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The Main Problems Of The Inclusive Education Sector

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Annotation. This article will talk about the main problems of the inclusive education sector. The experience of Uzbekistan and abroad is compared.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Survey, Research, psychological vibration, mental impact.

Introduction

Having outlined the research design, the thesis now turns to the findings of the study. The combined approach that discusses the findings immediately after presenting them is used for this section. The findings emerged from the information of both the online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. In total, I have formulated five major themes. The research questions and the existing literature provide the primary lens through which these themes are discussed.

The quotations of questionnaire respondents and interview participants in Russian have been translated into English. It was decided to provide all quotations in their original language in the annex to maintain the trustworthiness and credibility of the collected data. All quotations in English included in the findings sections were numbered. These quotations in Russian can be found in the annex under the same number.

Participants

Representatives of both national and international NGOs and DPOs were invited to participate in the online questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed in three languages: Uzbek, Russian, and English. In total, six responses were returned: two in Russian and four in English. No responses were received in Uzbek.

Four groups were invited to participate in the interviews: 1) parents of children with disabilities coming from different socio-cultural backgrounds; 2) teachers of both general and specialised schools and defectologists; 3) representatives of NGOs (who did not participate in the questionnaire); 4) government official. Some participants represented both groups, for example, they are parents who are also NGO or DPO leaders. In total, I interviewed 23 people. The demographic characteristics of non-governmental organisations and profiles of interview participants are presented in the tables below. Questionnaire participants

Table 2: Size of the organisation

Scale	No. of responses
Less than 10 employees	1
From 10 to 50 employees	1
From 50 to 100 employees	--
More than 100 employees	3

Table 3: Disability fields the organisations work in

Scale	No. of responses
Education	1
Disability rights	1
Rehabilitation services	--
Social adaptation	1
Inclusion and Equality Training	2
In all above	1

Table 4: The period an organisation has been involved in the field

Scale	No. of responses
Less than 1 year	--
From 1 to 5 years	--
From 5 to 10 years	1

Table 5: The position of the NGO representative within the organisation

Scale	No. of responses
High-level position	3
Medium level position	3
Entry-level position	--

Inclusive Education

The theme “Inclusive Education” contains three sub-themes: an understanding of inclusive education and its enactment; the importance of socialisation; and no inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities. The participants generally supported the concept of inclusive education and saw it as an equal educational opportunity for children with disabilities. Some of the participants had substantial experience in inclusion, for instance, parents whose children studied in an inclusive classroom or NGO representatives who participated in the Inclusive Education Project. Some of the participants had only heard about inclusive education. However, regardless of their experiences they all offered a definition of inclusive education and readily identified a number of positive aspects of inclusion where socialisation was viewed as the most significant one. Inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in a general school was one of the most often mentioned topics. These three sub-themes are discussed below.

Understanding of inclusive education and its enactment

Both the questionnaire and interview participants were asked to share their understanding of inclusive education. Their definitions of inclusive education were observed to be similar. They were about respecting the difference, acceptance, access, equity, quality, and justice.

In total, five survey participants responded to the question "How do you define the term 'Inclusive Education'?". Their responses are quoted below:

1. The open education for different categories of people regardless of the fact that they might have special needs.

2. A process of removing barriers to students' participation and learning in a regular classroom and school on an equal basis with other children.

3. Equal learning opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities, in the same classroom and with the provision of support that is required to meet the specific educational needs of each child.

4. Equal opportunities to receive quality education[1].

5. Creating conditions and possibilities for everyone to receive education at any educational institution[2].

The interview participants also shared how they understood the term 'inclusive education'. They understood inclusive education as an educational model that encompassed children with disabilities only. One of them said that inclusive education was about equality and acceptance:

Inclusive education is what I wanted. It means applying equal rights and having equal attitude towards them [children with disabilities]. Inclusive education is good because other people can see these children, not to fear them, and accept them as they are. Within inclusive education parents [of typically developing children] should not protect their children from ours and take their children out of the class saying, "Oh, this child has a disability". This is my understanding of inclusive education. Yet, the approach to every child has to be different[3]. (P1)

Similarly, two other participants while talking about what inclusive education was, emphasised that students with disabilities had to study alongside their non-disabled peers in schools. They said, "I think inclusive education means that a child is not separated based on his category and diagnosis"[4] (P4) and "Inclusive education means that children with additional needs can study together with typically developing children"[5] (P16). Other research participants expressed similar views.

