UZBEKISTAN

Inclusive Education: The way of the future

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WAYS AND PERSPECTIVES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

The solution of the problems that emerge because of time and life changes depends on the right choice of priorities in modern education.

Undoubtedly, one of the challenges, the system of education will have to overcome, will be the contradictions:
- between the necessity of person’s social adaptation to life activities in society and his need for personalization, and voluntary integration into society;
- between a competitive desire to be successful and an aspiration for equal opportunities while arranging a personal life and pursuing a policy in the field of education, social development, etc.

The main goal of such system of education is to help everyone develop his/ her abilities, so the quality and accessibility of education become a priority.

The Act On Education, the National Programme on Teacher Training of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantee free and quality education for all, equal access to primary and secondary education. Uzbek education system being holistic and lifelong comprises:
- state and private educational foundations which implement education programmes in accordance with the state standards on education;
- academic institutions carrying out researches necessary for proper work and the development of education system;
- state run public authorities in the field of education and other entities in charge.

Lifelong education is based on continuity of educational programmes and comprises:
- pre-school education;
- secondary education;
- out of school education;
- specialized secondary education, professional education;
- higher education;
- postgraduate education;
- in-service training and retraining.

A special place in this chain is given to pre-school and secondary school education, which is often called school education.

The Act On Education guarantees a place, method and language of instruction.

Today there are 6565 state pre-school institutions in the system of education, which are attended by 571147 children, and 52 private kindergartens attended by 4000 kids.

5926860 students attend 9491 mainstream schools. Education in Uzbekistan is carried out in 7 languages.

There are 431 specialized schools and boarding schools with advanced study of different subjects in the Republic, and there are specialized classes in 2433 schools. There are also 35 sport-oriented boarding schools and 6 of them are of Republican subordination.

Students of specialized and boarding schools take part in prestigious international Olympiads in mathematics, chemistry, biology, ecology, informatics, Russian and other subjects held in Russia,
Germany, the USA, South Korea, Indonesia, Turkey, Japan, Greece, Slovenia and other countries. For the last 5 years they have won 21 gold, 26 silver and 62 bronze medals. Students of specialized schools are a success in annual Republican Olympiads and competitions. Olympiad and competition winners enter institutes of higher education of the Republic hors concurs, i.e. without entrance examinations or tests.

It should be noted that the Act On Education makes provisions for creating specialized schools not only to meet needs and demands of gifted children, but also those aimed at children in need for special social support and state aid.

Currently there are 150000 children with special needs and 38% of them are handicapped from birth.

Orphans, unparented children and children with all sorts of impairments are a component of every nation who demand special attention on the state’s part. The attitude to children with special needs reflects nation’s morality and spirituality.

For the time being, as in other CIS countries, children with special needs are mainly supported by state institutions.

At the present time in the Republic of Uzbekistan function:

- 86 specialized boarding schools attended by 19245 children with impairments;
- 28 Mehrionlik Houses where 2900 orphans and unparented children from the age of 3 to 17 are brought up;
- 23 boarding schools with extended care facilities where 7000 children are simultaneously taught and cured;
- 122 specialized pre-school establishments give correctional help to 9095 physically challenged children. At the same time there are 937 integration groups on the premises of mainstream pre-school establishments attended by 11340 physically challenged children;
- 12000 children are involved in home-schooling.

### Types and Amount of Specialized and Boarding Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Types of specialized educational foundations of the Republic</th>
<th>Amount of schools in 2001</th>
<th>Amount of schools in 2007</th>
<th>Amount of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>schools for children with visual impairments</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>schools for children with hearing impairments</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>schools for children with speech impairments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>schools for mentally retarded children</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>11648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>schools for children with movement and motor impairments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Boarding schools for children with behaviour impairments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>19 245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children from such specialized educational foundations a taught in accordance with 10 curricula which are approved by the Ministry of Education yearly.

Reforms of lifelong education focus on the improvement of the teachers’ potential, development of a varied network of state and private educational establishments, drastic changes in professional
education programmes taking into account global achievements in education, science, culture, etc. These main tendencies of reformation are reflected in the State National Programme of School Education Development 2004-2009.

In 2006-2007 school year 450327 teachers worked in mainstream schools, and 308200 of them had higher education.

According to the State National Programme of School Education Development teaching staff should obtain in-service training every three years. Administrative and teaching staff are assessed by the Republican Test Centre.

Taking into consideration the demand for special needs personnel, much attention is drawn to their training. 3769 pedagogues work in educational foundations designed for children with special needs. 1084 of them are speech pathologists with higher education. 1843 teachers work in 28 Mehrbonlik Houses for unparented children.

Currently in Uzbekistan there are various forms of placing unparented children, but families are still prioritized.

Uzbek education system as well as other systems all over the world is shifting from segregation to integration of children with special needs into comprehensive schooling, i.e. inclusive education. The development of inclusion in Uzbekistan began in 1996.

At first inclusive education was viewed only as integration of disabled children into comprehensive schooling, but now more and more technologies of inclusive education, based on the equal accessibility of education for all children irrespective of their disability status, or any social, emotional, cultural or linguistic factors, are being implemented.

It is a well-known fact that holistic education presupposes child’s adaptation to the demands of education system through special medical and psychological help. But inclusive education presupposes equal teaching of healthy children and those with special educational needs in mainstream schools, and the system of education is adapted to child’s needs and expectations.

Countries and organizations define children with special needs differently. According to the international classification elaborated by OCDE there are at least three categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Limited Abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Experiencing Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Negative Factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The concept of inclusive education is based on the fact that difficulties in providing education for all is linked with the structure of school education and not with children’s difficulty learning. It means that the main task is not just to overcome learning difficulties, but also to reform schools so that they could accept all students irrespectively.


