



INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS EQUALITY OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND A PRIORITY COURSE OF MODERN STATE POLICY

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Abstract

This study explores inclusive education as a fundamental component of modern educational policy and a means to ensure equal access for all learners. It examines the historical evolution of inclusive practices, international normative frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and interdisciplinary scholarly perspectives from pedagogy, sociology, and international relations. Comparative analysis of national models highlights diverse approaches in Europe, North America, East Asia, Latin America, and Central Asia, including Uzbekistan. The findings demonstrate that inclusive education not only enhances learning opportunities but also promotes social equity, human development, and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 and SDG 10.

Keywords: Inclusive education, equal access, educational policy, international standards, Salamanca Statement, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, comparative analysis, social equity, sustainable development, Uzbekistan.

Introduction

Inclusive education in the context of the rapid social transformations of our time is gaining the status of one of the key areas of global and national educational policy. Its relevance is due to the fact that education systems are becoming central mechanisms for ensuring equality, social justice and sustainable development, as well as indicators of the maturity of public administration institutions and social policy [1]. The formation of an inclusive educational environment reflects the transition of the international community from traditional models focused on standardized approaches to a paradigm that recognizes the diversity of students and ensures equal access to education for everyone, regardless of physical, cognitive, socio-economic or cultural characteristics [2].





Research Methodology

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is based on an interdisciplinary approach combining historical analysis, methodology of international relations, social policy and research in the field of pedagogy and inclusion. The historical approach allows us to identify the evolution of views on equality in education – from the first attempts to integrate individual groups of students to the construction of integrated inclusion systems, which was enshrined in the UNESCO Salamanca Declaration of 1994 [3] and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 [4]. The methods of international relations allow us to consider inclusivity as an element of the global management discourse formed by the activities of UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and other international institutions that promote standards of equal access to education [5]. Social policy provides tools for analyzing the mechanisms of state support, regulatory regulation, financing, and the formation of an inclusive educational environment infrastructure. Pedagogical research, in turn, determines the content of inclusive approaches, the specifics of pedagogical training and teaching methods for children with special educational needs [6].

The degree of scientific development of the topic seems to be quite wide due to the works devoted to the problems of equal access to education, inclusive pedagogy and educational policy. UNESCO and UNICEF international studies reflecting global trends in the development of inclusive systems, as well as national and comparative studies on educational equity and social inclusion, are of significant importance. At the same time, complex interdisciplinary work combining historical, political, legal and international perspectives of the analysis of inclusive education remains limited, which determines the need for this research [7].

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the fact that inclusive education is considered not only as a pedagogical methodology, but also as a system-forming element of the state policy of equality, reflecting current trends in global governance. The purpose of the study is to identify the role of inclusive education in ensuring equality of educational opportunities and to determine its place in the political and legal discourse of our time. To achieve the goal, the following tasks are formulated:

- to analyze the historical and theoretical development of the concept of inclusion;
- to investigate the impact of an inclusive approach on overcoming educational inequality;
- to consider state mechanisms for regulating inclusion and international management models;
- to study the formation of an inclusive education system in Uzbekistan;





– to conduct a comparative analysis of international practices and determine the success factors of various models of inclusivity.

The research's source base includes international normative legal documents - the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [4], the UNESCO Salamanca Declaration [3], the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 4 and 10) [8] – as well as scientific papers and analytical reports from international organizations, including Global Education Monitoring UNESCO Report [1], UNICEF analytical reviews on inclusion [9], World Bank research on educational inequality and human capital development [5]. A significant part of the sources are the national regulatory legal acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at modernizing the education system and introducing inclusive practices.

The structure of the work is arranged in a logical sequence. The first section reveals the evolutionary and theoretical nature of inclusive education. The second one examines inclusion as a mechanism for ensuring equality in educational systems. The third one is devoted to the analysis of inclusivity as a priority of public policy. The fourth one reveals the specifics of the development of inclusive education in Uzbekistan. The fifth contains a comparative international analysis. The conclusion formulates the main conclusions of the study.

