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Forming Students' Psychological Readiness for Pedagogical Activity in Inclusive Education

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Abstract: Inclusive education places unprecedented psychological demands on beginning teachers because they must respond flexibly to the heterogeneous cognitive, emotional and social needs of every learner in a single classroom. The present study analyses a structured program for developing psychological readiness among undergraduate pedagogy majors in Uzbekistan. Psychological readiness is operationalized as the integrated expression of cognitive openness to diversity, affective resilience when facing behavioral challenges, and behavioral self-efficacy in applying adaptive instructional techniques. A quasi-experimental design compared an intervention group that completed a semester-long readiness module—including reflective seminars, supervised micro-teaching in inclusive settings and individual coaching—with a control group receiving standard teacher-training courses. Mixed methods were employed: quantitative pre- and post-testing with the Inclusive Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the Jefferson Scale of Empathy (educator version) and the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale, complemented by qualitative analysis of reflective journals. After sixteen weeks the intervention cohort demonstrated statistically significant gains on all three scales ($p < 0.01$) and produced richer, more learner-centred reflections, whereas the control group's indicators remained largely unchanged. The findings corroborate international evidence that purposeful psychological preparation enhances novice teachers' capacity to sustain inclusive practice. Embedding such modules in teacher-education curricula is recommended, alongside continuous mentoring during practicum placements.

Keywords: Psychological readiness; inclusive education; teacher education; self-efficacy; empathy; resilience.

Introduction: The global movement toward inclusive education redefines teachers' professional profile, requiring not only subject expertise but a high degree of psychological readiness to accommodate diversity [1]. Psychological readiness is understood as a multidimensional construct integrating attitudes, emotions and behavioral intentions that enable educators to address learners' varying abilities, cultural backgrounds and socio-emotional trajectories without prejudice or burnout [2]. Although numerous policies mandate inclusive practice, research consistently shows that insufficient psychological preparation undermines implementation fidelity, leading to teacher stress, reduced instructional quality and the marginalization of pupils with special educational needs [3]. In Central Asia these challenges are amplified by rapid legislative changes and scarce specialized support services. While universities have augmented special-pedagogy coursework, little empirical attention has been paid to explicit psychological-readiness formation within undergraduate programs. This study therefore examines whether a targeted pedagogical-psychological module can measurably strengthen students' readiness for future work in inclusive classrooms and, by extension, contribute to the sustainable realization of inclusive education goals in Uzbekistan.

The research adopted a quasi-experimental design involving 120 third-year pedagogy students at a regional teacher-training university. Sixty volunteers formed the intervention group and sixty comparable peers constituted the control group; group equivalence on age, prior teaching experience and baseline readiness scores was confirmed by independent-samples t-tests ($p > 0.50$). The intervention comprised a sixteen-week module developed according to social-cognitive theory and dialogic pedagogy principles. Weekly two-hour seminars fostered critical reflection on case studies portraying typical inclusive-classroom dilemmas, while bi-weekly micro-teaching sessions in partner schools allowed participants to practise adaptive strategies under mentor guidance. Individual coaching meetings encouraged goal setting, emotional self-monitoring and solution-focused feedback.

Quantitative data were gathered at weeks 1 and 16 using validated Russian-language versions of three instruments: the Inclusive Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (24 items; $\alpha = 0.91$), the Jefferson Scale of Empathy for Educators (20 items; $\alpha = 0.88$) and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-10 ($\alpha = 0.86$). Paired-samples t-tests examined within-group changes; ANCOVA tested between-group differences

while controlling for pre-test scores. Qualitative evidence derived from 240 reflective-journal entries written by the intervention group was coded inductively and thematically to identify shifts in professional meaning-making. The study was approved by the university ethics committee; informed consent and confidentiality were assured.

