

## IDENTIFYING SYSTEMATIC BARRIERS IN ADOPTING THE MODEL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION BY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

### ВИЯВЛЕННЯ СИСТЕМНИХ ПЕРЕШКОД У ПРИЙНЯТТІ МОДЕЛІ ІНКЛЮЗИВНОЇ ОСВІТИ ВИЩИМИ НАВЧАЛЬНИМИ ЗАКЛАДАМИ РЕСПУБЛІКИ МОЛДОВА

*The given article records the types of barriers in the university environment faced by people with disabilities in our country. There are numerous studies aimed at identifying barriers faced by people with disabilities in their access to world-wide education, and it has been highlighted the following issues, which can be found in most educational settings in different countries. The Inclusive Education Development Program contributes to ensuring equal opportunities and access to quality education for every child, young person, adult, at all levels and stages of the education system, by removing the barriers encountered. There was a lack of procedures to facilitate access to education at upper secondary and tertiary levels. In their absence, pupils and students are forced to make their needs known and to negotiate the conditions for participation in education, although this is a fundamental right of theirs. The curriculum can be adapted or modified to meet the needs of children and students with special educational needs. The way the curriculum is reflected in the individualized educational plan for the pupil/ student with special educational requirements. The educational Code explicitly regulates inclusive education and establishes education for children with special educational needs, such as people with learning, communication, and interaction, sensory, physical, emotional, behavioral, and social difficulties, as an integral part of the education system. The education strategy aims to establish a system of education that is accessible to all by promoting and ensuring inclusive education at all educational levels.*

*The achievements of some people with disabilities who are studying in higher education (undergraduate or master's degree) or who have obtained a doctorate should not be overlooked, but these achievements cannot be attributed to the education system and services. rather than the personal efforts of young people with disabilities and their families.*

**Key words:** barriers, skills, access, people with disabilities, education, university environment, competent specialists, curricular adaptation, training, employment.

*У наведеній статті фіксуються види бар'єрів в університетському середовищі,*

*з якими стикаються люди з обмеженими можливостями в нашій країні. Існують численні дослідження, спрямовані на виявлення перешкод, з якими стикаються люди з обмеженими можливостями у своєму доступі до всесвітньої освіти, і було висвітлено наступні проблеми, які можна знайти в більшості навчальних закладів у різних країнах. Програма розвитку інклюзивної освіти сприяє забезпеченню рівних можливостей та доступу до якісної освіти для кожної дитини, молодої людини, дорослої людини на всіх рівнях і етапах системи освіти, усуваючи перешкоди, що виникають. Не вистачало процедур для полегшення доступу до освіти на рівні старшої середньої та вищої ланки. За їх відсутності учні та студенти змушені повідомляти про свої потреби та домовлятися про умови участі в освіті, хоча це їхнє фундаментальне право. Навчальний план може бути адаптований або модифікований для задоволення потреб дітей та учнів з особливими освітніми потребами. Спосіб відображення навчальної програми в індивідуальному навчальному плані для учня/студента з особливими освітніми вимогами. Освітній кодекс чітко регулює інклюзивну освіту та встановлює освіту для дітей з особливими освітніми потребами, такими як люди з проблемами навчання, спілкування та взаємодії, сенсорними, фізичними, емоційними, поведінковими та соціальними труднощами, як невід'ємну частину системи освіти. Стратегія освіти спрямована на створення доступної для всіх системи освіти шляхом сприяння та забезпечення інклюзивної освіти на всіх освітніх рівнях. Не варто нехтувати досягненнями деяких людей з обмеженими можливостями, які навчаються у вищих навчальних закладах (бакалавраті чи магістратурі) чи здобули докторський ступінь, але ці досягнення не можна віднести до системи освіти та послуг, а не особистими зусиллями молодих людей з інвалідністю та їхніх сімей.*

**Ключові слова:** бар'єри, навички, доступ, люди з обмеженими можливостями, освіта, університетське середовище, компетентні спеціалісти, адаптація навчальної програми, навчання, працевлаштування.

UDC 373.3

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32843/2663-6085/2022/44/3.13>

**Cebotaru Nina,**

Ph.D.,

Lecture at the Department Physical

Therapy

State University of Physical Education and Sport

**Savițchi Svetlana,**

Ph.D. student, Assistant at the

Department Physical Therapy

State University of Physical Education and Sport

#### Introduction

Access to education is a fundamental human right. Education provides the basis for the personal, professional, economic, and social development of the individual. Through education, people with disabilities can develop their skills and reach their full potential. However, many barriers to reaching the potential of people with disabilities and the contribution they could make to society remain. These barriers can be physical, mental, social, or financial.