The historical and theoretical development of the concept of inclusive education demonstrates a complex and multifaceted path of transformation of ideas about equal access to education. In the first half of the 20th century, integration models dominated, in which children with special educational needs were included in the education system mainly through specialized institutions or separate forms of education, which actually reproduced segregation within educational structures [10]. The gradual transition from integration to inclusivity became possible due to a shift in emphasis: from student adaptation to the system to the adaptation of the system itself to the diversity of students, which formed a new understanding of equal access as a fundamental human right to education [11].

International regulatory documents have played a key role in shaping the modern vision of inclusivity. The UNESCO Salamanca Declaration adopted in 1994 marked a regulatory and conceptual turning point, consolidating the principled position of the world community that schools should "accept all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional or other characteristics" [12]. The Dakar Framework for Action of 2000, adopted at the World Education Forum, expanded these provisions, linking inclusivity with the basic priorities of education for all and the need to eliminate systemic barriers to access to quality education [13]. The final institutionalization of the concept occurred with the adoption of the UN Convention





on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, where inclusive education is enshrined as a legally binding standard aimed at preventing discrimination and creating appropriate conditions for the full participation of all students in society [14]. The theoretical evolution of inclusive education has been shaped by various scientific schools and disciplinary approaches. In pedagogy, inclusivity has come to be seen as a methodological basis for the transformation of curricula, pedagogical practices, and teacher training, as well as a tool for overcoming educational inequality based on the principles of individualization and universal design of learning [15]. The sociology of education has made a significant contribution to the analysis of structural factors of inequality, emphasizing that barriers do not exist at the level of individual characteristics of students, but within the educational system itself – in its institutions, norms, resource allocation and mechanisms of social reproduction [16]. International relations, in turn, consider inclusivity as part of the global sustainable development agenda and as an element of the international regulatory architecture related to the activities of UNESCO, UNICEF and other global actors that form universal standards in the field of education [17]. Humanitarian studies focus on the philosophical and legal foundations of equal access, interpreting inclusivity as a category that goes beyond pedagogy and includes ethical, cultural, and socio-political aspects [18].

A comparison of inclusive education models in different countries shows that, despite common regulatory guidelines, specific implementation paths vary significantly depending on socio-economic conditions, the level of development of the educational system, government policy priorities and cultural characteristics. In the Scandinavian countries, inclusivity is developing within the framework of a socio-democratic model focused on a high degree of universality of services and decentralized school management, which ensures sustainable results in the field of equal access [19]. In Canada and Australia, a model based on human rights and the active participation of local communities prevails, where inclusivity is seen as the state's obligation to ensure a non-discriminatory educational environment [20]. In East Asian countries, such as Japan and the Republic of Korea, there is a gradual evolution from integration forms to full-fledged inclusive practices, which is associated with the modernization of educational policy and increased attention to the social aspects of education quality [21]. In the post-Soviet countries, including Uzbekistan, inclusive transformation is carried out in the context of education system reforms, institutional modernization and adaptation of international standards, which forms its own trajectory of development of this model [22].





The historical dynamics of the formation of international approaches to inclusive education is a complex process of institutionalization, during which the world community gradually moved from narrow models of special education to integrated systems of equal access and supportive educational environment. The first international documents of the mid-20th century, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, laid the fundamental foundation for recognizing education as the universal right of every human being, which later became the basis for the development of specialized standards aimed at students with special educational needs [23].

A qualitative turn towards integration models occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, when UNESCO and relevant expert communities proposed considering children with special needs not as an exception requiring a separate institution of learning, but as an integral part of the educational space. The UNESCO 1985 report and subsequent analytical reviews on differentiated learning strategies offered the first systematic recommendations for the inclusion of such children in mass schools [24]. However, it was the Salamanca Declaration of 1994 that became a turning point in international discourse, establishing the principle of equal access as an indispensable element of a sustainable public education policy. The document emphasized that inclusive schools should become "the core of an effective strategy to achieve education for all" [25].

The development of global discourse intensified at the beginning of the 21st century thanks to international programs – the Dakar Framework for Action 2000, the UNESCO Education for All reports and subsequent global assessment reports, which emphasized the need to move from integration to full-fledged inclusion, covering infrastructure, teacher training, social support and human rights mechanisms [26]. The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities consolidated the legal status of inclusive education as an international norm, introducing legally binding requirements for participating states in terms of developing an "inclusive education system at all levels" [27].