What was interesting is the respondents seemed to move very quickly from their own definitions of inclusive education to how it was enacted. Several participants expressed their opinions about the misinterpretation of inclusion by local schools. Schools placed students with disabilities in general classrooms but were not able to provide proper conditions and services to them. One of the participants who has extensive experience in inclusive education shared his view of what inclusion was and expressed his disagreement with how inclusive education was being enacted in the country:

Let's talk about how inclusive education is being enacted here if you don't mind… First, we have the inconsistent concepts. A new concept 'inclusive classroom' has been created though it does not exist anywhere in the world. I said that there was no such concept. Only school can be inclusive [not a classroom]. A couple of children with disabilities were placed in a general classroom and that's all. It is not inclusion. School starts at the entrance. The entrance, classes, gyms, toilets – everything has to be inclusive and accessible… They cannot build inclusive schools; it is easier to say, "We opened inclusive classes"[6]. (P22)

He claimed that many international development organisations tried to carry out inclusive education projects but none of them was successful. In his opinion, all these projects were about training only and he believed it was a misuse of available resources.

Participant 4 stated that many specialists in the country used the terms 'inclusive education' and 'integrated education' interchangeably, although, as she pointed out, there was a substantial difference between them. Similar to the previous participant, she also said that not all children with disabilities were accepted into general schools,

"Nowadays, even leading specialists in the country mean integration by the term 'inclusion'. Simply, those children who have physical disabilities but not intellectual ones are included in regular schools. It is not inclusion"[7]. The participant supposed that genuine inclusion was not being enacted in the country due to a shortage of financial resources.

Another participant shared a story about the unsuccessful attempt to integrate students with hearing loss into a mainstream school:

She [a project organiser] offered to include deaf and hearing impaired students from specialised schools in the studying process [at the general school]. However, neither teachers nor children and their parents were ready for that. The preparatory work, as we organised within the framework of the EU project, had not been conducted there. Then, children are children: the deaf children were on their own and typically developing children were on their own. Inclusion as such did not happen[8]. (P21)

Two other interview participants expressed their doubts that it would be possible to enact inclusive education in Uzbekistan. One of them said, "I have seen inclusive schools in other countries: in the United States, Lithuania, and Hungary. What I saw makes me feel unsure that it will be possible to do the same here"[9] (P8). When I asked the participant why she held that view, she replied, "Both financial resources and understanding are needed for that. And not only parents but also the government has to understand that children need to study"[10]. In a similar vein, another participant said that she was not sure that it would be possible to enact inclusive education in the country because the way it was being enacted in Uzbekistan was far from how it had to be (P1).

People's perceptions of inclusive education are of critical importance for the successful enactment of inclusive education. It seems that in the disability context, the participants had a close familiarity with the term 'inclusive education'. Their definitions closely align with the CRPD that stresses that inclusive education is a fundamental right for children with disabilities (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006). However, many participants perceived inclusive education as an educational opportunity for this group of children only. Other marginalised groups, such as ethnic, linguistic, religious, and other minorities, were not considered. This issue has already been mentioned in Chapter Two where I referred to Florian and Becirevic (2011) and Rouse and Lapham (2013) who argued that such a perception of inclusive education was common for former Soviet republics due to the extensive segregation of children with disabilities during the Soviet Union era. Therefore, it is important to re-conceptualise inclusive education from the perspective of "widening participation" (Makoelle, 2020, p. 7). This author notes that inclusion should be based on pedagogy advocating education for all rather than on a special needs pedagogy designed exclusively for children with disabilities.

Further, based on the participants' responses there seemed to be a teachers' misunderstanding of the concepts 'integration' and 'inclusion'. Artikova, an independent consultant on Public Health and Disability in Uzbekistan, also noted that many local educators, including Professors of defectology, did not understand the difference between those two concepts well enough to enact inclusive education initiatives successfully (personal communication, January 27, 2017). Yet, there is a substantial difference between them. The term 'integration' refers to the "placement of a student with disabilities into an ordinary school environment and regular curriculum, usually without the curriculum being modified to any great extent" (Chhabra et al., 2010, p. 219). Inclusion is a more radical concept and "implies not only the integration of children with disabilities in mainstream schools but also the curricula adjustment" (Unianu, 2013, p. 1237). Sanagi (2016) notes that teachers' confusion about what inclusion actually means may lead to the creation of a segregated environment for students with special needs in a mainstream setting. We can see it if we refer back to the participant's example of the integration of children with hearing impairments into a regular school.

