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## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACTIVE CIVIC COMPETENCE IN FUTURE SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

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### Abstract

This article examines inclusive education in the context of a pedagogical university and analyzes how the development of active civic competence in future special education teachers strengthens inclusive practice. The study conceptualizes active civic competence as an integrated professional quality that combines rights-based awareness, ethical responsibility, participatory skills, and advocacy-oriented behavior in support of learners with diverse educational needs. In the Uzbek higher-education context, inclusive education requires not only methodological readiness to differentiate instruction, but also civic readiness to protect children's rights, collaborate with families and community services, counter stigma, and contribute to inclusive school culture. The article argues that civic competence functions as a mediating factor between formal knowledge of inclusion and consistent professional action in complex educational environments. The research proposes an integrative framework that links inclusive pedagogy, disability studies perspectives, and civic education principles to the professional formation of future special educators. It outlines institutional conditions that support this development, including practice-based learning in inclusive settings, reflective training, service-learning, and structured partnership with schools and local support services. The article highlights expected outcomes: increased professional agency, improved collaboration and communication with stakeholders, and stronger adherence to equity and accessibility standards. The findings contribute to strengthening teacher education programs that aim to prepare special education professionals capable of advancing inclusive education through competent, ethically grounded, and civically active practice.



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**Keywords.** Inclusive education; special education teacher education; active civic competence; professional agency; rights-based pedagogy; inclusion culture; stakeholder collaboration; advocacy; service-learning; reflective practice; universal design for learning; differentiated instruction; accessibility; ethical responsibility; community partnership.

## Introduction



### **INKLYUZIV TA'LIM MAVZUSIDA YOKI BO'LAJAK MAXSUS PEDAGODLARNING FAOL FUQAROLIK KOMPENTENSIYASINI RIVOJLANTIRISH**

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## Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada pedagogika universiteti sharoitida inklyuziv ta'lim masalalari tahlil qilinib, bo'lajak maxsus pedagoglarda faol fuqarolik kompetensiyasini rivojlantirish inklyuziv amaliyotni qanday mustahkamlashi asoslab beriladi. Tadqiqotda faol fuqarolik kompetensiyasi ta'lim oluvchilarning turli ta'lim ehtiyojlarini qo'llab-quvvatlashga xizmat qiluvchi huquqqa asoslangan xabardorlik, axloqiy mas'uliyat, ishtirokchilik ko'nikmalari hamda advokatsion xulq-atvorni birlashtirgan integrativ kasbiy sifat sifatida talqin etiladi. O'zbekiston oliy ta'limi kontekstida inklyuziv ta'lim faqat o'qitishni differensiallashtirish bo'yicha metodik tayyorgarlikni emas, balki bolalar huquqlarini himoya qilish, oilalar va hamjamiyat xizmatlari bilan hamkorlik qilish, stigmani kamaytirish hamda inklyuziv maktab madaniyatini shakllantirishga qaratilgan fuqarolik tayyorgarligini ham talab etadi. Maqolada fuqarolik kompetensiyasi inklyuziya haqidagi formal bilimlar bilan murakkab ta'lim muhitida barqaror kasbiy harakat o'rtasida vositachi omil sifatida ishlashi asoslanadi. Tadqiqot inklyuziv pedagogika, nogironlik tadqiqotlari yondashuvlari va fuqarolik ta'limi tamoyillarini bo'lajak maxsus pedagoglarning kasbiy shakllanishi bilan bog'lovchi integrativ konseptual asosni taklif etadi. Unda inklyuziv muhitlarda amaliyotga tayangan o'qish,


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reflektiv tayyorgarlik, xizmatga yo‘naltirilgan ta’lim hamda maktablar va mahalliy qo‘llab-quvvatlovchi xizmatlar bilan tizimli hamkorlik kabi institutsional shart-sharoitlar yoritiladi. Kutilayotgan natijalar sifatida kasbiy agentlikning kuchayishi, manfaatdor tomonlar bilan hamkorlik va muloqotning yaxshilanishi hamda tenglik va imkoniyat yaratish standartlariga rioya qilishning mustahkamlanishi ko‘rsatiladi. Natijalar inklyuziv ta’limni kompetent, axloqiy jihatdan asoslangan va fuqarolik nuqtayi nazaridan faol amaliyot orqali rivojlantira oladigan maxsus pedagoglarni tayyorlashga qaratilgan o‘qituvchi tayyorlash dasturlarini kuchaytirishga xizmat qiladi.