The State social support system aimed at rendering educational services to people with disabilities in Uzbekistan is fulfilled through the normative framework, which provides the disabled with equal
opportunities to implement their rights and free will, creates favorable conditions for participation in social, political and economic life, better access to education services.

First of all we mean the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, acts and State programmes:

- Act On Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan and National Programme for Teacher Training (1997 г.);
- Act On Social Protection for People with Disabilities (1991г.);

Annual target state programmes are of great importance. In 2007, which was proclaimed The Year of Social Protection in the Republic, a special programme was elaborated and implemented. In its framework a chain of integrated activities aimed at strengthening of social protection and support of socially disadvantaged children was implemented.

Our country is working at the integration of disabled children into the society of their healthy peers. There is a Resource Centre on Inclusive Education under the Ministry of Education. This Centre was founded in 2001 by the Republican Education Centre in collaboration with UNESCO.

Yearly the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Republican Public Child Fund “You are Not Alone” and the Republican Centre for Children’s Social Adaptation hold international conferences and workshops, dedicated to equality in education, adaptation of socially disadvantaged children. Positive experience becomes basis for a consistent policy aimed at evolutionary development of inclusive education; innovative patterns and methods of work with children with special needs are created.

To succeed a whole chain of projects are being implemented and carried out by the Republican Education Centre, A.Avloniy Central Institute for In-Service Training of Educational Administration. These projects are supported by international donors, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, Asian Bank of Development.

Inclusive education is a school for all students. No doubt that the joint project with UNICEF “Implementation of a Child Friendly Attitude through Inclusive Education” was aimed at involving maximum children in schooling and teaching them in concordance with their individual abilities.

In 2005-2006 in the framework of this project in 10 districts of 4 pilot regions – the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Khorezm, Fergan and Tashkent regions – 6093 children of different age and impairment groups were examined. About 560 children with mental and physical impairments of school age were covered by inclusive education and involved in mainstream schools. Special guidelines and instructions were elaborated on how to examine and teach such children in mainstream schools. This project raised a lot of questions which are being considered by the Ministry of Education.

One more important project is “Comprehensive Education for Disabled Children”, implemented with the assistance of Asian Bank of Development. This project is brand-new from all points of view.

Firstly, providing a liaison between specialized and boarding schools and nearby mainstream schools, the project guarantees promotion and support of innovative approaches to special needs education for the children who have to live and develop in the traditional environment of a boarding school.

Secondly, such symbiosis takes into account the development of a wider range of educational and social liaisons between specialized boarding schools and mainstream ones.

Thirdly, the project addresses present-day problems such as lack of in-service training courses and professional development of special needs teachers, bad textbook, teacher’s book, visual aid and other learning material provision. These problems will be revised in the framework of other Asian Bank of Development projects.

To conclude, it should be stressed that the offered project brings to the fore the components necessary for better educational results and social adaptation of children with special needs. This will be attained with the help of comparative analysis of the progress in the framework of the project with the results in the segregated schools which are not included in the project.
The project will give a chance to assess the benefits of inclusive approach to special needs education and will become basis for the National Core Curriculum aimed at the development, better learning results and social adaptation of children in Special Needs System of Education. It will also let us test more effective and viable ways of investing.

But it should be said that along with the success on the way to implementing inclusive education for special needs children there are various problems:

- Due to ethno-psychological reasons families hide from relatives, neighbors and community their children with special needs;
- There are few possibilities for integration of these children in the society, as well as for their further education and social adaptation after finishing secondary school;
- Most disadvantaged groups are families with single mothers that take care of their children with disabilities, and also families whose children are in state patronage establishments;
- Inadequate supply of technical means and methodological resources for inclusive education;
- Lack of infrastructure needed for integration of disabled children in mainstream schools (e.g., ramps);
- Inadequate supply of mainstream schools with qualified teachers and other educational specialists (speech pathologists and therapists, social and medical people, etc.) for working with students with special needs in inclusive classes and groups.

**Perspectives and plans for the future** were defined:

- in the new draft of Uzbek Act On Education there is a special article on Inclusive education;
- the draft of the law On Ensuring Rights of the Child has been elaborated;
- the bill On Alterations and Amends to Uzbek Disability Convention was adopted at the first read. It was elaborated to implement the Decree of the President On the State Programme “The Year of Social Protection”;
- the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection is developing a normative document on acceptance of children with disabilities in colleges and lyceums, taking into account their educational needs, and also on children involved in home-schooling;
- Act on Inclusive Education (in broad meaning of this concept) is being developed;
- at the state level the mechanism of financial resources allocation for inclusive education is being reconsidered;
- the Cabinet Council designed the draft of the law On Specialized Educational Foundations Aimed at Children with Disabilities, which approves the Stipulations on Special Needs Educational Foundations (boarding schools) for Children with Impairments and in Need for Medical, Social, Psychological and Pedagogical Aid;
- the problem of providing them with specialized textbooks, syllabuses, visual and learning materials is being considered.

Alongside with disabled children there is so called “uncovered” group. These are children with behavioural or emotional disturbances, or those with difficulty learning. As it has already been mentioned, it is believed that educational problems arise from ill cooperation of students and educational context which result in non-attendance.

To reveal the reasons of non-attendance, in the middle of 2007 the Ministry of Education initiated a special research. Now the statistics are being analyzed by a specially recruited agency and soon the results will be available to the Ministry of Education. This research is of great importance as the statistics results’ will allow to elaborate all the necessary plans and influence the “excluded” groups.

The Uzbeks have a saying: “All good intentions are supported by society”. And we believe that this is the essence of true inclusion.
I hope that this meeting will serve our future collaboration in implementing legal, educational, and social needs of every child, as well as positive transition to inclusive education.