Santos (2010) argues that integration and inclusion are integral parts of a historical process towards the humanisation of education. In this regard, these concepts represent different stages countries go through towards realisation of the right

to Education for All. Santos (2010) states:

As much as we need to learn to respect the different learning rhythms of our students in order to promote inclusion, we also need, in order to promote it internationally, to take account of the countries' rhythms of understanding and absorption of new paradigms, as well as their timing to adjust themselves within their own history (p. 897).

Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2007) also note that many countries have chosen integrated education as an interim model on the way from segregation to inclusion. From this perspective, it might seem that Uzbekistan and many other developing nations that started this worldwide movement in the 1980s and the 1990s are heading in the right direction. However, when an interim approach is taken, the focus is on "the student to fit the system rather than the system to adapt to meet the educational needs of a student" (Sharma & Deppeler, 2005, p. para 2). Based on the early history of educating children with special needs in some western societies, we can see that integrated education as a transition phase was hardly a successful way to move towards inclusion.

In the 1970s, in Quebec, Canada, the government recognised that segregated schools had deprived children of quality education and closed the majority of those schools. Children with special needs were placed in "a special section of an ordinary school, with an independent entrance and little mixing of the students" (Thomazet, 2009, p. 554). Even though those children attended mainstream schools, they were often still isolated andnot involved in a learning process with all other students. In the 1960s and 1970s, many European countries also formulated and introduced integration "as a programmatic principle for a new societal practice and for institutional reforms" (Vislie, 2003, p. 18). The effectiveness of new reforms varied from country to country in Europe but in general, the quality of integrative practices was questioned. Vislie (2003) notes that the integration provision was primarily focused on reshaping the special education system, not on adjustments of teaching practice and learning. They were not comprehensive enough to meet the needs of diverse learners that resulted in limited participation of children with special needs in academic and social activities with others.

Due to different historical legacies and practices of segregation, developing countries may need more time and effort to shift from segregation to inclusion. Inclusion in the developing world is more concerned with access to schooling, while in developed countries, it is more concerned with access to a non-segregated education environment (Bines & Lei, 2011). Most developing nations do not have enough qualified personnel who would be able to teach students with disabilities enrolled in general schools, "Unlike countries where compulsory education has long been in place, many schools in the Global South simultaneously face increased student enrolment and teacher shortages" (Franck & Joshi, 2017, p. 348). Sharma and Deppeler (2005), when describing early integration practices in India, note that the situation is often worsened by the non-availability of resources.

It cannot be denied that financial resources are critical to develop and sustain inclusive education. International literature contains many examples of meaningful programmes failed due to insufficient resources. For instance, in India, the government launched a nationwide scheme called Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) (Chadha, 2000). However, only about 60,000 of the estimated 30 million children were enrolled under this scheme. In South Africa, the government also was not able to support inclusive education as it lacked adequate financial provision (Walton, 2011). This author notes that since 2001, only eight state schools across the country have had the necessary services and resources to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Uzbekistan is no exception in this regard. Based on the participants' responses, due to insufficient budgetallocation, the Uzbek government, in cooperation with donors, established inclusive classes as a lower cost option instead of inclusive schools and ran small-scale integrated education projects.

However, even with all these challenges in mind, the concept of inclusion "may replace the one of the integration of children with special needs" if it becomes an education priority (Unianu, 2012, p. 900). The Salamanca Statement, therefore, committed all countries to "give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improve their educational systems to enable them to include all children"

(UNESCO & Ministry of Education and Science of Spain, 1994, p. ix). Whether to make inclusion a priority or not depends on governments. According to the Education Sector Plan (ESP) of Uzbekistan 2019-2023 (2019), "33.6% of the national budget (and 62% of the social sector expenditures) goes to education expenditures" (p. 64). This allocation is higher than that in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region and other OECD countries at approximately 11 and 13 percent, respectively. In 2016, 1,5 percent (199 billion UZS) was spent on education for children with special needs. Although these expenditures are significant, the government still seems to prioritise segregation. For instance, in 2018, the Mercy house for children with disabilities in Karshi city (Kashkadarya region, Uzbekistan) was completely renovated. Its renovation was organised in the framework of a charity project and cost more than 22 billion UZS (approximately 2,3 mln USD) (Vesti.uz, 2018). According to Mariga, McConkey, and Myezma (2014), many other developing countries also use available resources to create or maintain segregation, "Even when money is available, it is mostly directed towards the specialised schools and units" (p. 22). It is apparent that as long as segregated education is imposed and reinforced by the governments, inclusive education initiatives will not be adequately funded, and preference will be given to integrated education as a cheaper option.

