

<https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2025.30.2.20>

EMPATHY AND TOLERANCE AS DETERMINANTS OF THE FORMATION OF A CULTURE OF INTERACTION AMONG FUTURE TEACHERS IN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE SEARCH FOR INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

ЕМПАТІЯ ТА ТОЛЕРАНТНІСТЬ ЯК ДЕТЕРМІНАНТИ ФОРМУВАННЯ КУЛЬТУРИ ВЗАЄМОДІЇ МАЙБУТНІХ ПЕДАГОГІВ У КОНТЕКСТІ ІНКЛЮЗИВНОЇ ОСВІТИ: ПОШУК ІННОВАЦІЙНИХ ПРАКТИК

Received: 05/09/2025

Accepted: 10/10/2025

Maryna GRYNova¹ & Olha HUBAR²



¹*D.Sc. in Pedagogy, Full Professor, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine, Rector of V. G. Korolenko Poltava National Pedagogical University, Poltava, Ukraine.*

✉ E-Mail: grinovamv@gmail.com

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2526-6203>



²*Ph.D. in Pedagogy, Associate Professor, Head of the Department of Technologies of Correctional and Inclusive Education, Speech Therapy and Rehabilitation, V. G. Korolenko Poltava National Pedagogical University, Poltava, Ukraine.*

✉ E-Mail: olgagubar82@gmail.com

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3640-1490>

How to Cite (APA Style):

Grynova, M., & Hubar, O. (2025). Empathy and tolerance as determinants of the formation of a culture of interaction among future teachers in the context of inclusive education: The search for innovative practices. *Educational Challenges*, 30(2), 262–278. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2025.30.2.20>

ABSTRACT

Purpose. *The purpose of the article is to theoretically substantiate the role of empathy and tolerance as key*

Мета *статті полягає у теоретичному обґрунтуванні ролі емпатії та толерантності як ключових детермінант*

© Maryna GRYNova, & Olha HUBAR, 2025

Empathy and tolerance as determinants of the formation of a culture of interaction among future teachers in the context of inclusive education: The search for innovative practices © 2025 by Maryna GRYNova, & Olha HUBAR is licensed under **Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International**. To view a copy of the license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

determinants in shaping the culture of professional interaction among future teachers in the context of inclusive education, as well as to develop innovative practices aimed at developing these personal qualities in students of higher education institutions of pedagogy.

Methodology. The research methodology is conceptually based on both theoretical and empirical levels. At the theoretical level, we used methods of analysis, synthesis, systematisation, comparison and generalisation. At the same time, the modelling method allowed us to develop the author's model of empathy and tolerance formation in students of pedagogical specialities, which structurally consists of seven consecutive levels. At the empirical level, we used methods of pedagogical observation and interviews with students majoring in pedagogy, which allowed us to identify the characteristics of their value-semantic orientations and their level of readiness for inclusive interaction.

Results. The results of the study show that innovative forms of developing social and emotional competencies enable more effective formation of a culture of interaction by ensuring comprehensive development of cognitive, emotional and value components. We have determined that the formats analysed are effective when students not only 'know' but also 'feel' the experience of others. The unique value of art therapy is precisely the emotional involvement in the feelings of another person. We have developed and proposed the following formats of work: 'The Mask of the Other', 'Colours of Empathy', 'My Space of Tolerance', 'Music of Emotions', 'Map of Tolerance' and 'Tree of Interaction.'

Conclusions. Based on the results of the study, we have grounds to draw the following conclusions: studying empathy and tolerance as determinants of the formation of a culture of interaction opens up broad opportunities for finding innovative practices and creating new pedagogical strategies aimed at developing a humanistically oriented educational space. It is precisely such approaches that will allow future educators not only to adapt to the conditions of inclusion, but also to actively shape a culture of mutual understanding, cooperation and mutual support in society. At the same time, the challenge for educational institutions remains the systematic implementation of the practices we have identified, which must

формування культури професійної взаємодії майбутніх педагогів у контексті інклюзивної освіти, а також у розробці інноваційних практик, спрямованих на розвиток зазначених особистісних якостей у студентів педагогічних закладів вищої освіти.

Методологія дослідження концептуально базується як на теоретичному, так і емпіричному рівнях. На теоретичному рівні нами застосовувались методи аналізу, синтезу, систематизації, порівняння та узагальнення. Разом з тим, метод моделювання дозволив розробити авторську модель формування емпатії та толерантності у студентів педагогічної спеціальності, що структурно складається з 7 послідовних рівнів. На емпіричному рівні було використано методи педагогічного спостереження, бесіди зі студентами педагогічних спеціальностей, що дозволило виокремити особливості їх ціннісно-сміслових орієнтацій та рівень готовності до інклюзивної взаємодії.

Результати проведеного дослідження свідчать: інноваційні форми розвитку соціально-емоційних компетентностей дозволяють більш ефективно формувати культуру взаємодії, оскільки забезпечують комплексний розвиток когнітивного, емоційного та ціннісного компонентів. Нами визначено, що аналізовані формати забезпечують ефективність за умов, коли студент не лише «знає», а й «відчуває» досвід іншого. Унікальною цінністю арттерапії є саме емоційне залучення у відчуття іншої особистості. Нами розроблено та запропоновано наступні формати роботи: «Маска іншого», «Кольори емпатії», «Мій простір толерантності», «Музика емоцій», «Карта толерантності», «Дерево взаємодії».

Висновки. За результатами проведеного дослідження доходимо наступних висновків: вивчення емпатії та толерантності як детермінант формування культури взаємодії відкриває широкі можливості для пошуку інноваційних практик і створення нових педагогічних стратегій, спрямованих на розвиток гуманістично орієнтованого освітнього простору. Саме такі підходи дозволять майбутнім педагогам не лише адаптуватися до умов інклюзії, а й активно формувати культуру взаєморозуміння, співпраці та взаємної підтримки у суспільстві. Водночас викликом для педагогічних закладів залишається системність впровадження означених

be actively integrated into curricula and have appropriate scientific and methodological support.

