

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

 DOI 10.51582/interconf.19-20.11.2023.011

Implementing inclusive education in Kazakhstan: objective needs and real options

Abdizhamalova Akmonshak¹,

Tulekova Gulmira²,

Antikayeva Samal³

¹ doctoral student;
Toraighyrov University; Republic of Kazakhstan

² Doctor of Philosophy PhD, Associate professor;
Toraighyrov University; Republic of Kazakhstan

³ Doctor of Philosophy PhD; Associate professor;
Toraighyrov University; Republic of Kazakhstan

Abstract.

This study investigates the issues of including people with disabilities in the higher education process that have emerged in Kazakh education theory and practice. There is a brief overview of the Republic's objective needs and real options for implementing inclusive education. This work also discusses the difficulties associated with implementing inclusive education in the country. The study examines future teachers' professional training experiences for teaching in an inclusive environment. According to the study's findings, future teachers are not adequately prepared to teach in an inclusive environment, which hinders their development of a positive attitude toward inclusion. To address this issue, a serious and responsible approach to reforming higher pedagogical education is required, taking into account the positive international experience of developed countries.

Keywords:

inclusive education
special educational needs (SEN)
teacher training
higher schools

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

The study's relevance is due to the issue of modernizing educational services that provide education to students regardless of their health status. Kazakhstan has committed to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals until 2030, particularly Goal 4, which involves ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. In this regard, ensuring opportunities for people with disabilities in higher education contributes to the maximum development of their potential abilities, ultimately promoting their socialization and full self-realization in modern society [1].

Government documents in developed countries with high economic growth affirm the principle of non-discrimination against people with disabilities and proclaim their right to education. Our country supports such initiatives. For example, in 2015, the country ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [2], to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to higher education, vocational training, adult education, and lifelong vocational training without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. The Convention against Discrimination in Education, which was ratified in 2016, reinforced these obligations [3].

Inclusive education is a priority direction for the development of educational policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The formation of professional knowledge and skills and professional self-determination among young people with disabilities in the educational process at this stage is an urgent task to organize the necessary conditions to provide students with disabilities with access to higher education. For example, the State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025 envisages the creation of equal conditions and barrier-free access for students with special educational needs (hereinafter referred to as SEN) in 70% of civil universities by 2025 [4]. Consequently, the educational environment of higher educational institutions must be adapted to the characteristics of students with special education needs and take into account their capabilities and needs on a full scale. At the same time, the analysis of the documents led to the conclusion that they lack a unified conceptual apparatus and mechanism for implementing this policy at all stages of

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

education. For example, there are no clear indicators for monitoring inclusive education or methods for calculating them. The OECD's monitoring of Kazakhstan's policy for students with special education needs, as well as factors ensuring the development of an inclusive educational system, revealed the following issues: Uncertain management and legislative framework, insufficient funding and resources, ineffective teacher education system, and poor coordination of external services.

The Standards for Institutional Accreditation of Universities note that the educational activities of a university should be based on academic policy, which is aimed at meeting the needs of various categories of students, including students with special education needs (health problems, low-income families, and socially disadvantaged sections of the population).

By Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated May 12, 2016, No. 288 Quotas for admission to higher education organizations have been approved for vulnerable groups of the population. In addition to the state scholarship, this category of students receives social assistance in the form of payment for accommodation in dormitories and food stamps. However, despite government measures to expand the access of students with special education needs to higher education, several factors make their study at universities problematic. In the majority of higher education organizations in the Republic of Kazakhstan, appropriate conditions have not been created: insufficient or absent convenient ramps and doorways at the entrance and inside the building, special seats in classrooms, a barrier-free environment in the dining room, library, student dormitory, and specially equipped sanitary and hygienic premises. Employment of students with special educational needs is currently problematic. The issue of developing mechanisms to assist in the employment of persons with disabilities has not been addressed.

Higher education for students with special educational needs inevitably increases the demands on teachers' activities and special teacher training. This issue is highlighted in government documents. Since 2016, universities in the country have implemented the educational program

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

"Inclusive Education" for all pedagogical specialties. This discipline is represented by only 2 credits or 1.6% of all theoretical academic credits for the entire period of study. However, for such credits, you can get basic knowledge in the field of inclusive education, but it is not enough for practical skills in teaching methods for children with special education needs. For comparison, in Germany, about 5% of the content of teacher training programs is aimed at inclusive education. According to a survey of university students with pedagogical specialties, 24.9% of survey participants have no idea what inclusive education is; 64.6% have a partial understanding of inclusive education; and 18.6% have a complete understanding of inclusive education.