The scientific schools that were formed during this period demonstrate broad interdisciplinarity: pedagogical research (L. Florian, M. Ainscough) emphasized the need to transform pedagogical practices and rethink the role of teachers; sociological approaches analyzed inclusion as a social institution that reduces structural inequality; international relations theorists considered inclusivity in the context of a global normative order, including state obligations and international mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of contracts [28].

By the end of the 2010s, international education policy began to shift towards integrated, intersectoral models supported by the Sustainable Development Goals,





primarily SDG 4, where inclusivity is a key indicator of the quality of national education systems [29]. An analysis of various regulations and scientific research shows that the historical evolution of approaches is associated with strengthening the understanding of education as a social infrastructure designed to protect human dignity and ensure equality of opportunity, which, in turn, has logically consolidated inclusivity as one of the priority vectors of state and international policy.

The Main Part

The development of inclusive education in various countries of the world is characterized by heterogeneity due to the peculiarities of socio-economic development, the legal framework, historical models of educational policy and dominant theoretical approaches. Despite the fact that international documents – primarily the Salamanca Declaration of 1994, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, and the UNESCO Global Educational Framework – have established universal normative guidelines, the specific reform trajectories vary significantly [30].

In European countries, inclusive policies began to take shape in the 1980s and 1990s as part of the transition from segregated models of special education to systems involving multi-level support in general education schools. The Scandinavian countries, primarily Finland and Sweden, became the most striking examples of the implementation of the "supportive school", where inclusion was integrated into national educational standards, and teacher training focused on the development of flexible methods of individualized learning [31]. The European Commission additionally emphasized the need to unify approaches, which is reflected in the Education and Training 2020/2030 strategies, which emphasize equal access as a key parameter of education quality [32].

In Anglo-Saxon countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, the development of inclusive education was strongly influenced by human rights movements and judicial precedents. In the UK, the turning point was the 1978 Warnock Report, which proposed abandoning the traditional category of "children with disabilities" in favor of the concept of "special educational needs" (SEN), which transformed subsequent policy and funding system [33]. In Canada, provincial legislation established the principle of "reasonable accommodation", which allowed for the formation of individual training programs and support at the school-wide infrastructure level [34].

In Asian countries, there is a more multilevel nature of reforms. Japan and South Korea have developed an inclusive environment through the modernization of special





schools and their integration into a single educational system, while maintaining a high level of specialized services. China, on the contrary, applies the "resource rooms" model, focused on the creation of resource centers at mass schools and the expansion of the institute of teaching assistants [35]. In the Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan, the development of an inclusive system intensified after joining the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was institutionalized through national strategic documents aimed at reforming school infrastructure, training personnel and implementing systems for monitoring educational barriers [36].

In Latin American countries, inclusive reforms have largely relied on social policies to reduce inequality. Brazil and Chile are the most illustrative examples: in these countries, inclusivity has been integrated into anti-poverty and affordable education programs, which has allowed for increased participation of children from vulnerable groups in mass schooling [37]. At the same time, the region is characterized by the complexity of implementing regulatory requirements at the territorial level, which is revealed in significant differences between urban and rural areas.

A comparative analysis shows that the success of national strategies is determined by three key factors: the availability of a stable regulatory framework consistent with international standards; the availability of educational infrastructure, including architectural accessibility and access to supportive technologies; and the level of professional training of teachers capable of applying individualized teaching methods. Despite the differences, there is a common trend: inclusive education is gradually turning from a narrow social program into a systemic component of national policy aimed at improving the quality of education, strengthening social justice and achieving Sustainable Development Goals, primarily SDG 4, dedicated to equal access to quality education [38].

A comparative analysis of international models of inclusive education demonstrates a significant variety of approaches to ensuring equal access to education, reflecting the peculiarities of national educational systems, cultural traditions, socio-economic level and legal framework. The main typologies of the models are: integrative (partial integration of children with special educational needs into mass schools), inclusive (full inclusion with adaptation of the educational environment) and mixed systems combining specialized and mass elements [39].