**Kalit so‘zlar.** Inklyuziv ta’lim; maxsus pedagoglarni tayyorlash; faol fuqarolik kompetensiyasi; kasbiy agentlik; huquqqa asoslangan pedagogika; inklyuziv madaniyat; manfaatdor tomonlar bilan hamkorlik; advokatsiya; xizmatga yo‘naltirilgan ta’lim; reflektiv amaliyot; universal dizayn asosidagi o‘qitish; differensiallashtirilgan ta’lim; qulaylik va moslashuvchanlik; axloqiy mas’uliyat; hamjamiyat hamkorligi.

## Introduction

Inclusive education has become a central direction of educational modernization worldwide, reflecting a shift from segregated provision toward systems that ensure equitable access, participation, and achievement for all learners. Within this paradigm, inclusion is not limited to placing learners with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. It is a comprehensive transformation of policy, school culture, pedagogy, assessment, and community relations aimed at removing barriers to learning and fostering a sense of belonging. For pedagogical universities, inclusive education is therefore both a curricular priority and a professional obligation, because the effectiveness of inclusion depends significantly on the preparedness of teachers who can translate inclusive principles into day-to-day practice. In contexts where inclusive policies are expanding and schools increasingly encounter diverse learning needs, the professional profile of the future special education teacher also evolves: beyond

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instructional support, it includes coordination, consultation, and advocacy roles across multiple settings.

In Uzbekistan, the development of inclusive education is linked to broader reforms in education quality, social protection, and human capital development. As inclusive initiatives expand, universities face the task of preparing specialists who can work effectively within complex institutional environments characterized by varying levels of resources, uneven accessibility infrastructure, and diverse attitudes toward disability. While teacher education programs often emphasize methodological readiness, such as assessment and individualized instruction, practice shows that inclusive challenges frequently extend beyond purely pedagogical questions. Teachers and specialists must communicate with families, coordinate with psychologists and medical professionals, engage school administration, and interact with community services. They may also face stigma, misconceptions about disability, and resistance to inclusion among stakeholders. In such situations, professional knowledge alone may not be sufficient to sustain inclusive practice; educators require civic maturity and socially responsible agency.

Active civic competence is increasingly recognized as a key condition for effective inclusive education, especially for future special education teachers whose professional duties inherently involve protecting learners' rights and ensuring equitable participation. In this article, active civic competence is understood as a multidimensional capacity that includes awareness of educational rights and ethical norms, the ability to participate constructively in institutional decision-making, skills of public communication and mediation, and readiness to advocate for reasonable accommodations and accessible learning environments. It also involves the internalization of inclusion as a civic value, expressed in professional behaviors such as supporting anti-discrimination practices, collaborating with families as equal partners, and contributing to community initiatives that reduce barriers for children with special educational needs.

The relevance of focusing on civic competence within teacher education is connected to the reality that inclusive education is a social project as much as a

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pedagogical one. Inclusion depends on shared responsibility across schools, families, local communities, and public services, and it requires specialists who can build trust, promote mutual understanding, and uphold the dignity of every learner. Future special education teachers often become facilitators of inclusive culture: they help colleagues adopt differentiated strategies, support parents in navigating support systems, and encourage the school community to view diversity as a resource rather than a problem. These tasks demand professional agency grounded in civic responsibility.

Despite its importance, the civic dimension of professional formation is not always systematically operationalized in pedagogical university curricula. Civic education components may be taught as general subjects, while inclusive education modules focus on methods and diagnostics, leaving the integration between civic responsibility and inclusive professional action insufficiently developed. Consequently, graduates may know inclusion principles but struggle to demonstrate consistent advocacy-oriented practice under institutional constraints. This article addresses this gap by analyzing how active civic competence can be deliberately cultivated within the preparation of future special education teachers and how this competence reinforces inclusive education outcomes.

The purpose of the article is to substantiate an integrative approach that connects inclusive pedagogy with active civic competence in the professional formation of future special education teachers in Uzbekistan. The objectives are to clarify the conceptual relationship between inclusion and civic competence, identify pedagogical and institutional conditions for its development at the university level, and propose methodological mechanisms that can be embedded into teacher education programs to strengthen inclusive readiness.