Further research should be aimed at developing modular training programmes for students that combine theoretical learning with the practical implementation of art therapy technologies focused on developing empathy and tolerance in an inclusive environment.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that further development of research in this area requires a comprehensive understanding of empathy and tolerance as key competencies of a 21st-century teacher. They should become not only a component of individual professional style, but also defining characteristics of an educational culture that ensures the integration of humanistic values into the practice of inclusive education. This opens up prospects for the formation of a new pedagogical paradigm focused on personal development, mutual understanding and social unity.

Keywords: *empathy, tolerance, culture of interaction, inclusive education, social and emotional competencies, innovative pedagogical practices, art therapy.*

практик, що мають бути активно інтегровані у навчальні плани та мати належний науково-методичний супровід.

Подальші дослідження мають бути спрямовані на розробку модульних програм підготовки студентів, які поєднуюватимуть теоретичне навчання з практичним впровадженням арттерапевтичних технологій, що орієнтовані на розвиток емпатії та толерантності в інклюзивному середовищі.

Разом з тим, важливо наголосити, що подальший розвиток досліджень у окресленій площині передбачає комплексне осмислення емпатії та толерантності як ключових компетентностей педагога ХХІ століття. Останні мають стати не лише складовою індивідуального стилю професійної діяльності, а й визначальними характеристиками освітньої культури, яка забезпечує інтеграцію гуманістичних цінностей у практику інклюзивної освіти. Вказане відкриває перспективи для формування нової педагогічної парадигми, орієнтованої на розвиток особистості, взаєморозуміння та соціальну згуртованість.

Ключові слова: *емпатія, толерантність, культура взаємодії, інклюзивна освіта, соціально-емоційні компетентності, інноваційні педагогічні практики, арттерапія.*

INTRODUCTION

Respect for each individual, regardless of their individual characteristics, is fundamental in the context of the modern educational paradigm. That is why, in the context of the active implementation of inclusive education, it is particularly important to train future teachers who are able to work with children who have different educational needs and different physical abilities. Such training goes beyond the purely professional mastery of teaching methods and requires the formation of the teacher's personal readiness to accept diversity as the norm (Dmytriieva et al., 2022).

Effective implementation of this task is possible not only through the formation of professional competencies (methodological, didactic, organisational), but also through the development of value-semantic orientations that determine the humanistic nature of pedagogical interaction. Among such orientations, empathy and tolerance play a fundamental role. Empathy is a fundamental prerequisite for understanding students' emotional states, empathising with their difficulties and promoting positive change. Tolerance, in turn, is an important quality that is expressed in the willingness to accept differences, respect the rights and needs of others and create conditions for the equal participation of all children in the educational process.

It is these qualities that enable teachers to consciously accept other individuals as full participants in the educational process, regardless of their developmental characteristics or social experience. They contribute to the establishment of partnership relations between teachers and students and the creation of a trusting educational

environment in which every child has the opportunity to realise their full potential. Thus, the development of empathy and tolerance in future teachers is not a secondary task, but a strategic direction in the training of specialists who are able to act effectively in the context of inclusive education and form a new culture of interaction based on the principles of respect, cooperation and social responsibility.

The problem of developing empathy and tolerance in future teachers in the context of inclusive education is the subject of active scientific research in domestic and foreign scientific circles. The works of contemporary researchers consider various aspects of this issue, from the psychological prerequisites for personality development to methodological innovations in the field of teacher training.

Significant attention has been paid to the analysis of innovative approaches to the socialisation of children with special educational needs (Vrochynska et al., 2023), as well as to highlighting the problems and prospects of inclusive education in Ukraine (Horishna, 2020; Hubar et al., 2024; Shevchuk, 2021). In this context, it is important to study strategies for the development of higher education at national and global levels, focusing on the professional training of teachers in the field of inclusiveness (Dmytriieva et al., 2022; Miroshnychenko & Bakhmutova, 2025).

The psychological dimension of the issue we are studying is revealed in works that focus on the development of communicative tolerance and empathy as basic characteristics of a specialist (Dobroskok, 2023; Nasminchuk et al., 2025; Zamishchak, 2023). In this context, the use of art therapy methods, in particular fairy tale therapy, in corrective and pedagogical work with children with SEN (Sereda & Kuterzhynska, 2021) is also important, which emphasises the practical significance of creative innovations to foster empathy and tolerance among teachers.

Valuable methodological and didactic guidelines are presented in modern manuals aimed at supporting educators in inclusive settings (Kolupaieva & Taranchenko, 2023), as well as in foreign studies devoted to the development of inclusive competencies (Kazachiner, 2020), the anthropological approach to education (Holubnycha et al., 2023) and the issue of the psychosocial well-being of children in inclusive secondary education institutions (Mbatt & Philip, 2024).

So, an analysis of the scientific literature indicates the existence of a wide range of studies aimed at theoretical justification, psychological support and methodological support for the development of empathy and tolerance in future teachers. At the same time, there is still a need to search for new innovative practices capable of integrating these qualities into the professional activities of future teachers and promoting the formation of a culture of interaction in an inclusive educational environment.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is conceptually based on both theoretical and empirical approaches. At the theoretical level, we used methods of analysis, synthesis, systematisation, comparison and generalisation. At the same time, the modelling method allowed us to develop our own model of empathy and tolerance formation, which consists of seven consecutive levels. At the empirical level, we used methods of pedagogical observation and interviews with students specialising in education, which allowed us to identify the characteristics of their value-semantic orientations and their level of readiness for inclusive interaction.

The experimental component of the research was implemented in the form of a set of art therapy practices ('The Mask of the Other', 'Colours of Empathy', 'My Space of Tolerance', 'Music of Emotions', 'Map of Tolerance', 'Tree of Interaction'), aimed at developing students' ability to interact effectively in an inclusive environment.

Therefore, the research methodology combines theoretical analysis and empirical study of the problem, which provides a holistic understanding of the phenomena of empathy and tolerance in shaping the interaction culture of future teachers and also allows the testing and substantiation of the effectiveness of innovative educational practices in inclusive education.

RESULTS

Research by contemporary Ukrainian and foreign scientists shows that empathy and tolerance in modern scientific and pedagogical discourse are fundamental determinants in shaping the culture of interaction among future teachers, especially in the context of inclusive education.

