

SELF-ASSESSMENT AS A WAY TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL OF COMPETENCIES DEVELOPMENT OF FUTURE SPECIALISTS IN SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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The article highlights the necessity of self-assessing the development level of their general and special competencies by future specialists in special and inclusive education. It emphasizes that self-assessment is a crucial element of self-development and successful learning as it enables students to better understand themselves and their progress. The authors note that regular self-assessment allows individuals to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in the learning process; set goals and action plans to achieve educational or professional success; analyze the effectiveness of implementing methods and techniques in their own activities; ensure personal growth and the attainment of ideals. The article provides summaries of both initial and subsequent students' self-assessments. The findings from the initial measurement concluded that students faced the greatest difficulties with general competencies, particularly in communication in a foreign language, decision-making, and conducting research at an appropriate level. Among the special competencies, the ability to develop and implement innovative methodologies and technologies for correctional and developmental work with individuals with special educational needs was highlighted. The generalized analysis revealed that the majority of students rated themselves at an intermediate level. To enhance the development of competencies and foster a positive attitude towards their own achievements, interactive methods such as role-playing games, discussions, debates, case studies, etc., were applied, and a series of webinars were introduced into the educational process. The analysis of the subsequent self-assessment indicated an improvement in the development of both general and professional competencies, demonstrating the effectiveness of the proposed methods and approaches.

Keywords: competency, general competencies, special competencies, inclusive education, students

DOI: 10.24263/EDSD-2024-6-25

Received 30.04.2024

Received in revised form 15.10.2024

Accepted 12.11.2024

Introduction

At the current stage of societal development, particular attention is paid to educating children with special educational needs. Providing such children with high-quality education, ensuring equal opportunities, operating on the principles of inclusion, and considering the individual needs of each child are considered to be the key objectives of the modern educational sector. Hence, there is a need to train competent educators in the field of special and inclusive education, capable of ensuring comfortable conditions, organizing a safe educational environment, and fostering the development of each child's personality. The success of addressing this task is linked to the ability of learners to

evaluate themselves and their achievements: “Self-assessment is a system-forming element of the self-concept, as the self-image, in fact, arises based on the awareness of others’ evaluations of ourselves as a personality and the correlation of these evaluations with our own. It constantly develops, differentiates, and adjusts, as it is one of the basic processes of personality self-regulation” (Bozhenko, 2020). The problem of self-evaluation and its importance for becoming a future specialist is reflected in many modern scientists. Valuable research results are published for our scientific intelligence M. Kambourova, E. González-Agudelo, L. Grisales-Franco (2021), P. Karaman (2024). The researchers emphasized the need to conduct similar studies as a way of studying the success of students, their attitude to their abilities and achievements, which will ensure the improvement of the quality of education by implementing an individual approach and taking into account individual capabilities.

Therefore, there is a need to study the self-assessment of the level of competencies development by specialists in the field of special and inclusive education, who, upon graduating from a higher education institution, must be able to assess the level of their own professional knowledge and skills, analyze their own activities related to the care and psycho-pedagogical support of children with special educational needs, and also be able to track the dynamics of personal growth for successful professional self-realization and achievement of set goals and tasks.

The study aims to analyze the results of research on the self-assessment of future specialists in the field of special and inclusive education regarding the determination of the level of their competencies development.

Materials and Methods

The research was conducted during the 2022-2023 academic year. Students pursuing their master’s degree in specialties 016.01 Special Education (Speech Therapy) and 016.02 Special Education (Oligophrenopedagogy) of both full-time and part-time study modes at Municipal Establishment “Kharkiv Humanitarian Pedagogical Academy” of the Kharkiv Regional Council participated in the study. A total of 33 students were involved. The leading method of empirical research was surveying.

Graduates were presented with questionnaires aimed at self-assessing the level of development of their general and special competencies according to the higher education standard for specialty 016 Special Education at the second (master’s) level of higher education. In contemporary research (Lebedyk, 2023), four levels of competency development are identified: initial (low); reproductive (average); active (sufficient); creative (high). We opted for a three-level scale because the participants have already obtained their bachelor’s degree, which allows for a more accurate assessment of the level of competency development based on their experience and previous education.

Taking into account the requirements of the standard (Approval of the Higher Education Standard for Specialty 016 Special Education for the Second (Master’s) Level of Higher Education, 2021), the sufficient level of graduates’ competency development is defined as the ability to solve complex research and/or innovative tasks in the field of special and inclusive education at a sufficient level. The intermediate level implies a moderate ability to solve complex research and/or innovative tasks in the field of special and inclusive education. Accordingly, the high level entails the ability to solve complex research and/or innovative tasks in the field of special and inclusive education at a high level.

Results and Discussion

Studying self-assessment is an important direction in scientific research that can help better understand and support young people, promote their self-realization, and foster their professional growth. Interest in conducting systematic monitoring of the development of their own competencies will ensure the sustainability of graduates' motivations for their chosen profession, understanding the necessity of further qualification enhancement, and aspirations to improve their chosen field.

