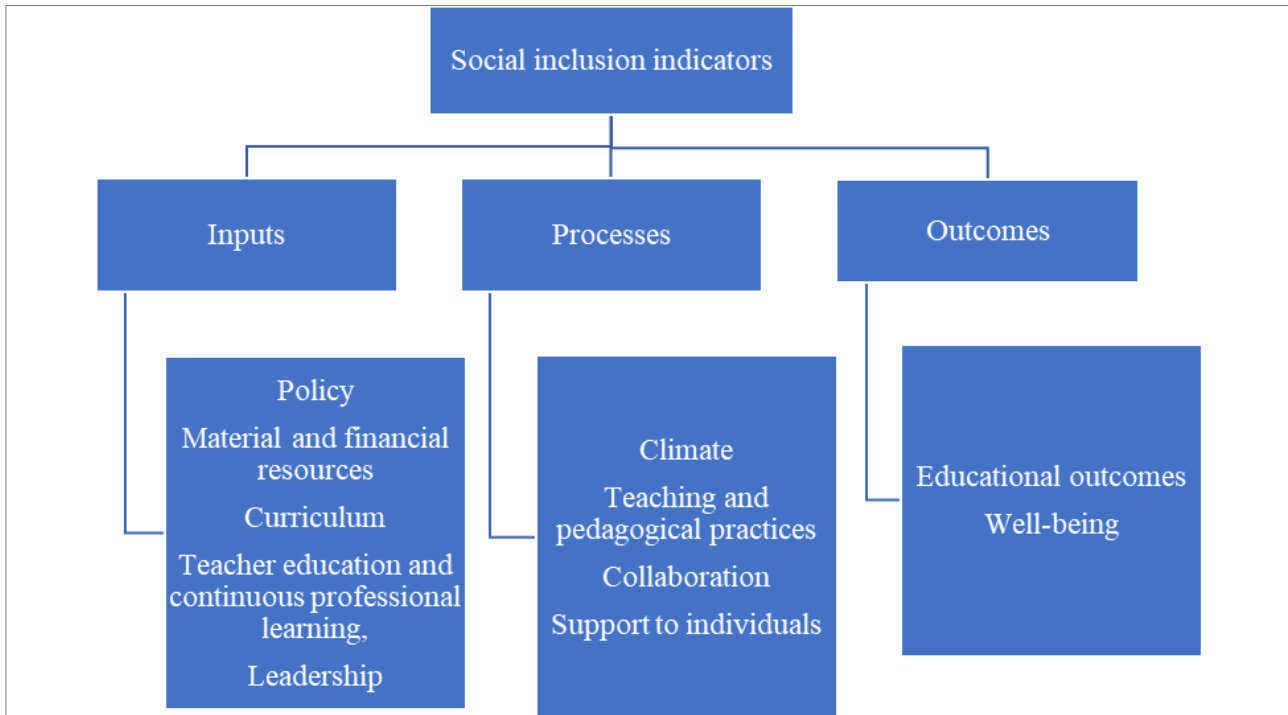


Figure 1. Social inclusion indicators according to the “inputs – processes – outcomes” approach

Source: Mezzanotte & Calvel, 2023.

Hubbard and Gawthorpe’s methodology for examining inclusion is based on the Inclusive Higher Education Framework, which contains five areas of activity that contribute to the implementation of the principle of inclusion in the educational institutions’ practices: structures and processes; curriculum development and delivery; assessment and feedback; community and belonging; and pathways to success.

In addition to the five areas, the framework is based on six key principles or ways of working:

- clear, consistent language and communication;
- leadership, responsibility and accountability;
- well-being, empathy and authenticity;
- development and training to empower individuals and teams;
- partnership working across the institution;
- evidence, reflection and evaluation.

Implementing principles at the institutional level requires all university community members to analyse their practices and take positive action when weaknesses are identified (Hubbard & Gawthorpe, 2024).

The methodology for assessing social inclusion, proposed by a group of researchers led by Kaiser, is based on a set of social dimension indicators covering five stages of the educational cycle: outreach, access, participation/progress (including induction), success, and outcomes of higher education (Figure 2). The set of indicators at all stages of the educational cycle covers the diversity of teachers and students and inclusion policies. The indicators focus on ensuring equity and considering stakeholders’ needs (Kaiser, 2022).



Figure 2. Stages of social inclusion in higher education

Source: Kaiser, 2022.

The New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education proposed the following groups of qualitative indicators of inclusive education: leadership; school climate; scheduling and participation; curriculum, instruction and assessment; program planning and development; program implementation and assessment; individual student supports; family-school partnerships; collaborative planning and teaching; professional development; planning for continued best practice improvement (New..., 2010).

According to the proposed methodology, the assessment procedure involves stakeholders, which should be determined by each institution independently. Stakeholders may include teachers, parents, and others (New..., 2010).

For each group of indicators, there were formulated statements which reflect the implementation of inclusive education practices. A qualitative scale is used for the assessment:

- fully — there is much evidence that the statement is true; it would be difficult to find ways to improve;
- substantially — there is much evidence that the statement is true, but there are a few practices that could be strengthened;
- partially — some evidence can be given that the statement is true, but there are some practices needing improvement or opportunities for strengthening;
- not yet — there is very little or no evidence that the practice exists (New..., 2010).