Empathy, which implies the ability to deeply empathise, understand the emotional states and inner world of another person, becomes the basis for effective communication, formation of an environment of trust, and support of personal development of participants in the educational process in pedagogical practice.

Tolerance, in turn, is defined as a willingness to recognise and accept differences in abilities, cultural values, social practices and forms of self-expression, which ensures harmonious coexistence and cooperation in a multidimensional educational space (Dobroskok, 2023).

In the context of inclusive education, the combination of empathy and tolerance appears not only as a set of personal qualities of a teacher, but also as a system-forming factor in the professional culture of interaction, which comprehensively covers the communicative, emotional-value and behavioural spheres. The modern challenges of inclusion require future teachers not only to have theoretical knowledge, but also to be able to put humanistic principles into practice when interacting with children with special educational needs, their parents and colleagues (Kolupaieva & Taranchenko, 2023; Miroschnychenko & Bakhmutova, 2025). Within this framework, it is important to seek innovative pedagogical practices that focus on developing students' emotional sensitivity, communicative flexibility and creative forms of self-expression (Mbatt & Philip, 2024).

Innovative practices that integrate artistic, body-oriented and collective-creative approaches serve not only as tools for personal self-discovery but also as effective means of socio-psychological preparation for future teachers to work in an inclusive environment. Symbolic actions (creating masks or collages, using colour or sound as metaphors for emotions), interactive exercises (dramatisation, collective writing, joint drawing), as well as group reflection, contribute to the formation of the ability to go beyond one's own experience, to recognise other identities and to practise safe forms of interaction (Pozniak, 2022). Such methods allow personal experience to be combined with professional training, creating a holistic space in which empathy and tolerance are not abstract categories but lived experiences.

It is equally important to emphasise that the integration of empathy and tolerance into the professional training of future teachers should be carried out at various levels – cognitive, emotional and behavioural. At the cognitive level, this involves acquiring scientific knowledge about the psychological mechanisms of empathy, forms and

manifestations of tolerance, as well as the specifics of interaction in an inclusive educational environment. The emotional level involves developing the ability to experience another person's emotional states, to be sensitive to non-verbal signals and internal experiences (Miroshnychenko & Bakhmutova, 2025). The behavioural level, in turn, consists of developing specific skills for tolerant communication, the ability to overcome conflict situations and create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

Another important aspect is understanding empathy and tolerance not only as personal characteristics but also as professional competencies, without which it is impossible for teachers to function effectively in modern society. In view of this, there is a need to develop special educational programmes and methodological recommendations that allow innovative psychological and pedagogical practices to be integrated into the training of future teachers (Kolbina et al., 2025; Vrochynska et al., 2023).

Equally important is the problem of diagnosing the level of empathy and tolerance among students of pedagogical specialities. Modern psychodiagnostics offers a wide range of tools for assessing the ability to empathise, communicative tolerance and readiness for inclusive interaction. The use of the above-mentioned methods allows monitoring the professional development of future teachers and timely adjustment of the educational process to ensure its compliance with real needs (Hubar et al., 2024).

From a scientific perspective, there is an urgent need to develop comprehensive models for shaping the culture of interaction among future teachers, where empathy and tolerance are considered not in isolation but as integrated personal and professional structural components. Such models should take into account the specifics of the national educational context, the cultural and value orientations of students and the contemporary demands of an inclusive society (Horishna, 2020; Shevchuk, 2021).

In contemporary educational discourse, the concept of 'partnership pedagogy' is becoming increasingly important, requiring teachers not only to have a high level of professional competence but also to be capable of empathic interaction, tolerant attitudes and openness to dialogue. Under these conditions, the teacher acts not as an authority figure, but as a facilitator of the learning process, capable of creating conditions for the development of critical thinking, co-creation and mutual respect. Empathy in this context becomes a necessary condition for understanding the needs and abilities of students, and tolerance is a guarantee of a safe psychological climate in the group.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the development of empathy and tolerance in future teachers is limited solely to working with students or interactive exercises. A systematic approach is important in this regard, which includes the integration of necessary values into curricula and teaching materials. For example, disciplines that cover the specifics of developmental psychology, social psychology, didactics and inclusive pedagogy should include tasks that encourage reflection on one's own biases, analysis of emotional reactions and the development of constructive interaction skills (Holubnycha et al., 2023).

Recent studies by contemporary scholars show that it is the combination of cognitive, emotional and practical structural elements of learning that creates a synergistic effect in the formation of professional competencies. In particular, empathy becomes a means of recognising the diversity of experience of all participants in the educational process, and tolerance becomes a guarantee of applying this understanding in professional behaviour. As a result, future educators acquire the ability to adapt the educational process to the

individual needs of each person and to provide psychological safety and support, which is critically important in the context of inclusive education (Zamishchak, 2023).

Innovative practices that use artistic, aesthetic, musical and symbolic methods not only develop empathy and tolerance but also create an integrated pedagogical environment where interaction is based on mutual respect, creativity and joint decision-making. These approaches contribute to the formation of a so-called 'culture of interaction', which manifests itself in the ability of students and future teachers to assess situations from the perspective of different participants, take their needs into account and consider various styles of communication.

The use of interdisciplinary methods that combine psychological, pedagogical and artistic technologies allows students to experiment with different forms of interaction in practice, to become aware of their own reactions and emotions, and to assess the impact of these reactions on the collective process. This approach provides an organic combination of personal development and professional training, creating conditions for the formation of a holistic pedagogical personality (Kazachiner, 2020).

From a scientific point of view, empathy and tolerance are not only tools for socio-psychological adaptation, but also criteria for the effectiveness of educational activities. They determine the ability of a teacher to model educational interactions in such a way as to ensure the inclusion of each participant in the process and maximise their potential. Innovative practices, including collective creative exercises and art therapy methods, allow students to experience situations of social interaction in a safe environment, analyse their own behaviour and adjust their approach to others based on the principles of empathy and tolerance.

For a detailed analysis of the problem under study, it is also important to consider the principles of organising an inclusive educational environment, which include the following aspects (Table 1).