Since "the assessment system is the main means of measuring achievements and diagnosing learning problems, allowing you to determine the quality of the educational process, make fundamental decisions on the strategy and tactics of training, improve both the content of education and the forms of evaluation of expected results", self-assessment enables individuals to adjust their own trajectory of personal and professional development in the right direction (Kharkivska et al., 2023).

Self-assessment is an important tool for professionals in the field of special and inclusive education, contributing to the improvement of their work effectiveness and the quality of education for children with special needs, as well as the enhancement of ways to interact with families, which is crucial in the context of disseminating inclusive education ideas.

Therefore, graduates were suggested to assess the level of their competencies development according to the higher education standard for specialty 016 Special Education at the second (master's) level of higher education (Approval of the Higher Education Standard for Specialty 016 Special Education for the Second (Master's) Level of Higher Education).

Based on the results of the initial self-assessment, it was concluded that graduates predominantly evaluate their own level of development of general and professional competencies as intermediate (Table 1).

Table 1. The results of the initial self-assessment of general competencies

Competencies	Level, %		
	Sufficient	Intermediate	High
GC-1. The ability to act based on ethical considerations (motives)	25.98	61.31	12.71
GC-2. The ability to act socially responsibly and consciously	24.40	62.58	13.02
GC-3. The ability to work in a team	24.17	63.56	12.27
GC-4. The ability to communicate in the state language both orally and in writing	21.21	64.60	14.19
GC-5. The ability to communicate in a foreign language	33.34	56.57	10.09
GC-6. The ability to make informed decisions	24.68	64.25	11.07
GC-7. The ability to search for, process, and analyze information from various sources	25.37	62.55	12.08
GC-8. The ability to apply knowledge in practical situations	22.46	65.11	12.43
GC-9. The ability to generate new ideas (creativity)	26.23	60.63	13.14
GC-10. The ability to conduct research at an appropriate level	26.43	62.39	11.18

A significant number of the participants self-identified an intermediate level of all general competencies development. The graduates stated that the most challenging was the ability to communicate in a foreign language – only 10% of respondents characterized the level of development of this competency as high. Also challenging were the abilities to make informed decisions (11%) and to conduct research at an appropriate level (11%). The smallest number of future specialists in the field of special and inclusive education identified a sufficient level of development of the following general competencies: communicating in the state language both orally and in writing (14%), generating new ideas (13%), and acting socially responsibly and consciously (13%).

The results indicate the need to enhance the level of development of general competencies through the use of interactive methods in the educational process and the development of skills for independent research in the field of special and inclusive education (Table 2).

Having analyzed the respondents' answers, we found that they rated their own special competencies at an intermediate level. Graduates considered the ability to develop and implement innovative methodologies and technologies for correctional and developmental work with individuals with special educational needs as the competency requiring the most attention and improvement. According to the responses of future professionals, 10% identified themselves as having a high level in this competency. Meanwhile, the smallest number of respondents identified the ability to organize the process of teaching, upbringing, and development of children with special educational needs in an inclusive educational environment as sufficient (21%), while the largest number rated it as high (15%).

Taking the above into account, the conclusion was drawn about the necessity of providing additional consultations and conducting webinars for students on the implementation of innovative methodologies and technologies for correctional and developmental work.

To enhance the development of general and professional competencies and foster a positive attitude towards their achievements in the process of studying educational components, interactive methods were utilized (role-playing games, discussions, debates, case studies, etc.). During the study of the educational component “Foreign Language for Professional Purposes”, graduates were engaged in various speaking situations to boost their vocabulary and improve their abilities to interact in dialogue and formulate extended responses in a foreign language. Additionally, future professionals in specialties 016.01 Special Education (Speech Therapy) and 016.02 Special Education (Oligophrenopedagogy) at the second (master's) level of higher education were offered a series of webinars on modern technologies and research in the field: “Alternative and Additional Communication in Working with Children with Complex Disorders”, “Kinesiotherapy: Development of Motor Skills and Health of Children with Special Needs”, “Inclusive Digital Education: Ensuring Accessibility and Equal Opportunities for All”, “Creativity and Art as Means for Children with Special Educational Needs”. Furthermore, students were provided with additional consultations on academic integrity, current research in special and inclusive education, and specifics of working with scientific and pedagogical literature.

Conducting self-assessment is an effective tool for personal growth of future specialists, which ensures the development of their professional competence. M. Kambourova, E. González-Agudelo, L. Grisales-Franco (2021), notes that determining self-esteem benefits the training and development of specialists, allows you to determine their level of education.