To study social inclusion, Booth & Ainscow (2002) proposed the Inclusion Index. The index is determined by indicators that cover three main dimensions of inclusion in education: creating an inclusive culture; developing inclusive policies; and developing inclusive practices.

Based on the achievements of France in implementing the priority of inclusion, Jaegler (2022) proposed a methodology for assessing the level of inclusion in higher education institutions. The methodology is based on indicators grouped by the main stakeholders of the higher education institution in the context of four dimensions. The main stakeholders include students, employees, alumni and partners. The dimensions include social openness, gender, identity, and disability. The list of indicators proposed by Jaegler is presented in Table 2.

- In addition, the researcher identified four general indicators:
- percentage of employees aware of inclusivity;
- internal communication on inclusive topics;

Table 2. Indicators for assessing the level of inclusion, developed by Jaegler

<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Students	Social openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the rate of scholarship holders • the number of students according to their parents' socio-professional category
	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % male/female and • % male/female association president
	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ratio of isolated territories (rural territories and isolated cities) to non-isolated territories (cities and peri-urban areas) • the percentage of different nationalities
	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of students declared as having a disability

Table 2 Continued

<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Employees	Social openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work-study students • % of nationalities not corresponding to one of the ten most advanced countries
	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender equality index
	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of different regions • % of different age groups
	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of employees declared as having a disability
Alumni	Social openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ratio of graduates working in companies of different sizes
	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wage gaps between male and female graduates
	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of graduates working abroad
	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of graduates who became disabled after graduation and whom the institution helped to retrain
Partners	Social openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existence of partnerships/associations aimed at social diversity
	Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existence of partnerships/associations with a gender focus
	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existence of partnerships/associations with diversity target
	Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • existence of partnerships/associations/projects targeting disability

Source: Jaegler, 2022.

- external communication on inclusive topics;
- reporting system.

The basic methodological principles for developing tools for assessing social inclusion in higher education institutions are outlined below:

- the methodology for developing the tools should be based on the modern views of international organisations and researchers on social inclusion in education, according to which the latter concerns the involvement of all students regardless of their characteristics;
- when developing indicators of social inclusion, it is necessary to follow the conceptual foundations of its interpretation, and therefore, it is necessary to develop indicators that reflect the availability of input resources, the educational process and outcomes;
- indicators of social inclusion should be clear, understandable and informative (availability of an information base for assessing the actual level of the relevant indicators);
- the system of indicators is developed to examine social inclusion at the institutional level — at the level of an educational institution.

When developing indicators of social inclusion, it is important to follow certain requirements. The SMART approach should be taken into account, according to which each indicator should be:

- specific (aimed at measuring a concrete result);
- measurable (the indicator can be calculated, analysed, and compared);
- achievable (the indicator should be realistic in terms of implementation);
- relevant (the indicators should be in line with the public policy and the policy of the educational institution);
- time-bound (indicators should be developed under the goals set and the timing of their achievement).

Indicators can be quantitative and qualitative, objective and subjective. Subjective indicators reflect the subjective assessments of participants of the educational process (students, faculty members) and stakeholders (employers, graduates, etc.) of the success/progress in implementing the social inclusion priority.

It should be noted that the set of indicators should be flexible. The set of indicators may vary depending on the study objectives, the development strategy of higher education and the institution, the external and internal environment of the institution, etc.

Based on the generalization of different approaches to selecting indicators of social inclusion and taking into account the methodological principles formed above, we developed indicators of social inclusion for higher education institutions, which are presented in Table 3. The basis for the development of indicators is the “inputs – processes – outcomes” approach proposed by the OECD (Mezzanotte & Calvel, 2023).

Indicators for measuring input resources are formed in the following dimensions: policy; educational environment and financial resources; communication; curriculum and teaching materials; teacher training and leadership and educational management.

Indicators for measuring the educational process include indicators in the following dimensions: climate in higher education institution; teaching and didactic practices; organization of learning and individual support.

Indicators for measuring the outcomes include indicators in the following dimensions: student engagement and performance.

Table 3. Social inclusion indicators for higher education institutions

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Indicators for measuring input resources	
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of institutional policy on inclusion in a higher education institution • Existence of reporting on the implementation of the inclusion priority in a higher education institution
Educational environment and financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of a quota system for budgetary places for students from socially vulnerable groups • Existence of grants, scholarships, and loans for education for people from low-income families • Availability/percentage of expenditures on creating an inclusive barrier-free educational environment • Availability of inclusive barrier-free educational space • Provision of necessary resources (food, textbooks, etc.) for socially vulnerable groups of students
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of information about the higher education institution, educational programs for people who have disabilities (Braille), or in different languages (not only in Ukrainian) • The use of non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive language in documents and information materials, including those posted on the website of the higher education institution
Curriculum and teaching materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities to build individual educational trajectories based on the experience and needs of students • Availability of adapted teaching materials and supporting devices for the provision of educational services for people with special needs
Teacher training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of professional development programs for faculty members in the field of inclusive education • Availability of professional development programs for faculty members on teaching in a multicultural environment • Availability of professional development programs for faculty members on the use of student-centered teaching methods • Availability/results of faculty members’ self-assessment of their ability to use inclusive teaching and learning methods in a multicultural environment
Leadership and educational management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of inclusive education by the head of the HEI • Availability of a responsible person for the implementation of inclusive education