Table 1
Principles of organising an inclusive educational environment

Principle	Characteristics
1. Early inclusion in an inclusive environment	This allows for habilitation, i.e. the development of social interaction skills from the very beginning
2. Corrective assistance	Children with developmental disorders have compensatory abilities that are important to activate in order to build an effective educational process. They usually adapt quickly to the social environment, but need a special space and support that takes their needs into account
3. Teamwork	It is important that teachers, specialists and parents work closely together, discussing the goals and objectives of learning, as well as the child's developmental characteristics
4. Individual focus of education	Even if a child with disabilities is mastering the general educational programme, it is necessary to develop a flexible individual trajectory for them depending on their characteristics and abilities

5. Development of positive interpersonal relationships	This process requires special work by teachers, as it is not spontaneous
6. Priority of socialisation	The main goal is to develop the child’s social skills, allowing them to actively participate in activities, not be afraid to express their opinion and make friends. This also involves developing the ability of other children to accept them as they are
7. Safety of the educational environment	An effective educational environment must be physically and psychologically safe. A psychologically safe environment is characterised by positive attitudes among participants and a high level of satisfaction with interaction, as well as protection from psychological violence

Source: (Nasminchuk, Kholostenko & Kyrsta, 2025).

Art therapy practices demonstrate a high level of effectiveness, as they provide a comprehensive impact on the cognitive, emotional and behavioural spheres of future educators. Involvement in art therapy allows students not only to intellectually comprehend the concepts of empathy and tolerance but also to experience them on a physical and emotional level. This creates the conditions for a deeper awareness of one’s own attitudes and stereotypes and also contributes to their correction through practical interaction.

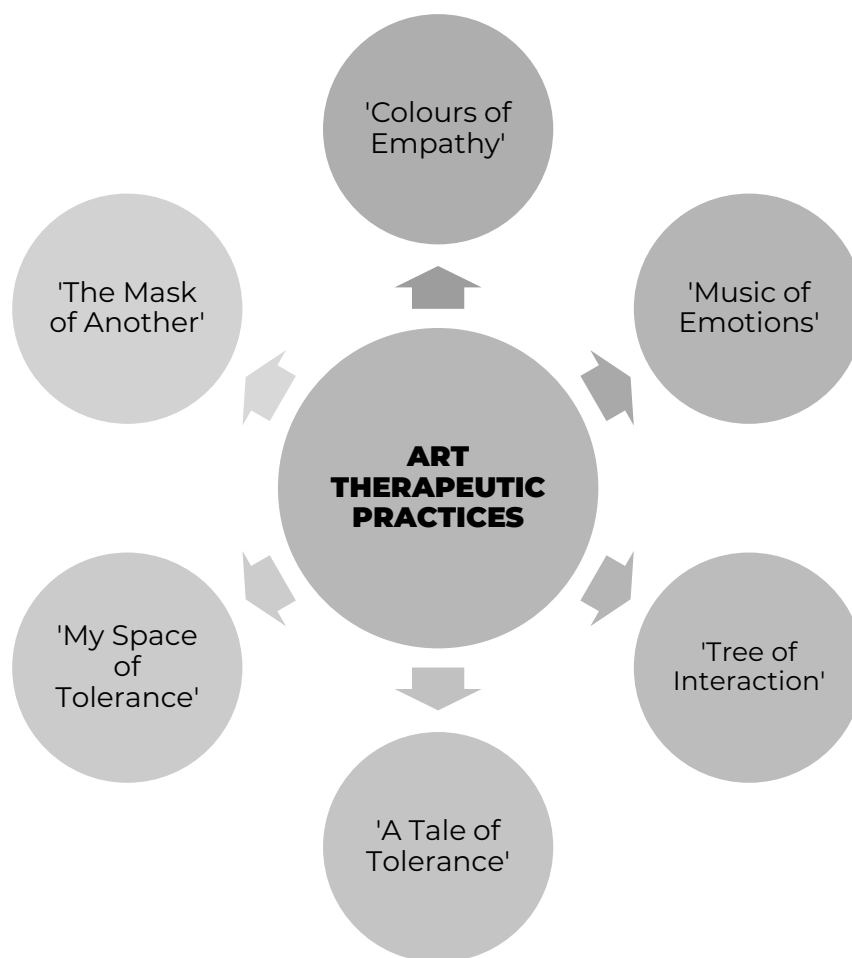
It is important to note that art therapy methods develop students’ ability to reflect and observe themselves. In the process of creative activity, hidden experiences and internal conflicts that may hinder the development of tolerance are brought to the surface. Through symbolic expression via masks, drawings, collages or other forms of artistic self-expression, students are given the opportunity to safely ‘live through’ their own prejudices and anxieties.

Thus, art therapy emerges as an innovative tool for forming new value orientations based on the acceptance of diversity and understanding of the uniqueness of each individual.

The effectiveness of art therapy practices is also confirmed by their interactive nature. Scientists have proven that collective creative tasks stimulate the development of communication skills and create an atmosphere of trust and mutual support within a student group.

This is of fundamental importance for the training of future teachers, as the culture of interaction in the educational environment is largely determined by their ability to build partnerships based on respect and cooperation (Nasminchuk et al., 2025).

Thus, we consider the introduction of art therapy practices in the training of future teachers to be entirely appropriate for the formation of empathy and tolerance, which contributes to the establishment of a culture of interaction in the context of inclusive education. They not only increase the level of professional competence of students, but also ensure the formation of value orientations, without which it is impossible to provide quality pedagogical support to children with special educational needs (Figure 1).

Figure 1*Art therapy practices*

Among the various formats of work, students were particularly interested in the art therapy practice 'The Mask of the Other', which is a unique symbiosis of elements of plastic art therapy and drama therapy. This format is aimed at developing students' ability to accept 'the other' and gain experience of living in the inner world of a personality different from themselves.

Conceptually, this practice is based on the idea that the process of creating and 'trying on' a mask is a significant symbolic act that allows the participant to temporarily abandon their own identity and take on the role of another. Under these conditions, a space for empathic immersion is formed, broadening the understanding of the diversity of human experience and promoting the formation of a tolerant attitude.