Santiso (2007) points out that "the budget is a political process, rather than a purely technical one" (p. 3), and a major reason for low budget allocations is a lack of political will. Halachev (2015) considers "the willingness of decision makers to support the transition from segregating settings to an inclusive mainstream educational system" a key element to facilitate inclusive education (para 7). A deficit of political will affects not only resource allocation but also policies. According to Artikova (personal communication, January 27, 2017), many educators in Uzbekistan are not familiar with the concepts of integration and inclusion because the Government's education policy neither provides a clear definition of these concepts nor a differentiation between them. It implies that with adequate resources and a clear policy backed up by political will, it is possible to transfer from exclusion to inclusion without wasting time and effort on an integrated stage.

The importance of socialisation

The development of social competencies of children with disabilities was found to be one of the major advantages of inclusive education. Four out of six survey respondents strongly believed that a mainstream setting contributed significantly to students' social skills.

Many of the parents interviewed mentioned that developing social competencies was the main reason why they wanted their children to study in inclusive classrooms. They said that growing in a "natural" environment amongst all other children and interacting with them were the most important aspects of inclusion:

There are many advantages of inclusive education. First, a child is in a natural environment. There are no similar children in the class; they all are different. It means the child is in that particular environment where he is supposed to be according to his age[11]. (P4)

Another participant emphasised that studying in a general classroom was more about the development of social skills rather than academic knowledge:

Any education is first of all communication with others, development of social competencies, and involvement in community life. Not all people who finished schools are necessarily very intelligent. The main purpose of inclusive education is to help children be included in the society[12]. (P8)

She added that she had realistic expectations of her child and fully realised that the majority of children with disabilities would not be able to reach the same level of development as children without disabilities. Yet, their social skills could improve if they studied amongst their typically developing peers and established social relationships with them.

However, some parents of children with intellectual disabilities believed that their children did not need to be in a general school to develop social competence. These parents considered that their children had sufficient opportunities for

socialisation within their specialised schools. For instance, one of them said that not all students in a specialised school, where his son was studying, had severe intellectual disabilities; some children had very mild disabilities. He referred to them as "almost typically developing children" who were sociable and friendly and who his son could build relationships with:

In our school, there are children with severe disabilities, but there are also children from the category F-70 [mild mental retardation code (World Health Organization, 2006)]. They have mental disorders but they are mild. Good children, they can socialise… There are different children there, for example, with Down syndrome. When we come there with my son, they hug him. They could cover our minuses [he means the inability to socialise with others common for people with ASD]. It would be good for our children[13]. (P6)

He continued to say that his child was mainly studying at home because he was not able to bear loud noises. The main obstacle for his son to be at school was a school bell; it scared him. The parent said he realised that the school could not cancel it only because of his son. However, the child was not completely isolated, he regularly went to school to take certain classes.

The parent of the child with muscular dystrophy raised her concerns about home-based education. After having studied in an integrated class for four years, her son was assigned to home-based schooling:

I had been sitting with him in the class for about four years because he had a very complicated form of hyperkinesia if you understand cerebral palsy… First, he could hardly speak. Then, he needed help when he wrote or held something in his hands. I was functioning as a resource teacher for him. After four years, he was assigned to home-based education. Teachers from general school came home to teach him until grade 9… However, at the end of the 90s – the beginning of the 2000s teachers worked [with him] on a voluntary basis. The system as such did not already exist… Based on the opinions of other parents, even though home-based education exists along with general and specialised education, it is… better than nothing[14]. (P7)

The parent added that in her view, the main problem of home-based education was a lack of socialisation. She stated that children who received long-term home-based education were isolated from their peers and society broadly. She sacrificed her career to take care of her son and contribute to his growth and development. The parent said, "His health condition became my profession"[15]. She established a disability-related NGO aimed at socialisation of children and young people with disabilities. Young people with disabilities learned there how to cook, knit, or make/repair small pieces of furniture. It was an opportunity for them and their family members to socialise.