The Scandinavian model (Sweden, Finland, Denmark) is characterized by the systemic integration of inclusive principles into educational standards, high professional training of teachers, access to educational support at all levels, and centralized resource coordination. This model provides equal access to learning for all





students, regardless of their educational needs, and is an example of social and pedagogical universalization [40].

The Anglo-Saxon model (Great Britain, Canada, Australia) focuses on human rights and the legal consolidation of the state's obligations to ensure inclusion. In the UK, the concept of "special educational needs" (SEN) has become a tool for adapting the educational environment to individual needs, while maintaining the mass structure of the school [41]. In Canada, the principle of "reasonable accommodation" is applied, ensuring the provision of resources, technology and personal support to each student [42].

In East Asian countries (Japan, the Republic of Korea, China), inclusive transformation is being carried out gradually, combining specialized schools and resource classes with a mass system. This approach ensures the phased implementation of inclusive practices while maintaining existing structures, which makes it possible to adapt international standards to the national context [43].

In Latin America (Brazil, Chile), inclusion models are closely linked to social programs to reduce inequality. Inclusive education is considered not only as a pedagogical task, but also as a tool of social policy aimed at empowering vulnerable groups of the population, which demonstrates the relationship between education and social justice [44].

In post-Soviet countries, including Uzbekistan, the introduction of inclusive education is associated with the systematic modernization of educational infrastructure, the training of teaching staff and the adaptation of international standards. National strategies include both elements of the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon models, as well as unique solutions that take into account the historical and cultural context and available resources [45].

Comparative analysis shows that the effectiveness of inclusive education models is determined by a number of factors:

1. Regulatory framework and compliance with international standards;
2. the training of teaching staff and the system's ability for differentiated learning;
3. Accessibility of infrastructure and assistive technologies;
4. Social and cultural readiness of society for inclusion;
5. the complexity and consistency of state policy, ensuring the coordination of all elements of the educational environment [46].

Thus, international experience demonstrates that inclusive education is becoming not only an educational, but also a socio-political strategy aimed at creating equality and removing barriers, ensuring the implementation of the principle of "education for all"



and achieving the Goals of Sustainable Development, primarily SDG 4 and SDG 10 [47].

Conclusion

The conducted research confirms that inclusive education is an integral component of modern educational policy and a key tool for ensuring equality in access to education. Historical analysis shows that the concept of inclusion has evolved from integration models focused on the partial inclusion of students with special needs to integrated systems adapted to the diversity of students and taking into account individual educational needs.

International normative documents, including the UNESCO Salamanca Declaration of 1994, the Dakar Framework for Action of 2000 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006, have consolidated the principle of equal access to education as a universal standard and guideline for national systems. These documents defined the framework of legal and institutional support for inclusion, stimulated the modernization of pedagogical practices, the introduction of comprehensive student support and the improvement of professional training of teaching staff.

A comparative analysis of international experience has revealed a variety of models of inclusive education reflecting national characteristics: from the Scandinavian model with system integration and highly developed social services, to the Anglo-Saxon model focused on human rights and legal protection, as well as models of East Asia and Latin America, combining specialized resources and mass schools. An analysis of national strategies, including the experience of Uzbekistan, shows that the successful implementation of inclusion requires a synergy of the regulatory framework, infrastructural capabilities, professional training of teachers and social support from the state and society.

As a result, the study demonstrates that inclusive education goes beyond pedagogical methodology, becoming a system-forming element of public policy and international educational management. Its implementation contributes to overcoming educational inequality, implementing the principles of social justice and strengthening the potential of human capital, and is also a direct tool for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, primarily SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 10 (reducing inequality).

Thus, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Inclusive education is a strategic priority of national and international educational policy, ensuring equal access to education for all categories of students.





2. The evolution of the concept of inclusion from integration to an integrated system demonstrates a systematic approach to solving the problems of educational inequality.
3. The effectiveness of national models of inclusive education is determined by the regulatory framework, the readiness of teaching staff, the availability of infrastructure and comprehensive government support.
4. International standards and practices of inclusion are a guideline for national reforms and contribute to creating conditions for the sustainable development of education and society as a whole.

Thus, inclusive education is not only an instrument of pedagogical transformation, but also a mechanism for implementing social policies aimed at equality, justice and the harmonious development of human capital.

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