The exercise we have described is structurally composed of several stages. First, each participant is asked to create a mask that symbolises 'the other' (for example, a child with special educational needs). In the process of decorating paper masks with paints, markers and decorative elements, students engage not only in a creative process but also in a symbolic reflection on the specifics of the inner world of the imaginary personality (Miroshnychenko & Bakhmutova, 2025).

The next stage is interactive, involving dramatic enactment of the created role. In pairs, participants act out short scenes in which they interact on behalf of the character embodied through the mask. This practice provides physical, emotional and cognitive immersion in a 'different' experience, allowing participants to try out a different model

of behaviour, communication and emotional response. This format makes it possible to develop empathy and tolerance, as it creates conditions for a safe but profound experiment with identity.

At the end, a group discussion is proposed, during which students have the opportunity to 'live through' their own feelings: what emotions did wearing a mask evoke, how difficult or, conversely, natural was it to take on another role, and were they able to feel 'otherness'? It is equally important to identify the most problematic areas in this process. At the same time, under these conditions, the verbalisation of emotional experience is ensured.

The expected outcome of the practice is to develop students' capacity for empathic perception, a tolerant attitude towards different forms of human identity, and increased readiness to work in an inclusive environment. By physically and emotionally experiencing another role, future teachers gain a unique experience that contributes to the formation of a culture of interaction based on respect, acceptance and understanding of all participants in the educational process.

The art therapy practice 'Colours of Empathy', which combines methods of art therapy and group interaction, deserves special mention. This format of work is aimed at developing the ability to recognise and understand one's own emotional experiences in the process of interpersonal communication and at developing a tolerant attitude towards the emotional diversity of other people. The methodological basis of the practice is the provision that colour, as a symbolic carrier of inner state, can act as a projective tool that opens access to deep emotions and creates conditions for their non-verbal expression.

The implementation of this exercise consists of several consecutive stages. First, each participant is asked to use watercolours or pastels to create an individual visual image, i.e. to depict their 'colour of empathy'. This image should reflect their personal understanding of the phenomenon of empathy. There are no artistic requirements or restrictions in this process, as the main thing is not the aesthetic quality of the drawing, but its symbolic meaning for the author.

The next stage involves integration: all participants combine their individual works into a joint composition on a large sheet of paper, this way forming a 'circle of empathy'. This task not only requires coordination of actions and consideration of the individual characteristics of other participants, but also forms the experience of coordination, acceptance of different emotional manifestations and their harmonisation within the group. The symbolic combination of colours serves as a metaphor for the integration of different emotional experiences into a single system that embodies the idea of mutual respect and coexistence.

At the final stage, a group discussion is held, during which participants share their feelings: whether they felt ease or difficulty in the process of 'merging' colours, whether internal barriers or rejection arose, or, conversely, feelings of harmony and unity. Verbalising one's experiences contributes to a deeper understanding of the importance of empathy in interaction and actualises tolerance as the ability to recognise another person with their unique differences and characteristics.

Among the various formats of work, the art therapy practice 'My Space of Tolerance' should be mentioned separately, which is based on the integration of collage and art construction techniques. The latter is aimed at developing students' ability to recognise their own psychological boundaries in combination with the development of a

willingness to accept others in their own social environment. The use of this practice provides an opportunity to create an individualised image of an environment that symbolises safety, mutual respect and constructivism.

A distinctive feature of the methodology is the rational combination of individual and group forms of activity. By creating their own collage space, students reproduce their subjective vision of an atmosphere in which comfortable coexistence with others is possible. The visual images used in the work are not only a means of artistic expression, but also a symbolic manifestation of the value orientations of the individual.

The presentation of these 'spaces' in small groups not only promotes the development of communication skills, but also creates a situation of 'inviting others', which models the experience of open and tolerant interaction. Further discussion allows students to identify common symbols and principles that characterise a tolerant environment, as well as to note differences in the perception of this phenomenon, which stimulates awareness of diversity as a resource for group interaction.

Based on the results of the analysed event, there should be a focus on developing the ability of future teachers to design a safe and inclusive space for cooperation, as well as forming a value-based foundation for their professional activities in the context of inclusive education.

The art therapy technique 'Music of Emotions' integrates elements of music therapy and body-oriented practices, ensuring the development of the ability to respond empathically through non-verbal means of expression. Its essence lies in the use of musical instruments or acoustic recordings as mediators of participants' inner experiences. By choosing a specific sound or rhythm, students symbolically record their emotional state and convey it to the group in the form of a sound message. Other participants have the opportunity to 'pick up' or reproduce what they hear, creating a situation of mutual emotional response.

This form of work promotes the development of sensitivity to non-verbal signals, as each participant gains experience in both expressing their own feelings in a safe environment and perceiving the emotions of others. The final element is a joint sound composition that symbolises the collective experience of empathy and the ability to provide emotional support. It not only strengthens the sense of unity within the group, but also serves as a metaphor for the coordination and harmonisation of different emotional states.

The expected outcome of implementing this methodology is to develop students' ability to 'hear' and 'support' the emotional experience of others, which expands their potential in the field of professional communication and interpersonal interaction in an inclusive educational environment.

Of particular interest to students is the event 'Fairy Tale of Tolerance', which combines elements of fairy tale therapy and group writing. In essence, it is an innovative tool for developing empathic thinking and forming a tolerant attitude in future teachers in the context of inclusive education. The methodology is based on the use of symbolic images characteristic of the fairy tale genre, which allow students to comprehend socially significant issues of interaction between people with different abilities in an accessible, vivid and creative form (Sereda & Kuterzhynska, 2021).

At the initial stage, a collective narrative is created, where the key characters are children with various developmental disabilities – hearing impairments, motor activity disorders, cognitive

or emotional problems. The proposed storyline promotes awareness of the need to take individual differences into account in the process of communication and cooperation.

The further development of the plot involves jointly constructing situations in which the characters overcome difficulties through mutual support and the ability to work together to achieve a common goal. This approach allows students to model mechanisms of inclusive interaction in practice, emphasising the importance of empathy, solidarity and mutual understanding. The process of collective writing itself is an important socio-pedagogical tool, as it stimulates the creation of conditions for the development of active listening skills and the ability to integrate different ideas and views into a single coherent story.

