



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the development of the educational system for children with special educational needs in the Republic of Uzbekistan and the improvement of the inclusive education system to integrate these children into social life and introduce it in general education schools.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive education, children with disabilities, personnel, normative-legal documents, society, social life, special equipment, concept of developing inclusive education, "All Children Succeed" project.

INTRODUCTION

In Uzbekistan, human dignity, especially the issues concerning individuals with disabilities, is under constant attention. Measures are being taken to protect their rights and interests, create a barrier-free environment, and integrate them into society. Legal and organizational conditions are being created to ensure that people with disabilities actively participate in the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the country. In recent years, the adoption of significant decisions and decrees by our country's leadership on

this issue has played an essential role in protecting the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, freeing them from feelings of despair and uncertainty, and increasing their desire to engage in life.

Inclusive education is an educational system aimed at eliminating barriers between disabled and healthy children, integrating children who need special education (due to certain reasons for disability) into social life, regardless of the developmental defects or economic difficulties they may face.



In our country, great attention is being paid to the development of inclusive education. In Uzbekistan, inclusive education has become a state policy issue. The integration of children with disabilities into general education schools is a natural stage in the development of the inclusive education system. This is related to the reconsideration of society and the state's attitude toward children with disabilities, not only recognizing the equality of their rights but also understanding society's obligation to provide broader opportunities for such children in various areas, including education.

A series of normative-legal documents have been adopted in Uzbekistan regarding the implementation of inclusive education. These documents outline measures to socially support children who are part of our society and need special assistance, provide them with education, and help them integrate alongside healthy children, showing their capabilities and abilities and achieving spiritual growth.

The President of Uzbekistan's decree No. PF-5270 dated December 1, 2017, "On Measures to Fundamentally Improve the State Support System for Persons with Disabilities," the decree No. PF-5712 dated April 29, 2019, "On the Concept for Developing the Public Education System Until 2030," the decree No. PF-6108 dated November 6, 2020, "On Measures to Develop Education, Upbringing, and Science in the New Period of Development of Uzbekistan," and the resolution No. 638 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan dated October 12, 2021, "On the Approval of Normative Legal Documents Related to the Education of Children with Special Educational Needs," and other documents, outline the organization of inclusive education for teaching children with special educational needs, equipping general education institutions with special devices (elevators, ramps, handrails, etc.), and providing the necessary personnel

(special educators, specialists in psychological-pedagogical supervision of children).

The President of Uzbekistan's resolution No. PQ-4860 dated October 13, 2020, "On Measures to Further Improve the System of Education and Upbringing of Children with Special Educational Needs" defined several tasks aimed at developing inclusive education in Uzbekistan, improving the education and upbringing system for children with special needs, and enhancing the quality of educational services provided to them. In the initial stages, it involved opening experimental classes in certain schools and regions, such as primary correctional classes for children needing special education or specialized groups for 9th-grade students.

Uzbekistan's new education system focuses not only on instilling academic knowledge in students but also on developing skills necessary for everyday life and the future. The system aims to foster young people who can communicate freely, think critically, creatively solve problems and challenges, and work in teams.

The project to create an inclusive, unrestricted learning environment and equal opportunities for all children is being implemented in accordance with the "Concept for Developing the Public Education System Until 2030." This initiative is organized by the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, UNICEF, and the "Zamin" International Public Foundation. Both international organizations have been supporting the creation and development of the inclusive education system in Uzbekistan for many years. By 2025, Uzbekistan aims to achieve inclusivity in at least 51% of schools. Additionally, creating a safe and inclusive educational environment for children is one of the priority directions for the country's development. This task is being implemented within the framework of the "Concept for Developing Inclusive Education for 2020-



2025." For example, in the 2022 academic year, 225 general education schools across all regions of Uzbekistan opened their doors to children with disabilities.

The 298th general education school in Tashkent has now become a convenient institution for children with disabilities. This school is the first educational institution in Uzbekistan with an accessible and safe inclusive infrastructure, where students with certain disabilities can move freely, study, and interact with their peers and teachers. The 298th school was selected as a pilot project in the summer of 2023. The architectural planning was initiated in January 2024 based on UNICEF's guidelines for the universal design of school buildings. It took six months to create all the necessary conditions for children with disabilities to receive a full-fledged education and integrate comfortably. At the initial stage, the first floor, where primary classes are taught, and the school yard were adapted to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Tactile tiles were laid along the perimeter of the area and on the first floor, including hallways, classrooms, the dining hall, the gym, and the first aid station. Floor markings were installed for visually impaired children. Ramps were installed at the entrance for students using wheelchairs. The first floor also has a separate bathroom for students with mobility impairments. If a child needs assistance, they can press a special button to call staff.

UNICEF has highlighted Uzbekistan's efforts in this area. Representatives of the organization called on communities, parents, teachers, students, and schools to adopt this inclusive approach.

On February 20, 2024, the USAID Mission Director in Uzbekistan, David Hoffman, together with relevant government partner organizations, launched USAID's five-year "All Children Succeed" project in Tashkent.

This project is implemented in partnership with Creative Associates International, the American Councils for International Education, the Center for Disability and Inclusion at Syracuse University, Praxis Plus, and the National Movement "Yuksalish."

Through the "All Children Succeed" project, USAID supports three key areas: creating accessible teaching materials for inclusive education, providing practical training for teachers, and developing a sustainable policy co-designed with teachers and people with disabilities. In his speech, David Hoffman, the USAID Mission Director in Uzbekistan, emphasized the importance of collective responsibility in creating educational opportunities that enable each child to realize their full potential.

Speakers from the USAID "All Children Succeed" project visited Namangan region to exchange experiences in developing inclusive education, addressing existing shortcomings, and learning from the practices of other countries. The inclusive education conditions created in Namangan were evaluated as part of the study of the city of Namangan. Discussions were held between teachers, social workers providing comprehensive services in communities, staff of the "Insan" Social Services Center, and American specialists regarding efforts to involve children with disabilities in inclusive education and the conditions being created in the country.

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