The teachers working at specialised schools for children with intellectual disabilities supported the view that students could develop social skills being at school. For that purpose, their school introduced a subject called 'Social Orientation'. Students were taught how to wash clothes, do shopping, write basic letters, pay bills, and other essential things they would need to make in their regular life in the future. They were also offered extracurricular activities, such as knitting, art classes, and sports clubs (basketball, table tennis, etc.).

One of the teachers said that although their students studied at a specialised school, they were not isolated from the rest of the world. They regularly met and participated in joint activities with students from a neighboring regular school. In response to my question of whether their students ever experienced discrimination of any kind on the basis of their disabilities while socializing with typically developing students, the teachers said they had never observed that, "Because we might have got used to them [students from a general school]: we visit them, they visit us. They come to us on special occasions to show what they can: dancing or singing, whatever they can do"[16] (P12).

The teachers also mentioned that the school often organised extracurricular activities for the students:

We try to take them to the theatre, circus, zoo, and museums because their parents will never do that. We have very good relationships with the Art Museum. The museum organises special themed exhibits and invites us. The students draw there, communicate with others, they are explained

something[17]. (P12)

However, when I asked the parent whose child was studying at a specialised school about socialisation, she had a different opinion. She said that although the school organised events for students' social integration, they were not enough to prepare them for adulthood, "They will anyway leave their school. Life out of school is very diverse… It is very difficult for them to live further"[18] (P4).

The parent added that her son was very sociable and could engage with people easily, despite being non-verbal. She believed it was her family members who contributed to the development of the child's social skills, not the school. The parents and elder siblings regularly took him to different social events, and by doing so, they increased his comfort level to meet and communicate with other people.

The NGO representative concurred and stated that after finishing a specialised school young people would not be able to engage in society because they had never really been there:

We explain to parents that socialisation is possible only if he [a child] has been amongst his typically developing peers since his early years, which is the most important concept of inclusive education. If he has studied with similar children for 17 years and then left his school, we cannot expect him to be socially developed - this is a problem. He will not be able to socialise[19]. (P21)

The participant, whose child was in general school, also supported the idea that a child develops his/her social skills better in an inclusive education setting than in a segregated one. She believed that even though her child did not develop academically, she definitely gained social competencies, built relationships, and improved her behaviour being amongst other children, "Many acquaintances and friends paid attention to my child's behaviour; it changed drastically. Her worldview and behaviour became better. She behaves better amongst typically developing children"[20] (P1).

Similarly, another parent held the view that children with disabilities acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for interacting with others better when they are together with all other children. "I can only see advantages in both children's academic performance and social development. If all children had an opportunity to study at inclusive schools, we would have fewer socially underdeveloped children. They should be given this chance"[21] (P5).

The opinions of many participants indicate that socialisation is an integral part of children's development, and ideally, school is a place where they can develop their social skills. This is consistent with numerous studies emphasizing the critical role of schools in developing the social competencies of students with disabilities. Simeonsson, Carlson, Huntington, McMillen, and Brent (2001) define school as "a primary environment for the education and socialisation of children and youth" (p. 49). According to these writers, active engagement of children with disabilities in school life leads to many positive outcomes. Amongst them are lower delinquency rates and active social participation during early adulthood. Vaughn et al. (2003) identified critical stages when children with disabilities develop their social skills. These scholars maintain that during the first three years socialisation mainly depends on their parents; for pre-school children it depends on play and interaction with other group-mates; and for school-age children, it is contingent on "developing peer relations by initiating and maintaining conversations, greeting, and joining groups" (p. 2). Thus, schools are of particular importance for the development of social skills of children with disabilities and making them more experienced in social engagement.

However, there is still a controversy amongst scholars and practitioners concerning what setting is better for children with disabilities to be socially integrated: a general school or a specialised one. Kassah, Kassah, and Phillips (2018) support the idea of "inclusion on their premises" (p. 349), which is widely practised by segregated schools for students with intellectual disabilities in Uzbekistan. These researchers believe that inviting students from mainstream schools to participate in "drawing and painting, skipping out of the loop, sports, whatever" (p. 349) can develop the social skills of students with

disabilities studying at specialised schools. Kassah et al. (2018) state, “special schools should remain as the initial socialization arena, where teachers groom children with intellectual disabilities to meet the expectations of the mainstream schools” (p. 348). It would be the case if most students with disabilities continue their education in general educational institutions. According to some studies, their segregation may often be permanent (Buysse & Bailey, 1993; Kunk, 1992; Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Buysse and Bailey (1993) point out that inclusive education should be actively promoted during preschool years because children placed in specialised preschool institutions tend to continue their education in specialised schools. Lipsky and Gartner (1997) also note that after leaving schools, young people either continue their education in specialised colleges or simply stay isolated at home, which is often the case for students in Uzbekistan.