The final stage is to illustrate the created fairy tale with symbolic drawings, which enhances the imagery and emotional impact on the participants. Visualising the plot lines helps to consolidate the experience gained and increases student engagement. At the same time, it is an additional channel for expressing one's own attitude to the topic, especially for those participants who find it more difficult to verbalise their own experiences.

The expected outcome of the proposed format of work is the formation of stable values in students, inclusiveness and tolerance. Symbolically experiencing a fairy-tale reality that reflects the diversity of the human world helps transform future teachers' attitudes towards children with special educational needs. Fairy tales are not only a form of creative activity, but also an effective pedagogical tool that enables the assimilation of humanistic values that underlie the culture of interaction in modern inclusive education.

The 'Tree of Interaction' format is valuable in practical terms, as it is aimed at developing students' sense of belonging to a group, awareness of collective responsibility and the formation of positive interaction experience in an inclusive environment. Its conceptual basis is the symbol of the tree as a universal archetype of growth, unity and interconnectedness. By creating their own symbolic element, a 'leaf', each participant not only expresses their individuality but also becomes part of a common whole, emphasising the interdependence and complementarity of the group.

This exercise is carried out in stages. First, the teacher or facilitator draws the base of a tree on a large sheet of paper – a trunk with branches, which symbolises the group or professional community of future teachers. In the second stage, each student creates an individual 'leaf' as a symbol of their own 'I' in the group, using paints, markers or other art materials. The leaf can reflect the participant's personality traits, inner feelings, life values or professional aspirations. Students attach each leaf to a branch, symbolising the process of integration into the community and their own contribution to the collective structure.

This is followed by a collective contemplation of the completed 'tree of interaction' and a discussion of the results of the work. Participants share their impressions of the joint creation, whether they feel harmony and integrity in the combination of individual elements, and what emotions the sight of their own 'leaf' among others evokes. Particular attention is paid to the metaphorical meaning: a tree as a living organism cannot exist without diverse and equally valuable components, symbolising the need to accept different individuals within a shared space.

We believe that the experience gained contributes to the expansion of tolerance, the development of empathy skills and the formation of a culture of interaction, which is crucial in the professional training of future teachers for work in an inclusive environment.

Table 2

Summary of the implementation of innovative work formats

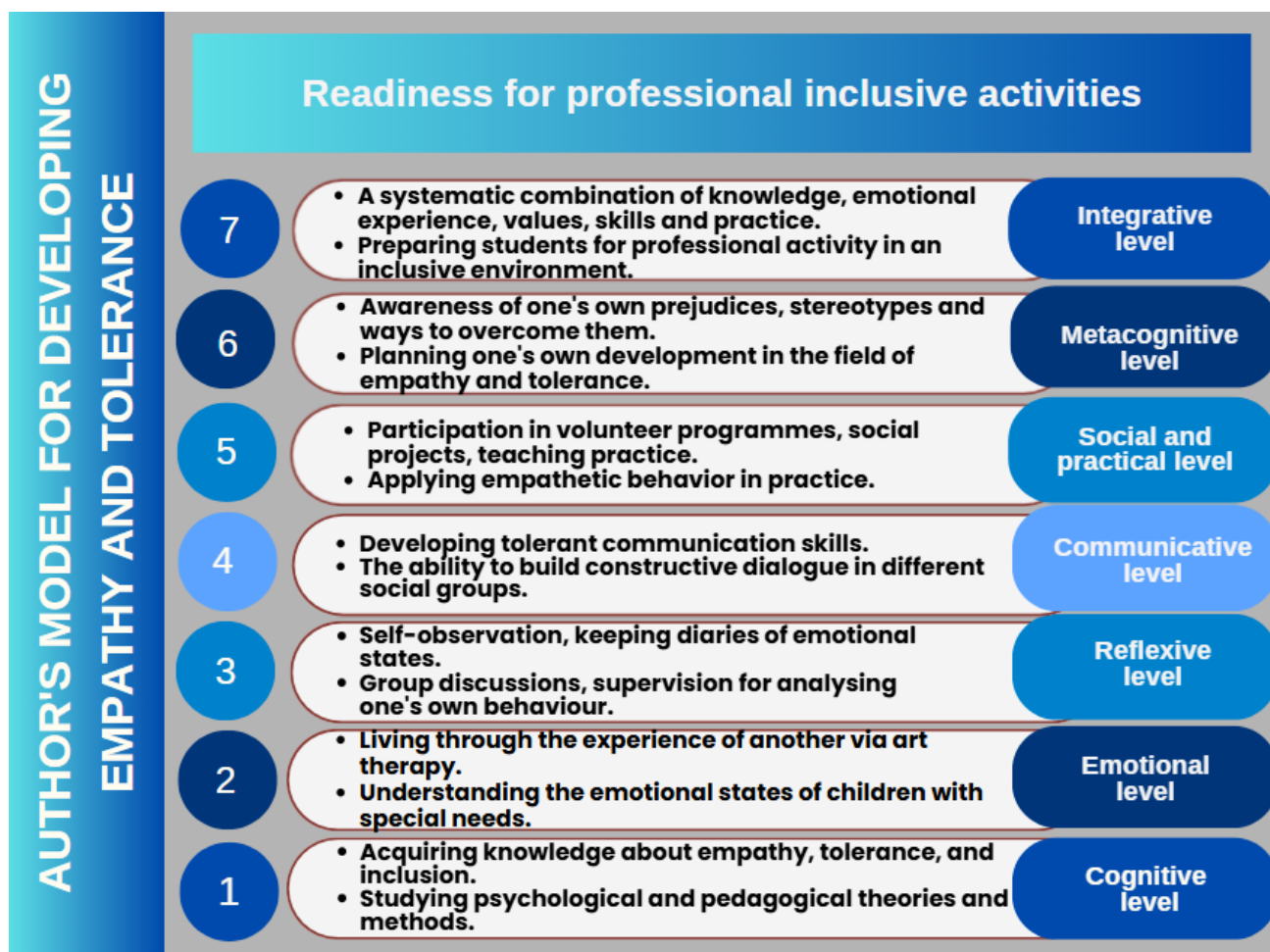
Work format	Goal	Expected result
Art therapy practices	Developing empathy and tolerance	Acceptance of 'others', sensitivity to emotions, readiness for inclusion
Visual arts techniques	Awareness of one's own and others' emotions	Harmonisation of interaction, collective unity
Musical and physical practices	Non-verbal expression and understanding of emotions	Sense of community, support for others
Narrative methods (fairy tale therapy, writing)	Formation of empathic thinking	Assimilating humanistic values, developing solidarity
Symbolic collective practices	Awareness of commonality and diversity	Experience of cooperation, collective responsibility