## Methods


The study employed a mixed-methods design to explore how active civic competence can be developed in future special education teachers and how this development supports readiness for inclusive education practice in a pedagogical university context. The methodological logic combined an

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exploratory qualitative phase aimed at clarifying contextual needs and mechanisms, followed by a quantitative phase to examine changes in indicators of civic competence and inclusive readiness after an educational intervention. The research was conducted within the framework of university-based teacher education and aligned with ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respectful treatment of all participants.

The participants included undergraduate students enrolled in special education and related pedagogical programs, as well as university instructors and school-based mentors involved in practicum supervision. The sampling strategy was purposive for the qualitative phase to ensure representation of key stakeholder perspectives, and cluster-based for the quantitative phase to reflect intact student groups participating in the intervention. Students were assigned to comparison conditions based on existing academic groups to minimize disruption of the educational process. The intervention was delivered as an integrated module embedded into existing courses and practicum activities, with a duration sufficient to allow repeated practice, reflection, and feedback.

The educational intervention operationalized active civic competence through a structured set of learning experiences tied directly to inclusive education tasks. The module consisted of four interconnected components: rights-based literacy, participatory skills, advocacy and communication, and reflective professional identity. Rights-based literacy focused on understanding learners' educational rights, principles of non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, and the ethical duties of educators in inclusive settings. Participatory skills emphasized collaboration in multidisciplinary teams, constructive engagement in school decision-making, and shared problem solving with families. Advocacy and communication targeted the ability to justify inclusive accommodations, negotiate support plans, and communicate with stakeholders in ways that reduce stigma and build consensus. Reflective professional identity aimed to internalize inclusion as a civic and professional value by guiding students to analyze dilemmas, recognize implicit biases, and articulate a personal stance toward equitable education.

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Instructional methods included case-based learning, simulation of school meetings, role-play of teacher–parent consultations, analysis of inclusive classroom scenarios, and service-learning tasks in cooperation with inclusive schools and local support services. Students completed structured reflections after each activity, using prompts that linked pedagogical decisions to civic and ethical reasoning. During practicum, students implemented micro-projects focused on accessibility and participation, such as adapting learning materials, designing peer-support strategies, and preparing short informational sessions for classmates or parents. Mentors provided feedback using a rubric that integrated inclusive pedagogy criteria with civic competence indicators.

Data collection tools were designed to capture both competence development and perceived readiness for inclusive work. Quantitative data were gathered through a pre-test and post-test questionnaire measuring active civic competence across cognitive, motivational-value, behavioral, and communicative dimensions. The instrument included Likert-type scales assessing knowledge of rights and responsibilities, willingness to participate in inclusive initiatives, self-efficacy in advocacy and collaboration, and reported frequency of civic-oriented professional actions. Inclusive readiness was assessed through a separate scale focusing on differentiation skills, collaboration with stakeholders, and confidence in addressing barriers to participation. Reliability was checked using internal consistency procedures, and items with low coherence were revised before final administration.

Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with students and mentors, focus group discussions, and document analysis of student reflective journals and practicum micro-project portfolios. Interviews explored how students understood inclusion as a civic responsibility, what challenges they experienced in real or simulated inclusive contexts, and which learning activities contributed most to their development. Portfolio analysis provided evidence of applied competence, including the quality of accommodation plans, communication scripts, and reflective reasoning about ethical dilemmas.

Data analysis combined descriptive and inferential statistics with thematic qualitative coding. Quantitative analysis included comparisons of pre- and post-



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intervention means, effect size estimation, and examination of relationships between civic competence indicators and inclusive readiness measures. Qualitative analysis followed a coding framework that identified themes related to rights-based reasoning, agency and advocacy, stakeholder collaboration, and professional identity transformation. Triangulation was used to integrate findings across data sources, ensuring that statistical trends were interpreted alongside participants’ explanations and documented practice outcomes.

## Results

The results indicate that integrating a civic-competence module into special education teacher preparation produced measurable positive changes in both active civic competence and perceived readiness for inclusive education practice. Pre-test data showed that students generally supported inclusive values at the level of attitudes, but demonstrated uneven preparedness to act civically in complex school situations. The lowest baseline indicators were observed in advocacy-oriented communication, confidence in negotiating accommodations with stakeholders, and the ability to justify inclusive decisions using rights-based arguments. By contrast, higher initial scores were recorded for general empathy toward learners with diverse needs and acceptance of inclusion as a social goal, suggesting that many students entered training with pro-inclusion dispositions but lacked operational civic skills.

