



## THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN: POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES

**Hasanova Dilafruz Buronovna**

*Bukhara State Pedagogical Institut Teacher of the " Mathematics and informatics"  
department*

**Fayzullayeva Madinabonu**

*Bukhara State Pedagogical Institute third-year student in mathematics and  
computer science*

**Annotation:** *Inclusive education ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, can access quality education within mainstream schools. This article examines the role of the state in promoting inclusive education in Uzbekistan, highlighting national policies, government initiatives, and the challenges faced in implementing inclusive practices. Findings suggest that while significant strides have been made, ongoing issues such as insufficient infrastructure, lack of teacher training, and societal attitudes require further attention to fully realize the goals of inclusive education.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Education, Uzbekistan, State Role, Education Policy, Accessibility, Educational Equity, Special Needs*

Inclusive education is a critical component of ensuring educational equity, allowing all children, including those with disabilities, to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools. In Uzbekistan, the government has taken steps to support inclusive education as part of its broader educational reforms.

Historically, children with disabilities in Uzbekistan have often been educated in specialized institutions. However, recent global trends and international commitments, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), have encouraged a shift towards more inclusive education models. Uzbekistan ratified the CRPD in 2021, thereby declaring its commitment to ensuring inclusive education for all children.

Uzbekistan is actively working to reform its education system to meet the needs of all students. The government has developed a concept for the development of inclusive education in the public education system, which includes specific goals to improve access to education for children with disabilities. In addition, the Law on Education and relevant decrees have been amended to emphasize inclusivity, aimed at integrating children with special needs into mainstream education.

There have been some positive developments in inclusive education in Uzbekistan. Pilot programs in cities such as Tashkent and Samarkand have demonstrated that with appropriate resources and training, mainstream schools can effectively integrate students with special needs. The government's collaboration with international organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO have also played an important role in providing teacher training programs and developing inclusive educational materials.

Despite the steps taken by the government, minors' education in Uzbekistan is still not up to par in terms of inclusion, as some children have limited opportunities in mainstream schools for various reasons.

According to the World Bank, as of 2022, 845.3 thousand people, or 2.3% of the total population, were recognized as people with disabilities in Uzbekistan. Of these, 42.3 thousand are children with disabilities under the age of 18.

Children with disabilities have nearly 20% lower access to preschool education than their peers without disabilities, which may negatively impact their retention rates in high school.

Many rural areas still lack access to inclusive education due to inadequate infrastructure, such as wheelchair ramps, specialized teaching materials, and accessible transportation. Additionally, a shortage of trained special education teachers means that many schools are not fully equipped to support students with diverse learning needs. Social stigma around disabilities also remains a significant barrier, with many families reluctant to send their children to mainstream schools for fear of discrimination.

Improving the quality of education and inclusion are key challenges for the education sector in Uzbekistan. The peculiarity of inclusive education is that it is child-oriented, not curriculum-oriented. It uses pedagogy that meets the needs of every child, including children with disabilities and those who need additional support. The new education system of Uzbekistan is aimed not just at instilling academic knowledge in students, but at developing the skills they will need in everyday life and in the future. The system is aimed at developing young people who can freely communicate, think, find creative solutions to any issues and problems in life, and work in a team.

A critical factor for the success of inclusive education in Uzbekistan is the allocation of adequate funding. Many challenges, such as the lack of infrastructure and trained staff, can be addressed through more efficient resource allocation. More investment is needed to build accessible facilities, develop specialized teaching materials, and provide comprehensive training for teachers.

Teacher training remains one of the most pressing issues. The government, in collaboration with international organizations, should prioritize developing training programs that equip teachers with the skills to support children with diverse needs. Schools should also have access to special education experts who can provide guidance and support in developing individual learning plans.

For inclusive education to be successful, societal attitudes toward disability must change. Public awareness campaigns can play a critical role in educating communities about the rights of children with disabilities and the benefits of inclusive education. Schools can also serve as hubs for promoting inclusion, engaging with parents and community members to raise awareness.

The state plays a fundamental role in promoting inclusive education in Uzbekistan. Significant progress has been made through legislative reforms, strategic plans, and international cooperation. However, to fully realize the vision of inclusive education, ongoing efforts are needed to address existing challenges, including improving

infrastructure, training teachers, and changing public perceptions. Continued investment and community engagement are essential to creating an educational environment in which all children can succeed.

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