Source: compiled by the author

In the course of our research, we developed an author's model for the formation of empathy and tolerance (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Author's model for developing empathy and tolerance



The scheme we propose represents a conceptualised model of the gradual development of empathy and tolerance in future specialists, aimed at ensuring their readiness for professional inclusive activity. Structurally, the model is built as a multi-level system in which cognitive, emotional, reflective, communicative, socio-practical, metacognitive and integrative components are sequentially integrated. Each level is not autonomous but functions as a link in a holistic educational and personal development process.

At the cognitive level, the fundamental basis of professional competence is formed, which involves mastering basic knowledge about the essence of empathy, tolerance and inclusion, as well as learning psychological and pedagogical theories and methods. At this level, the foundations of the conceptual and categorical apparatus are formed, without which the further meaningful application of practical and interactive strategies is impossible.

The next step is the emotional level, which ensures the transformation of cognitive knowledge into internalised experience. Through the use of empathic practices (e.g., art therapy) and awareness of the emotional states of children with special educational needs, students move from formal knowledge to its affective assimilation. It is at this stage that emotional sensitivity develops, which in modern scientific approaches is interpreted as an essential element of emotional intelligence.

The reflective level correlates with the concept of metacognition and is aimed at awareness and critical analysis of one's own emotional reactions. Practices of self-observation, journaling and group supervision create conditions for the construction of a narrative identity, within which the subject comprehends their own experience, identifies areas of psychological vulnerability and forms self-regulation strategies.

At the communicative level, the main focus is on mastering tolerant communication techniques, which is consistent with the concept of non-violent communication. Developing constructive dialogue skills in different social groups means moving from individual empathy to socially relevant communication practices.

The next (social-practical level) is the stage of testing the acquired competencies in real conditions. Participation in volunteer and educational programmes ensures the social consolidation of empathic and tolerant behaviour patterns, which is consistent with the principles of experimental learning. This level is characterised by the integration of the learning environment with practice and the implementation of the 'learning by doing' mechanism. It is this feature that determines its uniqueness.

The metacognitive level involves awareness of one's own cognitive biases and stereotypes, which correlates with current research on cognitive patterns and social stereotypes. Planning personal development in the sphere of empathy and tolerance at this level means entering the realm of self-regulated learning, which increases the autonomy and reflectiveness of the subject.

The final (integrative level) is a comprehensive combination of knowledge, emotional experience, values and practical skills. It reflects the formation of comprehensive professional readiness for inclusive activities, which correlates with modern models of the competence-based approach (Kazachiner, 2020). As a result, the ability to act professionally in diverse conditions is formed, demonstrating consistent empathic and tolerant behaviour in various educational and social contexts.

Thus, the author's model we have developed can be interpreted as a holistic architecture of professional development that harmoniously combines the emotional, professional and behavioural dimensions of personality development. Its distinctive feature is the logic of increasing complexity: from knowing → feeling → comprehending →

communicating → acting → self-correcting → integrating. After all, in the aspect under consideration, it is precisely the step-by-step approach that is important, ensuring not only the gradual complication of educational tasks but also the formation of mechanisms of self-reflection and metacognitive control necessary for sustainable professional activity in an inclusive environment.

The results of the study show that innovative forms of developing social and emotional competencies allow for more effective formation of a culture of interaction, as they ensure comprehensive development of cognitive, emotional and value components. We have determined that the formats analysed are effective when students not only 'know' but also 'feel' the experience of others. The unique value of art therapy is precisely the emotional involvement in the feelings of another person. We have developed and proposed the following formats of work: 'The Mask of the Other', 'Colours of Empathy', 'My Space of Tolerance', 'Music of Emotions', 'Map of Tolerance' and 'Tree of Interaction.'

Further research should be aimed at developing modular training programmes for students that combine theoretical learning with the practical implementation of art therapy technologies focused on developing empathy and tolerance in an inclusive environment.

DISCUSSION

The question of tools for developing social and emotional competencies remains controversial today. Some scholars prefer traditional pedagogical methods, such as discussions and analysis of pedagogical situations, while others emphasise the effectiveness of innovative practices, including art therapy, music therapy, fairy tale therapy and collective creative writing. Proponents of the innovative approach argue that it is precisely the immersion of students in artistic and symbolic activities that creates the conditions for a deep emotional experience of the 'other' and the formation of genuine tolerance, rather than its declarative imitation. Opponents, on the other hand, emphasise that excessive use of creative methods can distract from the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and does not always guarantee a long-term change in value orientations.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the study, we have grounds to draw the following conclusions: studying empathy and tolerance as determinants of the formation of a culture of interaction opens up broad opportunities for finding innovative practices and creating new pedagogical strategies aimed at developing a humanistically oriented educational space. It is precisely such approaches that will allow future educators not only to adapt to the conditions of inclusion, but also to actively shape a culture of mutual understanding, cooperation and mutual support in society. At the same time, the challenge for educational institutions remains the systematic implementation of the practices we have identified, which must be actively integrated into curricula and have appropriate scientific and methodological support.

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that further development of research in this area requires a comprehensive understanding of empathy and tolerance as key competencies of a 21st-century teacher. Those should become not only a component of individual professional style, but also defining characteristics of an educational culture that ensures the integration of humanistic values into the practice of inclusive education. This opens up prospects for the formation of a new pedagogical paradigm focused on personal development, mutual understanding and social unity.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

FUNDING

The authors declare that this study received no specific financial support.