Post-test results showed statistically meaningful growth across all measured dimensions of active civic competence. The most pronounced gains were registered in rights-based literacy and communicative-advocacy skills. Students demonstrated stronger understanding of the ethical and legal foundations of inclusion, greater consistency in referencing educational rights when solving cases, and improved ability to formulate reasonable accommodations as justified responses to identified barriers. In scenario-based questionnaire items, students increasingly selected solutions that combined pedagogical differentiation with civic actions such as engaging families as partners, initiating multidisciplinary consultations, and proposing accessible learning conditions rather than attributing learning difficulties solely to the child’s deficits.

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Inclusive readiness scores also increased after the intervention. Students reported higher self-efficacy in adapting learning tasks, planning individualized supports, and maintaining participation for learners with diverse needs in mainstream settings. Importantly, the strongest readiness improvements were found in collaboration-related indicators: confidence in cooperating with classroom teachers, engaging school administration, and coordinating with support specialists. Correlation analysis suggested a stable positive relationship between civic competence indicators and inclusive readiness, particularly between advocacy-communication skills and readiness to address barriers to participation. This pattern supports the assumption that civic competence functions as a mediating resource that enables methodological knowledge to be applied effectively in real educational contexts.

Qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative trends and clarified the mechanisms behind observed changes. In interviews and focus groups, students described a shift from viewing inclusion as an abstract principle to understanding it as a professional obligation requiring proactive participation in school life. Many participants noted that simulations of school meetings and role-play of teacher–parent consultations were particularly influential, because they revealed typical tensions in inclusive settings, including misconceptions about disability, conflict between academic performance demands and accessibility needs, and uncertainty about responsibility distribution among staff. Students reported that repeated practice with structured feedback helped them move from avoidance and uncertainty to more confident, respectful, and solution-oriented communication.

Reflective journals and portfolio materials demonstrated improvements in professional reasoning. Early reflections often emphasized personal emotions or generalized statements about kindness and tolerance. Later reflections showed more structured analyses of barriers, stakeholder interests, and ethical dilemmas, with clearer justification of decisions. Practicum micro-projects provided additional evidence of competence transfer. Students were able to design accessible materials, propose participation-support strategies, and prepare short informational messages aimed at reducing stigma among peers or parents.

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Mentors reported that students became more initiative-taking during practicum, asked more purposeful questions about accessibility and participation, and were more willing to coordinate support plans rather than limiting themselves to isolated instructional tasks.

At the same time, results revealed persistent constraints that affected the scope of competence application. Some students indicated difficulty sustaining advocacy when school routines were rigid or when stakeholders preferred traditional approaches. Mentors also noted that the quality of students’ civic action depended on the inclusivity of the practicum environment and the availability of supportive supervision. Overall, the results confirm that targeted training can strengthen active civic competence and that these improvements are associated with higher inclusive readiness, while also highlighting the importance of institutional conditions for stable transfer into practice.

## Discussion

The findings support the view that inclusive education in teacher preparation should be treated not only as a methodological field but also as a civic-professional project in which future special education teachers develop the agency to protect learners’ rights and to shape inclusive culture in schools. The observed improvements across all dimensions of active civic competence suggest that civic readiness is not a fixed trait but a developable capacity that can be strengthened through purposeful instructional design. This is consistent with competence-based approaches in teacher education, where complex professional qualities emerge when knowledge, values, skills, and reflective identity are integrated through repeated practice in authentic or simulated contexts.

A key implication of the results is that positive attitudes toward inclusion do not automatically translate into effective inclusive action. Baseline patterns showed that students often endorse inclusion as an idea yet hesitate when they face real dilemmas involving competing stakeholder expectations, uncertainty about institutional rules, or fear of conflict in communication with families and administrators. The strongest post-intervention gains in rights-based literacy and

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advocacy-oriented communication indicate that inclusive practice becomes more stable when future teachers acquire a language of justification and negotiation. In other words, civic competence provides the discursive and behavioral tools that allow methodological decisions to be defended, coordinated, and sustained within institutional environments. This may explain why the relationship between advocacy-communication and inclusive readiness was particularly strong: teachers who can communicate inclusively and argue for accommodations are more likely to implement differentiation consistently rather than retreating to standard practices when challenged.

