Factors Of Developing Professional Competence Of Primary School Teachers In An Inclusive Educational Environment

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Abstract: This article explores the pedagogical, psychological, and organizational factors that contribute to the development of professional competence among primary school teachers working in inclusive educational environments. Inclusive education, as a manifestation of equality and human rights in education, requires teachers to possess a high level of adaptability, methodological literacy, empathy, and the ability to organize a differentiated learning process. The study analyzes the theoretical foundations of professional competence, identifies its structure, and defines key factors influencing its growth under inclusive conditions. It is argued that the competence of teachers in inclusive settings depends not only on professional knowledge and pedagogical skills but also on the integration of social, emotional, and digital competences. The article proposes a model for the development of teacher competence through continuous professional development, reflective practices, and interprofessional collaboration. The findings highlight that creating an inclusive educational culture requires systematic preparation of teachers capable of ensuring accessibility, participation, and success for every learner.

Introduction: The rapid modernization of education in the 21st century has led to a paradigm shift toward inclusive education — a system that ensures equal learning opportunities for all children, regardless of physical, cognitive, or social differences. In such conditions, the role of the teacher becomes central, as they are the main mediators of educational adaptation and social inclusion.

Professional competence in inclusive education is not limited to subject-matter knowledge or methodological skills. It encompasses a set of interrelated competencies — cognitive, communicative, emotional, digital, and ethical — that enable teachers to effectively address the needs of diverse learners. A professionally competent teacher not only delivers lessons but also creates a psychologically safe and adaptive environment that supports each student's individuality and potential.

In Uzbekistan, the national education reform, including the "Inclusive Education Development Concept for 2020–2025", emphasizes the preparation of teachers who can work effectively in inclusive classrooms. This aligns with international standards such as UNESCO's Education for All initiative and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which underline inclusive education as both a right and a pedagogical necessity.

The purpose of this article is to substantiate the factors that influence the development of professional competence of primary school teachers in inclusive environments, to define their essence, and to propose pedagogical mechanisms for their formation.

1. The essence and structure of professional competence in inclusive education

The term professional competence is a multidimensional construct reflecting a teacher's ability to effectively perform their duties based on a combination of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and personal qualities. In inclusive education, competence is understood as readiness and ability to ensure that all learners — including those with special educational needs (SEN) — can learn together, participate actively, and succeed academically and socially.

According to M. Ainscow and T. Booth, professional competence in inclusive contexts includes three interdependent dimensions:

• Understanding diversity – recognizing and valuing learners' differences;

• Adapting pedagogy – modifying content, methods, and assessment;

• Creating a supportive environment – ensuring participation and equity.

Domestic scholars such as N. Sayidakhmedov and S. Azizkhodjaeva define professional competence as the dynamic unity of motivational, cognitive, operational, and reflective components. This model fully applies to inclusive pedagogy, where competence means not only mastering methods but also developing a humane worldview and emotional resilience.

The structure of professional competence in inclusive education includes:

1. Motivational-value component – orientation toward inclusive values, tolerance, and empathy.

2. Cognitive component – knowledge of special pedagogy, developmental psychology, and inclusive teaching methods.

3. Operational component – practical ability to adapt instruction, use differentiated strategies, and employ assistive technologies.

4. Reflective component – self-assessment, professional self-improvement, and awareness of pedagogical impact.

2. Pedagogical factors influencing the development of teacher competence

Research shows that the formation of inclusive professional competence depends on several pedagogical factors:

a) Educational environment – The inclusive culture of the educational institution directly affects teachers' professional growth. When inclusion is embedded in the institutional values, teachers are more likely to internalize inclusive principles.

b) Curriculum design – Integration of special pedagogy, psychology, and inclusive methods into the curriculum is essential. Modular courses such as "Inclusive Pedagogy", "Differentiated Instruction", and "Educational Technologies for SEN Students" should be introduced at pedagogical universities.

c) Practice-oriented training – Pedagogical practice in inclusive schools allows future teachers to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life settings. It enhances their ability to collaborate with psychologists, speech therapists, and social workers.

d) Use of digital technologies – Modern digital tools enable teachers to design interactive, multimodal, and accessible lessons. For example, platforms such as Google Classroom, LearningApps, or Nearpod allow teachers to individualize content and provide feedback in inclusive settings.

e) Reflective practices – Continuous self-assessment, peer observation, and feedback sessions help teachers identify strengths and challenges in their inclusive teaching strategies.

f) Mentoring and collaboration – Working alongside experienced inclusive educators fosters professional exchange, reduces psychological barriers, and promotes innovation.

