

INTEGRATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS.

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Abstract: *The notion of inclusive education is examined in this article by applying for previous works done by researchers and writers, as well as its positive impact on children's and students' learning, their social well-being and interaction with their peers, moreover detrimental effects including vision loss, social isolation and discrimination between these disabled children and their healthy peers. Integration of inclusive education requires teacher training, curriculum adaptation, authentic materials and legislative reforms supporting students with special educational needs. The study also highlights both benefits and drawbacks of conducted research on integration of inclusive education in Uzbek schools, and providing alternative solutions to overcome the challenges while its implementation, also offers valuable insights for educational departments, policymakers, school administrations and parents.*

Key words: *inclusive education, children with disabilities, non-disabled peers, children with special educational needs, integration, education system, boarding school, regular state schools, students with visual impairment.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, human rights-based approaches have been used to develop education systems around the world, and inclusive education has become a focus of attention. It is stated in the UNESCO (2014) that “The right of all children to education is asserted in numerous international treaties and texts, and has been affirmed by both legally non-binding instruments” (p.9).

Inclusive education means that children with special educational needs are educated in the same environment as their non-disabled peers. Every child has the right to receive education and participate in the learning process on an equal basis with all their peers, regardless of their family background, financial resources, or other special needs. It is mentioned in the UNESCO(2017) that “Education for All (EFA) – the global movement to ensure quality basic education for all children, youth and adults – and are specific about the kind of education that is needed in today's world” (p.12). Several European countries, including Finland, Norway, the United Kingdom, and Germany, have successfully integrated inclusive education into their education systems, enabling children with disabilities to become part of society, receive an education on an equal basis with everyone else, and build a foundation for their future. In our country, many reforms are being carried out to develop inclusive education and successfully implement it in our education system. For example, in recent years, we can cite laws and decisions aimed at ensuring that children with special educational

needs receive education in regular state educational institutions. Uzbekistan has introduced key legislative reforms supporting inclusive education, including Presidential Resolutions No. PF-5270 (2017), PQ-4860 (2020), and Cabinet Resolution No. 638 (2021). These documents form the national policy basis for inclusion and were analyzed to understand the country's implementation framework.

Despite the great positive impact of inclusive education on the future success of children with disabilities, their ability to find their place in society, their education and development, unfortunately, there are also negative consequences. For example, children may have difficulties in adapting to a new environment, they may not be accepted by their peers, teachers may not be able to maintain balance in teaching children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers, and there may be a lack of sufficient educational and authentic materials. This research analyzes the results of the practical implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan, comparing and discussing the positive advantages and negative consequences of inclusive education.

Methodology

In examining this topic, we applied two complementary research methods to ensure the reliability and depth of our findings: 1. Qualitative research which was carried out in articles published in Google Scholar, Research Gate and similar sources on the topic of inclusive education between 2010 and 2025. By analyzing the articles, the importance of inclusive education in the education system and its shortcomings were studied. The results derived from the analyzed literature and policy documents were combined to pinpoint best practices and obstacles in executing inclusive education in Uzbekistan, setting the stage for the discussion and suggestions in the upcoming sections.

2. Quantitative research. Using this method, we monitored and analyzed the effectiveness and shortcomings in the development and study of children with special educational needs, in particular, visually impaired children, in Uzbekistan, while including them in the inclusive education system.

Literature Review

According to Saepova D.A. & Reymova M.J. about the benefits of inclusive education, “ the advantages of inclusive education extend beyond the classroom and contribute to long-term societal benefits. By promoting understanding, acceptance, and respect for diversity, inclusive education helps cultivate a generation that is better prepared to live and work in an increasingly diverse world” (Saepova D.A. & Reymova M.J. 2025, pp.77-79). We agree with this viewpoint as this education framework helps disabled people to be a part of society and to make their contribution for the development of their country.