Some studies on enhancing the social functioning of children and young people with disabilities also indicate that to develop their social skills, they need to experience different situations in a diverse setting, which a segregated environment cannot provide anyway (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Solish, Perry, & Minnes, 2010; Vaughn et al., 2003). For example, in a two-year study by Fisher and Meyer (2002), students with severe disabilities were placed in two different programmes to examine their social relationships: in an inclusive programme and a self-contained one. The results of the study indicated that those students who were enrolled in the inclusive programme developed better social competencies than those who were studying in a segregated setting: the inclusive group gained 9.5 points when their social competences were measured, while the segregated group gained only 3.8 points. Fisher and Meyer (2002) conclude, “Moving instruction into inclusive environments, rather than providing instruction in isolation from normalized learning opportunities (provided in social contexts) seems to be beneficial for individual child learning outcomes” (p. 172). This resonates with the opinions of almost all participants of this study, who stated that children and young people with disabilities could gain stronger social competencies if they were placed in a mainstream setting.

In considering the first-hand experiences of the participants and the prevailing views of experts and researchers, it would seem that extracurricular activities for students studying in specialised institutions should be organised in a different, diverse setting. Being involved in extracurricular activities in a segregated setting, children may develop certain skills, for instance, photography skills, but not their social competencies. Participant 14 provided an example of an alternative opportunity for social skill acquisition. She received a grant from the government and organised Inclusive Clubs as an after-school activity for both children with special needs studying at specialised and boarding schools and typically developing children from general schools. The purpose of the Clubs is the social inclusion of children with disabilities. The participant added that she had been observing for many years how the children’s engagement in social activities helped them form peer relationships.

Modell, Rider, and Menchetti (1997) also point out that meaningful relationships between children with and without disabilities are usually formed in inclusive settings where they can interact and participate in activities together. Therefore, “it is reasonable to assume that those children who attend segregated classes during the school day would benefit socially from participation in inclusive recreation and leisure” (p. 701). These authors continue that the majority of young people with disabilities leave their institutions and enter adulthood with poor social skills. It results in high unemployment rates, a lack of meaningful relationships, non-participation in community life, and low socioeconomic status. Given these adverse effects experienced by individuals with disabilities, there should be more opportunities to facilitate their social interaction and integration during their school years.

Conclusion

All research participants understood inclusive education as a model where all children study together regardless of their skills and abilities and are treated equally. Yet, they were concerned about the educators’ misunderstanding of inclusive

education that relates to considering integration and inclusion to be synonyms. According to the participants, it resulted in inclusive education projects being carried out ineffectively. Children with disabilities were placed in general schools, where there were no relevant conditions for them. In many cases, students felt isolated and needed to adapt to the existing conditions if they wanted to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers. The literature pertaining to integrated and inclusive education provides clear differentiation between these two concepts. It also suggests that the enactment of integrated education as an interim model is ineffective and unnecessary if inclusive initiatives are supported by strong political will.

The participants were generally of the view that socialisation with same age peers is one of the major benefits of inclusive education. They believed that social skills are necessary for their children's successful integration into community life in the future. A large body of international literature has also shown that children with disabilities who attend mainstream schools develop stronger social skills rather than those who are placed in segregated institutions. Despite that, some teachers of specialised schools held an opinion that their students could acquire social competencies being in a self-contained setting and periodically meeting with their typically developing peers at social events. However, as studies have demonstrated, the full social integration of children with disabilities is only possible when they are in a diverse environment regularly.

Another concern expressed by many participants was the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities in regular schools. Both educators and disability advocates believed that they had better study in specialised institutions due to their lack of intellectual capacity. The evidence from the literature suggests that society, which does not accept people with intellectual disabilities, is highly unlikely to support their inclusion in regular schools. In Uzbekistan and other post-socialist societies, this attitude has been primarily formed by Soviet disability history. Yet, according to international studies, the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities is possible. Its success is determined by different factors, but two of them, adjusting the existing general education curriculum and the availability of qualified manpower, are critical.

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