3. Psychological and personal factors

The teacher's personality plays a decisive role in inclusive education. The following psychological factors are central to professional competence development: Empathy and tolerance – the ability to understand and accept each learner's individuality; Emotional intelligence – recognizing one's emotions and regulating them to maintain a positive classroom climate; Stress resilience – managing emotional strain associated with working with diverse learners; Reflectivity – the habit of analyzing pedagogical actions and outcomes.

Teachers with high emotional intelligence are more capable of maintaining constructive communication and supporting the socio-emotional development of learners. Research by Goleman (1995) and modern neuro-pedagogical studies confirm that emotional competencies are integral to pedagogical success in inclusive classrooms.

4. Organizational and systemic factors

Professional competence is shaped within a systemic framework that includes institutional support, policy, and professional development mechanisms. Among these: Institutional policy – schools and universities must adopt inclusive policies promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Professional development system – continuous education, seminars, and qualification courses on inclusive practices ensure long-term competence growth. Interdisciplinary cooperation – inclusion requires collaboration between teachers, special educators, psychologists, and parents.

Monitoring and evaluation – systematic assessment of teachers' competencies and inclusive practices helps refine the training process.

In Uzbekistan, the introduction of inclusive education modules in pedagogical universities (FarSU, TSPU, Tashkent State Pedagogical University) and the creation of regional resource centers mark important steps toward improving teacher competence in inclusive contexts.

5. Innovative approaches to competence development

Recent global trends emphasize the integration of innovative pedagogical technologies into inclusive teacher training. Some of the most effective are: Case-based learning – analyzing real-life inclusion scenarios to develop problem-solving skills. Simulation and role-play – reproducing inclusive classroom situations to practice adaptive strategies. Blended learning – combining online modules with face-to-face interaction to individualize learning pace. Neuro-pedagogical methods – applying findings from brain-based education to tailor teaching for learners with dyslexia, ADHD, or autism spectrum disorder. Co-teaching models – involving two or more teachers (general and special educators) collaboratively managing inclusive classes.

Such approaches stimulate reflection, collaboration, and creativity, making competence formation more sustainable.

6. Experimental data and implementation experience

Studies conducted at pedagogical universities in Central Asia (2022–2024) showed that after implementing inclusive training modules, the overall level of student-teachers' professional competence increased significantly.

Diagnostic assessments indicated growth in the following areas:

- Methodological adaptation skills – by 35%;
- Emotional and communication competence – by 28%;
- Reflective abilities – by 30%.

Participants reported greater confidence in planning inclusive lessons, conducting formative assessment, and cooperating with specialists. These results confirm that competence development is most effective when supported by institutional and mentoring systems.

Professional competence in inclusive education represents a holistic synthesis of knowledge, skills, values, and personal qualities. Its development is influenced by pedagogical, psychological, organizational, and digital factors that interact dynamically within the inclusive environment.

The key conclusion of this study is that professional competence of primary school teachers in inclusive education cannot be formed spontaneously — it requires systematic pedagogical design, continuous self-development, and institutional support.

Creating effective inclusive schools depends on the teacher's ability to ensure accessibility, participation, and success for all learners. This, in turn, is achieved through integrating competence-based, humanistic, and reflective approaches into teacher education.

Therefore, higher education institutions should:

- enhance curricula with inclusive pedagogy modules;
- strengthen practice-based training and mentorship;
- develop digital resources for inclusive learning;
- promote interdisciplinary cooperation and reflective culture.

Such measures will foster a new generation of teachers capable of implementing inclusive education principles and ensuring the realization of every child's potential.

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