REFERENCES

- Dmytriieva, I., Ivanenko, A., & Odynchenko, L. (2022). Stratehii rozvytku vyshchoi osvity Ukrainy v natsionalnomu ta svitovomu vymiri shchodo profesiinoi pidhotovky v konteksti inkluzii [Strategies for the development of higher education of Ukraine in the national and global dimensions regarding professional training in the context of inclusion]. *InterConf*, 131, 48–50. <https://archive.interconf.center/index.php/conference-proceeding/article/view/1579> [in Ukrainian].
- Dobroskok, S. S. (2023). Psykholohichniy suprovid rozvytku komunikatyvnoi tolerantnosti maibutnikh psykholohiv [Psychological support for the development of communicative tolerance of future psychologists]. *Naukovyi visnyk Uzhhorodskoho natsionalnoho universytetu. Seriya: Psykholohiia – Scientific Bulletin of Uzhhorod National University. Series: Psychology*, 1, 57–61. <https://doi.org/10.32782/psy-visnyk/2023.1.11> [in Ukrainian].
- Holubnycha, L., Shchokina, T., & Soroka, N. (2023). The Anthropological Approach to Education and Modern Training and Learning Methodology. *Educational Challenges*, 28(1), 58–71. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2023.28.1.05>
- Horishna, N. M. (2020). Inkluzivna osvita: pidkhody do rozuminniata ta vyklyky rozvytku [Inclusive education: Current understanding and challenges in development]. *Visnyk Natsionalnoho universytetu «Chernihivskiy kolehium» imeni T.H.Shevchenka – Bulletin of the T.G. Shevchenko National University 'Chernihiv Collegium'*, 162(6), 23–29. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3730642> [in Ukrainian].
- Hubar, O.H., Pakhomova, N.H., Kovalenko, V.V., & Baranets, I.V. (2024). Inkluzivna kultura v osvitnomu prostori: problemy ta perspektyvy [Inclusive culture in the educational space: problems and prospects]. *Inclusion and Diversity*, 3, 26–33. <https://doi.org/10.32782/inclusion/2024.3.5> [in Ukrainian].
- Kazachiner, O. (2020). Developing Philology Teachers' Inclusive Competence in Postgraduate Education. *Educational Challenges*, 25(1), 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2020.25.1.03>
- Kolbina, L., Sopivnyk, I., Hubar, O., Teslenko, S., & Tsymbal-Slatvinska, S. (2025). Implementar una educacion superior inclusiva mediante el uso de tecnologías digitales. *Revista Eduweb*, 19(1), 68–84. <https://doi.org/10.46502/issn.1856-7576/2025.19.01.5>
- Kolupaieva, A. A., & Taranchenko, O. M. (2023). *Inkluziia: pokrokovy dlia pedahohiv: navchalno-metodychnyi posibnyk [Inclusion: step by step for educators: teaching and learning guide]*. Kyiv [in Ukrainian].
- Mbatt, I. P., & Philip, E. M. (2024). The psychosocial wellbeing of children with disabilities in inclusive secondary school education settings. *Educational Challenges*, 29(2), 259–272. <https://doi.org/10.34142/2709-7986.2024.29.2.17>

- Miroshnychenko, O., & Bakhmutova, L. (2025). Fakhova pidhotovka maibutnikh pedahohiv do profesiinoi diialnosti v umovakh inkluzii [Professional training of future teachers for professional activities in the context of inclusion]. *Novi tekhnolohii navchannia – New teaching technologies*, 99, 125–134. <https://doi.org/10.52256/2710-3560.2025.99.13> [in Ukrainian].
- Nasminchuk, I. A., Kholostenko, Yu. V., & Kyrsta, N. R. (2025). Inkluzivna osvita: psykholohichni pidkhody do rozvytku empatii ta sotsialnoi kompetentnosti [Inclusive education: psychological approaches to development of empathy and social competence]. *Naukovi innovatsii ta peredovi tekhnolohii – Scientific innovations and advanced technologies*, 1(41), 948–959. [https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-5274-2025-1\(41\)-948-959](https://doi.org/10.52058/2786-5274-2025-1(41)-948-959) [in Ukrainian].
- Pozniak, O. S. (2022). Protses stvorennia in kliuzyvnoho osvitnoho seredovyshcha dlia zabezpechennia vsestoronnoho rozvytku dytyny z OOP [The process of creating an inclusive educational environment to ensuring the holistic development of a child with SEN]. *Pedahohichni nauky – Pedagogical Sciences*, 98, 60–68. <https://doi.org/10.32999/ksu2413-1865/2022-98-9> [in Ukrainian].
- Sereda, I., & Kuterzhynska, K. (2021). Kazkoterapiia v roboti korektsiinoho pedahoha z ditmy z osoblyvymy osvitnimy potrebamy [A fairy tale therapy in the correctional work with children with special educational needs]. *Veresen – September*, 1(88), 87–95. <https://doi.org/10.54662/veresen.1.2021.09> [in Ukrainian].
- Shevchuk, H. Y. (2021). Inkluzivna osvita u vishchii shkoli: vyklyky ta perspektyvy [Inclusive education in higher education: challenges and prospects]. *Akademichni studiyi. Seriya «Pedahohika» – Academic studies. Series «Pedagogy»*, 2(3), 151–157. <https://doi.org/10.52726/as.pedagogy/2021.3.2.23> [in Ukrainian].
- Vrochynska, L.I., Verbovskyi, I.A., & Kotlomanitova, H.O. (2023). Innovatsiini pidkhody do sotsializatsii ditei z osoblyvymy osvitnimy potrebamy [Innovative approaches to socialisation of children with special educational needs]. *Innovatsiina pedahohika – Innovative pedagogy*, 57(2), 190–194. <https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-6085/2023/57.2.38> [in Ukrainian].
- Zamishchak, M. I. (2023). Psykholohichni osoblyvosti formuvannya empatiyi v maybutnikh pedahohiv [Psychological peculiarities of the formation of empathy in the future pedagogies]. *Naukovyy visnyk Uzhhorods'koho natsionalnoho universytetu – Scientific Bulletin of the Uzhhorod National University*, 1, 62–66. <https://doi.org/10.32782/psy-visnyk/2023.1.12> [in Ukrainian].