Table 3 Continued

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Indicators for measuring the educational process	
The climate in higher education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of institutional policy on anti-bullying in higher education institutions • Implementation of inclusive policies and anti-bullying measures • Implementation of measures aimed at preserving mental health • Involvement of student self-government bodies in the implementation of inclusive policies • The sense of security of students with special needs and different characteristics (gender, race, social status, etc.)
Teaching and didactic practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of modules (disciplines, topics of qualification theses) related to the issues of diversity, inclusion, equal opportunities, non-discrimination • Conducting/participation of HEI students in student research competitions, conferences, and other scientific events related to diversity, inclusion, equal opportunities, non-discrimination • Involvement of students with special needs in educational, scientific, sports, and cultural activities
Organization of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using flexible learning forms (online, asynchronous, distance learning, etc.) • Availability of a system re-accreditation (recognition) of the results of previous, including non-formal learning • Availability of a system of awarding ECTS points to students for volunteer and community activities
Individual support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting information in a variety of ways by faculty members, taking into account the cultural, socioeconomic, and other diversity of students • Providing students with opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills in different ways • Use of special tools, and technologies, including digital ones for people with special needs • Provision of psychological assistance to students with health problems • Availability of mixed mobility programs, internationalization at home
Indicators for measuring the outcomes	
Student engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number/percentage of students with special needs • Number/percentage of students with different characteristics (gender, race, social status, etc.) • Percentage of attendance of classes by students with special needs and different characteristics • Involvement of students with special needs and different characteristics in student research competitions, conferences, and other scientific events
Student performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success rate of students with special needs • Percentage of students with special needs who complete their studies to the number of students enrolled • Percentage of students with special needs who enter a master's degree program after obtaining a bachelor's degree • Percentage of students with special needs who enter postgraduate programs after obtaining a master's degree • Percentage of students with special needs who are employed after obtaining the relevant educational level (bachelor's, master's) in the profession they have acquired

Source: compiled by the author.

To implement the priority of social inclusion in higher education institutions, it is important to elaborate development strategies based on inclusiveness, equality, and diversity that consider the needs of the entire community.

Directions for implementing the priority of social inclusion in the academic environment:

- creating opportunities for lifelong learning, and developing adult education;
- introduction of various forms, including blended and distance learning, flexible forms;
- providing wide opportunities for building individual educational trajectories to meet the needs of a diverse contingent of students;
- introduction of tools for recognizing the results of non-formal and informal education;

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- creation of an inclusive barrier-free educational space: inclusive campuses, classrooms, laboratories to meet the academic needs of all students;
 - financial support — providing grants, scholarships, and loans for education to people from low-income households;
 - quotation of budget places for students from socially vulnerable groups;
 - providing psychological assistance to students with health problems;
 - conducting activities aimed at preserving mental health;
 - providing equal access to participation in international academic mobility programs;
 - introducing programs of mixed mobility, internationalization at home, international online cooperation, etc.

One of the most effective measures is introducing an ombudsman position in higher education institutions, whose responsibilities include resolving conflicts related to equality, inclusiveness and accessibility.

An important area is the formation of an inclusive culture in the academic environment, which requires the introduction of modules on inclusive pedagogy into the professional development programs of academic staff, workshops, trainings, and conferences on social inclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

The relevance of implementing the priority of social inclusion is due to some external and internal factors that affect the activities of higher education institutions. Today, the priority of social inclusion is declared by international and national strategic and program documents. The analysis of publications on social inclusion has shown that in recent years the view of various international organizations and researchers of the education system has changed and inclusion refers to the involvement of all students regardless of their characteristics. At the same time, different views and approaches to interpreting social inclusion in education make it difficult to develop tools for monitoring and assessing it. Researchers often use different characteristics and indicators to study social inclusion.

Based on the generalization of the approaches of various researchers, the methodological foundations for developing tools for studying social inclusion have been formulated and a set of indicators of social inclusion has been elaborated. It is determined that the methodology for developing the tools should be based on the current views of international organisations and researchers on social inclusion. The development of indicators is based on the “inputs — processes — outcomes” approach proposed by the OECD. Indicators for measuring input resources, educational process, and outcomes have been formed along different dimensions. Higher education institutions can use the proposed indicators to assess the implementation of the social inclusion priority at the institutional level.

Promising areas for further research include verifying the reliability of the developed indicators of social inclusion (by expert evaluation), elaborating a methodology for determining comprehensive indicators for assessing the level of social inclusion to rank higher education institutions and tracking progress in implementing the priority of social inclusion in institutions. It is important to test the developed tools and develop methodological recommendations for their use by higher education institutions.

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