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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: FROM DECLARATION TO PRACTICE. SUCCESSES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE CRITICAL TRANSITION TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ANNOTATION

Inclusive education is a transformative approach in the Uzbekistan education system aimed at ensuring equal access for all students. This study examines the progress made in primary schools regarding the integration of children with special educational needs. Furthermore, it analyzes the challenges faced during the critical transition period from primary to secondary education. Based on a review of current practices and legislation, the paper suggests strategies to maintain the continuity of inclusive practices throughout a student's academic journey.

Keywords: *inclusive education, Uzbekistan, primary school, secondary education, educational transition, special educational needs, pedagogical strategies.*

Introduction

Inclusive education has become a central pillar of the educational reforms in Uzbekistan. It is not merely about placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms, but about creating an environment that adapts to the diverse needs of all

learners. In primary education, the foundations of social integration and basic literacy are established, making this stage vital for students with special educational needs (SEN).

While Uzbekistan has made significant strides in implementing inclusion at the primary level, many students face difficulties when moving to secondary school. This transition involves a change from a single-teacher environment to a multi-teacher system, which can be overwhelming. If the support systems are not maintained, students may lose the academic and social progress they achieved in their early years. The purpose of this study is to examine the successes of primary inclusion and identify the barriers in the transition to secondary education.

Literature Review

The Progress of Inclusion in Primary Schools The initial phase of inclusive education in Uzbekistan has focused heavily on primary schools. At this level, the curriculum is more flexible, and teachers have more time to provide individual support. Research indicates that early inclusion helps develop empathy among peers and improves the social skills of children with SEN.

Challenges in the Transition to Secondary Education The transition to secondary school is often described as a "critical gap" in inclusive practice. Students move from a structured, familiar classroom to a complex environment with different subject teachers, increased academic demands, and changing social dynamics. Without a coordinated "transition plan," many inclusive gains are lost during this period.

Successes in Primary Inclusive Practice

Several key factors have contributed to the success of inclusion in Uzbek primary classrooms:

- **Teacher-Student Bond:** The primary teacher acts as a consistent mentor, which is essential for students who require emotional stability.

- **Simplified Curriculum:** The focus on core literacy and numeracy allows for more effective adaptation of materials.
- **Peer Support:** Young children are often more naturally accepting of differences, creating a supportive social environment.

Barriers to Secondary Transition

The move to the 5th grade introduces several systemic challenges:

1. **Subject Specialization:** Secondary teachers often lack specific training in inclusive pedagogy compared to primary teachers.
2. **Physical Environment:** Navigating between different classrooms and floors can be a physical barrier for students with mobility issues.
3. **Assessment Pressure:** The increased focus on standardized testing in secondary school can discourage teachers from using differentiated instruction.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach based on an analysis of current educational policies in Uzbekistan and a review of existing academic literature. The study focuses on reports from pilot inclusive schools and pedagogical research concerning student transitions. The reviewed sources were analyzed to identify the most effective methods for bridging the gap between primary and secondary levels.

Discussion

The reviewed literature and current practices suggest that inclusion must be viewed as a continuous process rather than a stage-limited project. Success in primary school is only the beginning. To ensure long-term success, schools must implement "bridging programs" where primary and secondary teachers collaborate before the student changes levels.

Furthermore, the role of the "tutor" or assistant teacher becomes even more critical in secondary education to help students navigate the complex schedule. Finally, teacher

preparation programs must ensure that subject-specific teachers (math, science, history) are as well-equipped for inclusion as primary school generalists.

Conclusion

This study highlights that while Uzbekistan has made commendable progress in primary inclusive education, the transition to secondary school remains a significant hurdle. In response to the research question, it is concluded that a lack of continuity in support is the primary barrier to long-term inclusion. To improve the situation, the study recommends the development of individualized transition plans and mandatory inclusive training for all secondary school staff.

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