At pre-test no significant differences existed between cohorts across all scales. Post-intervention analysis revealed that the experimental group's mean self-efficacy rose from $M = 3.12$ ($SD = 0.34$) to $M = 3.87$ ($SD = 0.29$), empathy from $M = 88.5$ ($SD = 6.3$) to $M = 97.9$ ($SD = 5.1$) and resilience from $M = 24.1$ ($SD = 3.8$) to $M = 28.6$ ($SD = 3.4$). All improvements were significant at $p < 0.001$ and exhibited large effect sizes ($\eta^2 > 0.25$). In contrast, the control group's scores fluctuated minimally and non-significantly. ANCOVA confirmed the robustness of group differences for each dimension ($F = 31.7\text{--}45.2$, $p < 0.001$).

Qualitative coding yielded three dominant themes. First, students progressively reconceptualized diversity from a deficit-oriented to an asset-based perspective, indicating cognitive transformation consistent with self-efficacy growth. Second, affective narratives shifted from anxiety towards measured confidence, reflecting enhanced emotional regulation and resilience. Third, reflections documented concrete behavioral intentions, such as differentiated assessment and co-operative learning structures, underscoring the behavioral component of psychological readiness. Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings thus attests to the module's comprehensive impact.

The pronounced gains align with recent international research demonstrating that structured psychological preparation boosts teachers' inclusive-classroom performance [4, 5]. By integrating experiential micro-teaching with guided reflection, the module activated reciprocal determinism between personal factors and enacted practice, thereby operationalising Bandura's conception of self-efficacy in a culturally specific context [6]. Enhanced empathy scores corroborate assertions that perspective-taking is malleable and can be cultivated through dialogic exposure to diverse learner narratives [7]. Resilience improvements suggest that repeated success experiences and mentor affirmation inoculate novices against the emotional exhaustion frequently reported by inclusive-education teachers [8].

Notably, the study extends extant literature by focusing on pre-service rather than in-service teachers, demonstrating that psychological readiness can be meaningfully shaped before full-time employment, which may reduce early-career attrition. The Uzbekistan

setting further contributes region-specific data, enriching global understanding of inclusive-education dynamics beyond well-researched Western contexts. Limitations include reliance on self-report measures and the single-institution sample; future multi-site, longitudinal studies should examine retention of gains during actual teaching service and explore interactions between psychological readiness and institutional support structures.

CONCLUSION

Embedding a purpose-built psychological-readiness module in undergraduate teacher-education programs demonstrably elevates students' cognitive, affective and behavioral preparedness for inclusive pedagogy; however, the present findings carry broader implications that warrant explicit articulation.

First, curriculum designers should treat psychological readiness not as an elective enrichment component but as a core competence aligned with national professional-standards frameworks. Integrating iterative readiness checkpoints—spanning introductory coursework, practicum placements and capstone reflections—will scaffold the gradual internalisation of inclusive values and skills. Second, university–school partnerships must be formalised so that micro-teaching opportunities occur in authentically diverse classrooms rather than simulated environments, thereby closing the theory-practice gap and normalising inclusion for both trainees and mentor-teachers.

Third, the study underscores the necessity of a multi-tiered support ecosystem. While the module bolstered self-efficacy, empathy and resilience, these gains could erode without institutional structures that provide continuing mentorship, peer-support circles and access to special-needs specialists during early career stages. Policymakers should therefore link pre-service psychological training with mandatory induction-year mentoring and incentivise schools that maintain inclusive professional-learning communities.

Finally, sustainable implementation demands continuous research. Longitudinal studies should track whether enhanced readiness translates into measurable learner outcomes and teacher retention over five- to ten-year horizons. Mixed-methods inquiries could explore how digital simulation tools and immersive virtual reality might complement live micro-teaching to cultivate emotional regulation and adaptive expertise. Comparative cross-regional analyses would clarify how socio-cultural factors mediate the effectiveness of readiness interventions, informing context-sensitive scaling across Central Asia and other emerging inclusive-education systems.

In sum, psychological readiness is a dynamic, teachable construct. Embedding it systematically within university curricula and professional ecosystems will fortify the human capital essential for transforming inclusive-education policies into day-to-day classroom realities, thus advancing the right of every learner to equitable, high-quality schooling.

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