TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: CHALLENGES, STRATEGIS, AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: This thesis explores the multifaceted landscape of implementing inclusive education in Uzbekistan, with a focus on the challenges, strategies, and broader implications for educational systems. As the global commitment to inclusive education gains momentum, it is essential to critically examine the complexities associated with creating learning environments that embrace diversity and cater to the needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Through an analysis of international and local perspectives, case studies, and policy considerations, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on inclusive education.

Key words: Inclusive education, disabled students, tolerance, challenges, strategies.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Inclusive education is an educational philosophy and practice that seeks to address the diverse learning needs of all students, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or differences. It promotes the idea that every learner has the right to access and participate in quality education within regular mainstream schools.International organizations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), have played a significant role in advocating for inclusive education. Documents such as the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) emphasize the importance of inclusive education on a global scale. This requires to implement inclusive education in Uzbekistan. The thesis analyzes the blocks halting the system transforming to inclusion and finds potential solutions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

First of all, The decree signed by the president Shavkat Mirziyoyev, approved the Concept for the Development of Inclusive Education in the Public Education System in 2020-2025, as well as the Roadmap for its implementation.

In accordance with the decree, in the 2021/2022 academic year:

- the system of inclusive education is being introduced in one of the secondary schools in the cities, as well as districts of Tashkent;
- basic remedial classes for children with special educational needs are opening in one of the secondary schools of Karakalpakstan, regions and the city of Tashkent;
- specialized groups are being created in one of the vocational schools of Kashkadarya, Fergana and Khorezm regions for the graduates of specialized educational institutions and children with special educational needs.[1]

[1] The Presidential Decree "On measures to further improve the education system for children with special educational needs" was adopted (PD-4860, 13.10.2020)

The concept of inclusive education has evolved over time. Historically, students with disabilities were often segregated into separate educational settings, a practice known as institutionalization. The move towards inclusive education gained momentum in the latter half of the 20th century as a response to the call for equal rights and opportunities for all individuals.Many countries have enacted laws and policies to support inclusive education.

Research consistently identifies resource constraints as a major problem in the implementation of inclusive education. Limited funding and insufficient availability of specialized materials, assistive technologies, and support staff can hinder the provision of quality education for students with diverse needs (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). the critical role of teachers in inclusive education and emphasizes the need for proper training and ongoing professional development. Teachers may lack the skills, knowledge, and confidence to address the diverse learning needs of students in inclusive settings (Forlin, 2010; Sharma & Desai, 2002).Attitudes toward inclusion, both among educators and the broader community, remain a significant challenge. Negative attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities can create barriers to acceptance and full participation for students with special needs (Slee, 2011; Skrtic, 1991).

2.6 The Role of Legislation and Policies

Legislation and policies form the bedrock for the successful implementation of inclusive education in developing countries. By setting clear objectives, allocating resources strategically, and fostering collaboration, well-crafted policies can create an enabling environment for inclusive education. The ongoing challenge lies in addressing the contextual nuances, overcoming implementation barriers, and ensuring sustained commitment to inclusive education goals.Legislation serves as the legal backbone for inclusive education. In developing countries, enacting laws that ensure equal educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities, is crucial. Such legal frameworks contribute to setting the stage for systemic changes (Slee & Allan, 2001; Tomaševski, 2000). At this time, Uzbekistan has enacted laws and policies, including “Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. 638 dated 12.10.2021” to support inclusive education. These policies emphasize equal educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. Efforts have been made to create a legal framework that ensures the right to education for every child.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design is based on qualitative and quantitative statistics.

The questionnaire was shared on Uzbek social forum in social networking site, 27 middle aged parents and 31 teachers were attracted. included the following questions:

1. Do you know inclusive education?
2. As a parent, would you choose inclusive education for your children?
3. As a teacher, would you support the inclusive education system spread on a wide scale?
4. As a teacher and a parent, what do you suggest to foster inclusive education?

55 % of parents did not have any knowledge about the inclusive concept. While 45 % have a limited facts about the system. For the second question, 30% supported inclusive education, their reason is that the offspring should not be isolated. The remaining 70% adults were reluctant that their children would go to school with disabled children. This survey results clarify most individuals lack information about the concept. Most educators claim that it is hard to maintain in the current education system due to lack of resources, funds, and a solid basement.

And also, parent attitudes matter a lot , most of them are concerned about the mental impact on their children. As it is stated above, if maintained properly inclusive classrooms could be beneficial for both disabled and healthy students. This means there are still challenges to deal with.

Chapter 4: Challenges in Implementing Inclusive Education

Infrastructure and Resource Limitations. The pilot parent's club numbers lack throughout the country , they exist only in 5 regions : Urgench, Tashkent, Namangan, Samarkand, Termiz[2]. The number of schools specialized in inclusive education is 417, the number of enrolled students is 734. The statistics is relatively low in the whole population scale. In practice, the numbers is by far less.

The reasons deduced from the survey participants are: lack of the potential resources; deficiency in trained specialists; public disbelief over the inclusive system. The issues can be tackled through consistent strategies.

Chapter 5: Strategies for Successful Implementation

Teacher Training and Professional Development Programs :

The SISF has been implementing the project "Inclusive education in Uzbekistan" since 2007. It unites kindergartens and educational establishments of various regions, where over 1,000 children with disabilities are studying. In 2013 number of pilot projects reached 64, of which 22 are kindergartens, 30 schools, six lyceums and six colleges. It unites kindergartens and educational establishments of various regions, where over 1,000 children with disabilities are studying. [3]

Providing ongoing and targeted professional development for teachers is crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education. Teachers need training in inclusive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, and understanding diverse learning needs. This training should be practical, incorporating real-world examples and scenarios that teachers may encounter in inclusive classrooms.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL):

Universal Design for Learning is an educational framework that emphasizes designing instruction to meet the needs of all learners from the outset. It involves providing multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities.

Developing curriculum materials that incorporate multimedia, varied instructional methods, and flexible assessments to cater to different learning preferences. Encouraging teachers to adapt their lesson plans to address the varied needs of students and create an inclusive learning environment.

Community Engagement and Awareness:

[2] http://inclusive-education.uz/en/news/index.htm
[3] https://uzdaily.uz/en/post/24249

Building awareness and engaging the community are essential components of successful inclusive education. Inclusive practices require understanding, acceptance, and support from parents, community members, and other stakeholders.

Organizing community events, workshops, or seminars to educate parents and community members about the benefits of inclusive education. Fostering a sense of inclusivity within the community, emphasizing that the success of inclusive education depends on collaboration and shared responsibility.

Policy Development and Implementation:

Clear and supportive policies at the national, regional, and school levels are fundamental for the effective implementation of inclusive education. Policies should address issues such as resource allocation, teacher-student ratios, infrastructure, and accessibility.

Advocating for and contributing to the development of inclusive education policies at the government level. Ensure that these policies include provisions for adequate funding, teacher training, and the creation of accessible learning environments. Work with educational authorities to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these policies.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Through a comprehensive examination of challenges, strategies, and case studies, this thesis provides insights into the complexities of implementing inclusive education In Uzbekistan and offer practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in shaping inclusive educational practices. By understanding the nuances and developing targeted strategies, educational systems can foster environments that celebrate diversity and empower all students to reach their full potential.

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