Barriers – as defined in the CIF – are “factors in a person's environment that, by their absence or presence, limit their functioning and create disability. Possible barriers may be inaccessible physical environment, lack of relevant assistive / support technologies, negative attitudes of people towards disability, and services, systems, and policies that either does not exist or raise barriers to the involvement of all people with disabilities. health in all areas of existence” [1; 5, p. 60].

**The purpose of the research is** to identify systematic barriers in adopting the model of inclusive education by higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova.

**Research hypothesis:** it is assumed that the identification of barriers in the adoption of the model of inclusive education by higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova will streamline the inclusion process.

**The objectives of the study:**

1. Studying the theoretical and practical aspects of inclusive education by higher educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova.

2. Determining the barriers in adopting the model of inclusive education by higher educational institutions.

3. To propose the recommendations for higher educational institutions to remove barriers and adopt the model of inclusive education.

**Material and methods:**

Out of the total group of 50 subjects, 12 are students, 38 are graduates of higher education, one is a student of the post-secondary school and another is a graduate of the post-high school. Therefore, more than half of the total number of investigated subjects have experience in accessing this level of education.

The relationship between the type of disability and the university specialization attended or graduated attests to international, public administration, or computer science. Subjects with hearing impairments turned to special psychology or psych pedagogy, social support, and even specialization in theology (fig. 1). Subjects with neuromotor disabilities attend or have completed specializations in

the categories "psychology, special pedagogy or pedagogy", "mathematics, informatics", "physics", and other specializations (arts, physiotherapy, marketing, international relations, public administration, theology). Therefore, it is a wide range of university specializations, of regular high school graduates, two-thirds went to continue their studies at the university level, while of the high school graduates, only half had access to this level of education. Therefore, attending a special high school induces a certain disadvantage, a reduction of chances concerning access to higher-level education, compared to attending high school; quite a few subjects mentioned that in the high schools the quality of their training was lower, and this was recognized with the access to higher education when they found that there were other requirements in the learning process. It should be noted that for some special high school graduates, an important role was played by certain personal factors as compensation for the deficits of the training offered by formal education.

Only 15 subjects completely followed the path of special education, from kindergarten to high school.

Another 11 participants did not attend kindergarten, after which they entered special education, and remained there until graduating from high school.

Many studies have aimed to identify the barriers that people with disabilities face in their access to education worldwide [4, p. 88, 6, p. 144]. A comprehensive approach to these barriers appears in a paper developed in Australia, which highlighted the following issues, can be considered universally valid, and can be found in most educational settings in different countries:

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TYPE OF DISABILITY AND THE UNIVERSITY SPECIALTY**

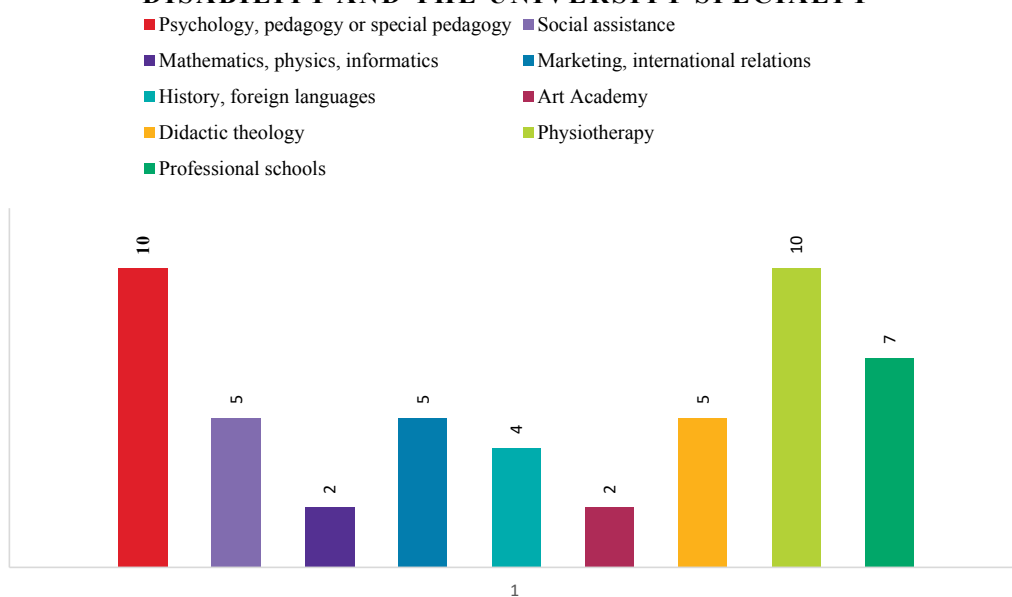


Figure 1. The relationship between the type of disability the university specialty

1. Lack of information for families or prospective students about possibilities and options. Many parents do not know what the possible options are for their children in universities, or about access to supporting services.