The educational program at the university is aimed at the professional and personal training of a teacher who is ready to work with children with different levels of educational needs, according to 72.6% of students studying in pedagogical specialties; 18.4% indicated that the university did not provide them with sufficient knowledge necessary to work with children with special education needs. Thus, in order to provide high-quality training for teachers who are prepared to work in inclusive environments, the educational program's content must be updated to meet modern international standards.

The solution to this problem is primarily realized at the level of stating the problem and justifying the need for its resolution. Much more attention is being paid to research on the issue of inclusive education at the elementary and secondary levels. These studies [5-10] fully explore the issue of inclusive competencies and their formation stages, including the conditions for obtaining future teachers in higher education as well as the characteristics of teachers in school education and correctional activities.

An examination of trends in the evolution of the process of teaching people with disabilities in these studies allows us to draw the following conclusions:

1. Education of people with disabilities is a socially significant process that is influenced by the development of concepts of human rights and equal opportunities, changing attitudes towards the education of people with disabilities.

2. Foreign inclusive theory and practice are centered on

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

large-scale transformations that affect both the educational and socioeconomic spheres. This fosters the development of a more inclusive culture in society.

3. Foreign researchers recognize the importance of special training for teachers for the implementation of the process of teaching people with disabilities in universities.

Despite Kazakhstani researchers' interest in the issue of university teachers' readiness to teach students with disabilities, there is still no agreement on approaches to determining the professional competencies required for them. One reason for this situation is that the problem of training teachers to solve problems related to meeting the special educational needs of students with disabilities has not been the subject of special scientific research in Kazakhstan. Due to a lack of understanding of the issue, domestic educational and methodological materials are scarce for organizing the education of students with disabilities. As a result, the professional needs of university teachers who carry out educational activities with students who have various disorders of psychophysical development and face organizational challenges remain unresolved to this day.

Public policy requirements and the current needs of the country's universities in providing for students with special education needs have determined the need to disclose the concept of teachers' readiness to teach this category of students. Even though the inclusive readiness of university teachers is regarded as the most important factor in the success of the inclusive process in education, there is currently no unambiguous approach among researchers to the definition of the above concept.

At the same time, the importance of a comprehensive study of teachers' readiness to implement inclusive education at a university is determined by the politics of the government's desire to include students with disabilities in the educational environment.

The content of university teacher training for teaching students with disabilities should be determined by taking global theory and practice trends into account. This will enable us to avoid errors and select an appropriate strategy for the professional development of a university teacher who

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

provides educational services to students with disabilities.

In developed countries where inclusive processes are actively developing in the education system, all stakeholders, from the parent community to government officials, participate actively. This is largely due to widespread public awareness of ongoing educational policies, events, and initiatives, as well as the provision of information and advisory support. However, there is a lack of coverage of issues related to inclusive education and support for students with special education needs in Kazakh society as a whole. All of this highlights the importance of developing an inclusive culture in the country by providing advisory support to students with special education needs, their parents, and teachers.

All government organizations must work together to implement inclusive education in Kazakhstan. However, the country has not established an interdepartmental interaction mechanism to assist people with special needs.

The lack of coordination among various departments is evident in all aspects. Data on students with special education needs provided by various departments varies greatly, raising concerns about its completeness and reliability. As a result, there are no consistent approaches to the measures taken to support people with special needs.

References:

- [1] United Nations. (2015) General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1. Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available from: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- [2] Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 13, 2006. Ratified by the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated February 20, 2015 No. 288-V ZRK. Available from: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs>
- [3] UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960): Key Pillar of the Education for All. Available from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark>
- [4] State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025. Available from: <https://primeminister.kz/en/news/>
- [5] Korkmaz, A. V., Van Engen, M. L., Knappert, L., & Schalk, R. (2022). About and beyond leading uniqueness and belongingness: A systematic review of inclusive leadership research. *Human Resource Management Review*, 32(4), 100894.

PEDAGOGY AND EDUCATION

- [6] Ashikali, T., Groeneveld, S., & Kuipers, B. (2021). The Role of Inclusive Leadership in Supporting an Inclusive Climate in Diverse Public Sector Teams. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 41(3), 497-519.
- [7] Nishii, L. H., & Leroy, H. (2022). A multi-level framework of inclusive leadership in organizations. *Group & organization management*, 47(4), 683-722.
- [8] Dewsbury, B., & Brame, C. J. (2019). Inclusive teaching. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 18(2), fe2.
- [9] Molbaek, M. (2018). Inclusive teaching strategies—dimensions and agendas. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(10), 1048-1061.
- [10] Booth, T., Nes, K., & Strømstad, M. (Eds.). (2003). *Developing inclusive teacher education*. Routledge.