Table 2. The results of the initial self-assessment of special competencies

Competencies	Level, %		
	Sufficient	Intermediate	High
SC-1. The ability to conduct theoretical, methodological, and empirical analysis of current issues in special and inclusive education	26.41	62.40	11.19
SC-2. The ability to develop and implement innovative methodologies and technologies for correctional and developmental work with individuals with special educational needs	23.45	66.34	10.21
SC-3. The ability to perform diagnostic-analytical, correctional-developmental, and advisory activities taking into account learners' specific educational needs	23.19	63.58	13.23
SC-4. The ability to effectively interact with parents, colleagues, and other professionals in the process of psycho-pedagogical support for a child with special educational needs based on partnership principles	24.21	63.58	12.21
SC-5. The ability to make effective decisions in complex and unpredictable conditions, and to adapt to new situations in professional activities	29.03	58.48	12.49
SC-6. The ability to assess the boundaries of one's professional competence, make decisions, and continue learning and/or professional development according to existing needs and requests	28.68	59.25	12.07
SC-7. The ability to organize the educational process in special preschool and general secondary education institutions using modern tools, methods, techniques, and technologies	23.33	63.18	13.49
SC-8. The ability to organize the process of teaching, upbringing, and development of children with special educational needs in an inclusive educational environment	21.19	63.75	15.06
SC-9. The ability to organize a safe and health-preserving educational environment, including an inclusive educational environment	25.77	59.63	14.60
SC-10. The ability to develop and implement scientific and/or educational projects in the field of special and inclusive education	22.27	64.48	13.25

The results of the subsequent self-assessment conducted by future professionals indicated an increase in the percentage of students who identified their level of general and professional competencies development as high.

From the table above, it is evident that students of specialties 016.01 Special Education (Speech Therapy) and 016.02 Special Education (Oligophrenopedagogy) at the second (master's)

level of higher education rated their ability to communicate in a foreign language high (81%), indicating not only the effectiveness of the educational techniques used but also the greater confidence in their own abilities.

Table 3. The results of the subsequent self-assessment of general and special competencies

Competencies	Level, %		
	Suffi- cient	Inter- mediate	High
GC-1. The ability to act based on ethical considerations (motives)	2.98	13.45	83.57
GC-2. The ability to act socially responsibly and consciously	3.48	13.94	82.58
GC-3. The ability to work in a team	4.18	14.76	81.06
GC-4. The ability to communicate in the state language both orally and in writing	1.99	10.43	87.58
GC-5. The ability to communicate in a foreign language	4.55	14.40	81.05
GC-6. The ability to make informed decisions	3.11	11.48	85.41
GC-7. The ability to search for, process, and analyze information from various sources	2.38	14.43	83.19
GC-8. The ability to apply knowledge in practical situations	3.57	14.56	81.87
GC-9. The ability to generate new ideas (creativity)	2.85	11.78	84.41
GC-10. The ability to conduct research at an appropriate level	2.35	12.28	85.37
SC-1. The ability to conduct theoretical, methodological, and empirical analysis of current issues in special and inclusive education	3.76	13.75	82.49
SC-2. The ability to develop and implement innovative methodologies and technologies for correctional and developmental work with individuals with special educational needs	4.19	11.42	84.39
SC-3. The ability to perform diagnostic-analytical, correctional-developmental, and advisory activities taking into account learners' specific educational needs	2.49	14.28	83.23
SC-4. The ability to effectively interact with parents, colleagues, and other professionals in the process of psycho-pedagogical support for a child with special educational needs based on partnership principles	3.58	11.78	84.64
SC-5. The ability to make effective decisions in complex and unpredictable conditions, and to adapt to new situations in professional activities	2.83	12.59	84.58
SC-6. The ability to assess the boundaries of one's professional competence, make decisions, and continue learning and/or professional development according to existing needs and requests	3.39	14.14	82.47
SC-7. The ability to organize the educational process in special preschool and general secondary education institutions using modern tools, methods, techniques, and technologies	3.67	12.19	84.14
SC-8. The ability to organize the process of teaching, upbringing, and development of children with special educational needs in an inclusive educational environment	1.97	13.02	85.01
SC-9. The ability to organize a safe and health-preserving educational environment, including an inclusive educational environment	1.98	11.11	86.91
SC-10. The ability to develop and implement scientific and/or educational projects in the field of special and inclusive education	3.67	14.44	81.89

The increase in the ability to conduct research at an appropriate level (85%) and make informed decisions (85%) reflected in the subsequent self-assessment is attributed to the effectiveness of the interactive methods. The high self-assessment of the ability to develop and implement innovative methodologies and technologies for correctional and developmental work with individuals with special educational needs (84%) is the result of meaningful webinars that the participants attended.

Therefore, the content of professional training for future specialists in the field of special and inclusive education should “provide students with additional competencies, skills, and knowledge necessary for their competitiveness in the labour market and opportunities for further education” (Dyman, 2020).

Conclusions

The results of studying the self-assessment of competency development levels of future specialists in special and inclusive education underscore the necessity of conducting similar investigations among students. Engaging in competency self-assessment contributes to the formation of reflection skills, self-analysis, and further professional growth. This is crucial for future speech therapists, special education teachers, or other professionals in this field, as they need to be able to timely address problematic situations, anticipate errors and difficulties, and adjust their activities to create an inclusive and safe society that respects the needs and interests of all.

Conflict of interest

The authors state no conflict of interest.

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