2. Insufficiency of equipment, assistive technology, and other types of technical support. Obtaining the right equipment for certain students, from hearing aids to electronic mobility devices, walking frames is an ongoing barrier to ensuring equitable access to education at all levels.

3. The need to adapt the curriculum; limited curriculum; situations in which it should not be addressed. Components of some courses (disciplines) that are not accessible. Although much work has been done to adapt the curriculum to a wide range of people of different age groups with different abilities, this remains one of the biggest areas of difficulty for education providers and students. It is an extremely broad field given the individual nature of students, their needs, and their willingness to learn. In some cases, the adaptation is less understood. A separate issue arises when training courses (vocational, academic) include certain segments that the student with a disability cannot access. This creates difficulties in enrollment, accreditation of training, or post-qualification.

4. Family-denied or unrealistically minimized disability. Sometimes, the family denies or does not inform the institution about the degree of disability, or requires the institution to provide education well above the level of the student's ability with a disability. This creates sensitive issues for teachers and educational institutions.

5. Mandatory training of teachers and staff. This is probably the biggest problem in the whole spectrum of barriers to access education for students with disabilities, along with the problem of insufficient funding for infrastructure. Some teachers have trained decades ago, without expecting to have students with

disabilities in the group. For the most part, teachers are willing to deal with several such students, but to gain the essential confidence to enable them to have creative and sensitive teaching, they need training, theoretical and practical consolidation regularly and a consultation mechanism, for example, a specialist to ask how to proceed in different situations they are facing.

6. Access to buildings. Many of the buildings used for the courses are not physically accessible. Many of them are not suitable for changes or changes would require huge costs.

7. Transport: barriers (functional and financial) in terms of transport to and from the university. Many students with disabilities have mobility limitations. Many have inappropriate behaviors, which may be allowed in the auditorium, but which would create difficulties or embarrassment for the student in public. Many have physical and medical problems that make it difficult to use public transportation. Some attend schools away from home because those units provide them with support and accessibility. The cost of special transportation is expensive. The availability of family members to transport students is not always possible, especially when everyone is working.

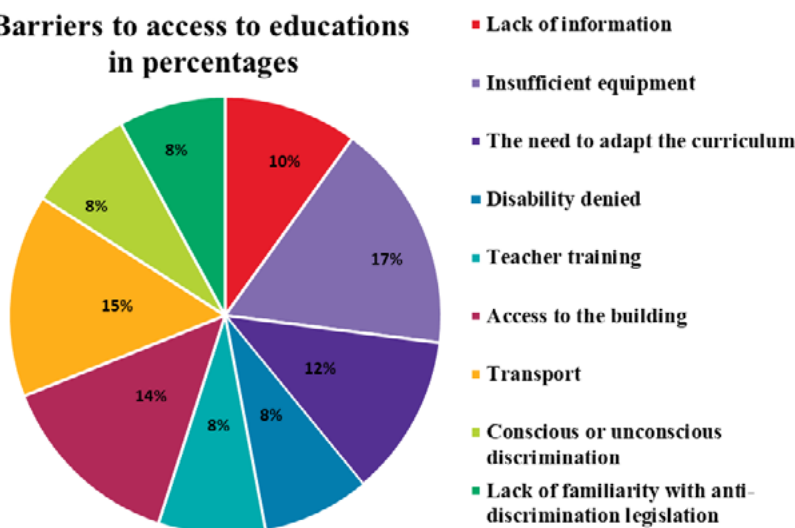
8. Conscious or unconscious discrimination at the level of some educational institutions, including the lack of understanding of the relevant aspects. Both forms of discrimination, direct or indirect because of disability, occur regularly at the level of education authorities. In some cases, discrimination against students is open and direct; in others, it is based on a lack of knowledge of disability issues and inclusive practices. Until a higher level of knowledge and understanding of disability and its effects is reached, until human rights and principles, experience, and the practice of inclusion have been reached, as a rule, individuals and institutions will continue to discriminate against, or without their knowledge. However, the field of education is supported by a

broad movement towards equitable access for people with disabilities to education.

9. Lack of familiarity with anti-discrimination legislation. Many education providers are unaware of their legal obligations and do not know how to interpret reality from this perspective.