Nor Aniza Ahmad, Anis Farahanim Abd Rahman (2017) writes, “For a successful inclusive education to be established, mainstream and special education teachers need to work together and create a communication channel that will be useful for

suggestion and knowledge sharing between mainstream and special education teachers” (pp.53-57).

Mel Ainscow argues about the functions of schools in implementing inclusive education: the implication is that schools need to be reformed and practices need to be improved in ways that will lead them to respond positively to student diversity: seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed but as opportunities for enriching learning (Mel Ainscow, 2020, pp.123-134). From this idea, we can understand that school administration and teachers need to consider individual preferences and personal values of each pupil to expand the scope of knowledge acquisition.

Siyu Chen, Qixuan Huang, Zhiyi Liu, Haijing Wang(2021) cite that, “from equal rights and social justice perspective, a huge body of literature argues that inclusion can provide equitable opportunities to all students” (pp.195-202).

The positive impacts of inclusive education on students’ learning is a paramount importance and they benefits to learners in all aspects of their lives.

Parveen A. & Qounsar state the negative effect of inclusion in teaching process: “Students with disability tend to disrupt the classroom with behaviour issues. Majority of the teachers felt that the biggest challenge in dealing with students with disabilities is the lack of knowledge and skills they require to understand these students’ behavioural needs. Because they are not as cognitively developed as their peers, the teaching-learning process is not as effective as it could be” (Amina Parveen & Tamheeda Qounsar, 2018, pp.64-68). It can be observed that students with disabilities tend to have more behavioral issues and problems related to cognition, as a result the interaction between teacher and student will be more complicated and challenging to establish good learning nevironment in the classroom.

Jardinez, M. J., & Natividad, L. R. (2024) highlighted another drawback of inclusive education that, “educators, administrators, and stakeholders may find themselves struggling to navigate the complexities of legal frameworks, the complex environment of inclusive policies, and the art of individualized support for students with a variety of needs” (pp. 57-65). Yuqiong Fang (2022) brings one of negative consequence into conversation by writing that, “although disability is a culturally defined concept, people with this label often face the considerable risk of isolation and low expectations, especially in school settings” (pp.44-48).

Jardinez, M. J., & Natividad, L. R.(2024) acknowledge another disadvantage of integration of inclusive education by saying: “The act of rejection may have negative consequences, especially about the individual’s self-esteem of the students, which may result in decreased self-confidence and perhaps limit their social growth making it harder for them to build solid connections with their classmates. Some students with impairments may also face bullying because of their condition” (Jardinez, M. J., & Natividad, L. R. 2024, pp.57-65). It is worth noting that discrimination between

students can cause serious problems that make harder to build better connection with their peers.

Doménech A. & Moliner O. (2014) argue about the parents' distrust and fears about inclusive education: “As a negative effect, they indicates the conflicts and aggression that it could arise among student with disabilities. This is one of the major concerns for parents, especially parents of students with disabilities, and also the lack of knowledge about disability, their characteristics, ... because it can lead to misunderstandings and confusions which become a conflict” (Doménech A. & Moliner O., 2014, pp.3286-3291).

It can be seen that there are several consequences that make detrimental effect on learners' both mental and physical health. Our task is studying the process in detail while adapting students in inclusive education. As the object of research, we chose the “Specialized State Educational Institution for Visually Impaired Children” located in the Navoi region of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This educational institution includes a kindergarten and a school, operates as a boarding school, and is equipped with a kitchen and a dormitory, that is, children both live and study here. During the observation of our research object, it became clear that the school is fully equipped with textbooks, visual materials, teaching aids and teaching aids for children with visual impairments, and children study here not in 1 class with 30 students, as in regular schools, but in groups of 7-12, which creates conditions for the teacher to work individually with children. The curriculum includes not only exact, natural and humanitarian subjects, but also correctional subjects, which are aimed at developing students' real-life skills. Additionally, after-school science and sports clubs have been organized to help students spend their free time productively.

According to the results of conducted research, this table is created to give information about the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in state regular schools.