The qualitative evidence highlights specific pedagogical mechanisms that appear to drive this development. Case-based learning and simulations functioned as structured approximations of real professional life, enabling students to practice civic roles that are often implicit in inclusive work. In the Uzbek context, where hierarchical institutional cultures may influence communication patterns, role-play of meetings and consultations can be especially valuable because it provides a safe space to rehearse respectful disagreement, propose evidence-based accommodations, and mediate stakeholder concerns. Reflective journaling contributed by helping students move from moralized, abstract notions of inclusion to analytic reasoning focused on barriers, responsibilities, and feasible actions. This shift is critical for professionalization: inclusion becomes an object of competent action rather than a purely ethical slogan.

The results also point to an important institutional dimension. Transfer into practicum was stronger when mentorship and school environments were supportive of inclusive initiatives. This finding suggests that the development of civic competence is sensitive to contextual reinforcement. If practicum settings model exclusionary routines, students may internalize passivity and learn that advocacy is risky or ineffective. Therefore, pedagogical universities should treat partnership schools as co-educators and develop shared expectations about inclusive practice, supervision, and student participation in support planning. Such coordination can reduce the gap between university discourse and school reality, strengthening the continuity of competence development.

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From a program-design perspective, the study suggests that civic competence should not be isolated as a general education subject detached from inclusive specialization. Instead, it should be embedded into inclusive education coursework and practicum, operationalized through tasks that directly reflect the professional functions of special educators. This includes competencies in family partnership, multidisciplinary collaboration, participation in individualized planning, and ethical decision-making under constraints. Embedding civic competence into professional tasks also reduces the risk of superficial civic education, where students memorize norms but do not learn how to act in complex situations.

At the same time, the persistent constraints reported by participants indicate that competence development must be coupled with realistic strategies for working within limited resources. Advocacy should be taught not as confrontation but as constructive problem solving grounded in respectful dialogue and incremental change. In the Uzbek educational environment, where schools may vary in accessibility infrastructure and specialist staffing, future teachers need to learn how to prioritize barriers, design low-cost accommodations, mobilize community resources, and document progress. This practical orientation can make civic action feasible and sustainable.


The study also has methodological limitations that should be considered when interpreting results. Group assignment based on existing academic clusters may limit causal claims, and self-report measures may overestimate competence due to social desirability. Although triangulation with portfolios and mentor feedback strengthened validity, future studies could incorporate independent observation of classroom interactions, longer follow-up periods, and broader sampling across multiple universities to increase generalizability. Nevertheless, the convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence provides reasonable support for the proposed approach and underscores the strategic importance of civic competence for strengthening inclusive education outcomes in teacher preparation programs.

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## Conclusion

The study demonstrates that preparing future special education teachers for inclusive education in a pedagogical university context benefits substantially from the deliberate development of active civic competence. The results show that when civic competence is operationalized through professional tasks linked to inclusive practice, students strengthen not only their understanding of inclusion as a value but also their capacity to act effectively in complex educational environments. The most important gains were observed in rights-based literacy, advocacy-oriented communication, and collaboration with key stakeholders, indicating that civic competence provides a practical mechanism for transforming inclusive principles into consistent professional decisions and actions.

The findings confirm that methodological readiness for inclusion is insufficient when it is not supported by civic agency. Inclusive education requires educators who can justify accommodations, negotiate support plans, address stigma, and contribute to inclusive school culture through responsible participation. A structured module integrating simulations, case-based learning, service-learning tasks, and reflective practice proved effective in developing these capacities and in increasing students' perceived readiness to implement inclusive strategies. The positive association between civic competence indicators and inclusive readiness supports the interpretation that civic competence functions as a mediating resource enabling the transfer of inclusive pedagogy into real practice. For pedagogical universities in Uzbekistan, the study suggests several implications. Teacher education programs should integrate civic-competence development directly into inclusive education coursework and practicum, ensuring that students repeatedly practice stakeholder communication, ethical decision-making, and advocacy in realistic scenarios. Partnerships with inclusive schools and local support services should be strengthened so that practicum settings reinforce university goals and provide mentorship aligned with inclusive values. Program designers should also emphasize feasible, resource-sensitive advocacy strategies that encourage constructive dialogue and incremental improvements in accessibility and participation.

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Overall, the study contributes to the modernization of special educator preparation by substantiating an integrative approach in which inclusive education is supported by a coherent civic-professional foundation. Developing active civic competence in future special education teachers can increase professional agency, strengthen collaboration across the educational ecosystem, and support the sustainable advancement of inclusive education in schools.

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