The social inclusion of people with disabilities is a complicated and long process, but through the efforts of the state and the community, their participation in various activities and fields (education, health, sport, etc.) can be ensured, classifying them as citizens with equal opportunities and rights in the field of work, etc. In this context, concrete steps are required, concrete

**Barriers to access to educations in percentages**



**Figure 2. Barriers to inclusion in higher education institutions**

measures and the whole community will be involved in these activities [2, p. 2; 3, p. 14].

Next, we propose a chart to have a concrete picture of the reality in which there are young people with disabilities and to draw some conclusions (fig. 2):

**In conclusion, we can say that:**

There is a lack of procedures at the level of higher education institutions to ensure access and equal opportunities for students with disabilities. In their absence, each student ends up negotiating individually with the teachers regarding the participation in the courses, the obtaining of the course support, the accomplishment of some activities specific to the study disciplines, and the way of examination for the evaluation and grading.

Some teachers are reluctant to provide course materials because they could reach out to other students and demotivate them in terms of attendance. In addition, difficulties have been reported with PowerPoint materials, which cannot be adequately tracked by students with sensory impairments.

Access is often difficult due to architectural barriers, stairs, lack of elevators, lack of adapted toilets, etc.

The educational context seems to show an acceptance of students with disabilities, but this acceptance is rather reserved, based on common sense and not on principles, facilities, procedures, and a knowledge of what is disability is, and the right of people with disabilities to education.

Teachers' attitudes seem to be acceptable, even if initially (under pressure from stereotypes, prejudices, or ignorance about disability) they are marked by a lack of confidence that a student with a disability could cope with the demands of the learning process.

The attitudes of other students also seem to be acceptable (with some exceptions) and in most cases, the support they give to their peers with disabilities is extremely important. However, it should be noted that in the relationships between students, certain transactions take place, in the sense that sometimes students with disabilities end up supporting their colleagues, by sharing courses received individually from teachers or registered.

Most universities abroad have developed a culture of accepting students with disabilities, created facilities, and developed procedures through which they are facilitated access and are guaranteed the conditions for participation in various activities (courses, seminars, exams, recreation, etc.).

**General proposals on improving access to education for young people with disabilities**

– harmonization of legislation, emphasizing the fundamental right of access to education of persons with disabilities, by the principles of inclusive education at all levels;

– training and improvement of teachers to develop the skills necessary for the proper conduct of activities with students with various disabilities;

– defining clear responsibilities at the level of each school regarding the cases of young people with disabilities and/or special educational needs (for example, in most Western universities there is a dedicated person to provide answers to the needs of students with disabilities, who, together with them, deals with all the necessary conditions to ensure participation in academic life;

– improving the access to the technology of students with disabilities;

– providing adequate counseling and guidance services;

– organization of awareness campaigns, in which to emphasize the fundamental right to education and to demonstrate the negative character of some mentalities, stereotypes, prejudices.

Therefore, we need sustained efforts, well thought out and adjusted to the reality of our country, goodwill and dedication, understanding and tolerance, love for our neighbor. Or, the most complicated change is related to the collective and individual mentality, to the relationships between people, to the attitudinal reactions.

**REFERENCES:**

1. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 5 January. 2022 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>
2. Cebotaru N., Racu S. *Inclusive school environment and mechanisms for the emergence of segregation barriers in school*, „SPORT AND SOCIETY”. În: *Interdisciplinary Journal of Physical Education and Sports*, Volume 20, Issue 1 (2020), Iași, România, <https://www.sportsisocietate.ro/articol/492>
3. Racu S., Racu A., Popovici D.V., Popa-Velea O., Tudorache L.A., Diaconescu L.V. *Incluziunea social în mediul academic: provocări, oportunități, soluții contemporane: suport didactic*, Chișinău: Pontos, 2019. 132 p. ISBN 978-9975-72-412-8.
4. Racu A, Racu S., ș.a. *BAZELE TEORETICO-PRACTICE ale educației tinerilor cu dizabilități în instituțiile universitare*. Ghid științifico-metodic. Chișinău: UPS „I. Creangă”, 2018. 192 p. ISBN 978-9975-51-999-1.
5. Cebotaru N., Savițchi S. *Identificarea barierelor sistematice în adoptarea modelului educației incluzive de către instituțiile de învățământ superior din Republica Moldova*. În: *Accesibilitatea tinerilor cu dizabilități în universități (orientări teoretice și practice)*. Chișinău: Ed. Pontos, 09-10 decembrie 2017. p. 59-65. ISBN 978-9975-51-900-7.
6. Manea L. (coordonator), *Accesul la educație a tinerilor cu dizabilități în România, cu focalizare pe învățământul secundar superior, vocațional și universitar*, 2016. 189 p.