The grades	The number of students transformed to inclusive education system	Pupils with positive outcomes and continued studying	Pupils with negative outcomes and give up studying
1st grade	–	–	–
2nd grade	–	–	–
3rd grade	–	–	–
4th grade	2	1	1
5th grade	1	1	–
6th grade	2	2	–
7th grade	2	2	–
8th grade	1	1	–
9th grade	4	3	1
10th grade	4	4	–
11th grade	2	1	1

Table 1. Indicators of students covered within the framework of inclusive education in 2025.

Results

We analyzed the results of our study and compared them with the outcomes reported in previous scholarly works, identifying points of convergence and divergence. It is clear from the table that this boarding school has begun to take measures to include its students in the inclusive education system. According to the analyzed data, pupils from 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades are not included in inclusive education as their level of visual acuity slightly less than the degree which is mentioned as a standard. We can see that some of the children from grades 4 to 11 were directed to regular state schools within the framework of inclusive education. From the results, it can be observed that students in grades 5-6-7-8 have adapted to schools and continued study. There have been significant positive changes in their learning, and they have also managed to establish good relationships with their classmates.

According to the information, 1 student from the 4th grade, who was included in inclusive education, returned to the boarding school, and this was due to his participation in additional courses during the summer holidays, his vision had deteriorated significantly, and he had lost interest in studying and did not want to go to school, so he left school. Our study revealed that one of the 9th grade students also returned to his school due to his vision loss. One of the 11th grade students was found to be unfit for education. He was blind and had Down syndrome, so he could not continue his studies.

Discussion

In this section, we present the main findings derived from the data collected during our study. The analysis allowed us to identify several positive trends as well as challenges related to the research topic. We also documented the key issues that emerged throughout the research process. Overall, the results provide a concise overview of the outcomes and offer insights that may guide future investigations in this area. We must emphasize that the purpose of our research is to expand the scope of the inclusive education system in our country, based on the experience of European countries, discuss its positive results and negative consequences, and provide appropriate advice on how to eliminate these shortcomings in the future. According to the results of our research, approximately 80% of students involved in the inclusive education system showed positive results in learning and adapting to the environment. However, more than 20% of children did not continue their education due to health problems, decreased vision, and loss of interest and desire for education. According to the adopted law, students with visual acuity above 0.2 levels are enrolled in regular state schools. Children with visual acuity below this level must continue their education in boarding schools. It should also be taken into account that even partially sighted students, after using traditional textbooks adapted for healthy children, experience a significant decrease in their visual acuity or even complete loss of vision. This, in turn, is one of the most negative consequences. The textbooks and teaching

materials in the boarding school are designed to be easy on the eyes of children, and they use Braille to read and write, not by sight, that is, they read and write by touch. In addition, a large number of students in this school have secondary disabilities (autism, Down syndrome, mental retardation), and these factors create great difficulties in their adaptation to regular schools and are likely to leave them with psychological trauma. It is also worth noting that boarding schools are staffed by teachers and educators who have studied defectology and have the skills to teach and work with children with special educational needs. However, the lack of such personnel in regular public schools, or their complete absence, makes it difficult for one teacher to work with more than 30 healthy children and children with special educational needs, and it becomes impossible to achieve the expected results in learning. Based on this, we can say that before expanding the scope of inclusive education, we need to reform the provision of sufficient teaching materials and personnel. Taking into account mentioned factors, we need to be very careful in the process of introducing inclusive education into our education system, analyze both sides of the situation, choose an alternative option, and most importantly, avoid decisions that could endanger the health and lives of children. Conclusion

In conclusion, inclusive education is a globally accepted framework that supports every learner except for their disabilities. It promotes equity between disabled children and their non-disabled peers and avoids discrimination. In order to achieve the desired outcomes of integration of inclusive education we need to consider both benefits and drawbacks of the phenomenon, and support provided by government, educational policies, teachers and parents plays an important role in the study and personal development of learners with special educational needs.

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