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Concept, Principles and Evolution of Inclusive Education

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Abstract: The article reveals the essence of inclusive education as a modern humanistic approach aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for obtaining quality education for all students, regardless of their individual characteristics. The key principles of inclusion are considered, including equality, accessibility, individual approach and participation. Particular attention is paid to the historical evolution of inclusive education - from the model of isolation to a system based on the values of acceptance and respect for diversity. The importance of international initiatives and documents that contribute to the implementation of inclusive practices in the educational systems of different countries is emphasized.

Introduction: Inclusive education is a concept that affirms the equal right of every student to quality education, regardless of their characteristics, abilities or background. It involves adapting curricula, teaching methods and the organization of space in a way that takes into account the wide range of needs of learners. Today, inclusive practices are moving towards creating a more diverse and equitable system where individual differences are valued and a sense of belonging is strengthened. Quoting the words of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev: "The true value of education is manifested not when it is available only to the strong, but when it is available to everyone" [1], we can emphasize the importance of equity, accessibility and inclusiveness in the education system. These words reflect a profound idea that the true meaning of education lies not only in its quality, but also in its universality. Education should not be a privilege of the chosen few, but a right of every person, regardless of their physical, social or economic characteristics. This approach requires creating conditions in which every student – whether with special needs, from a remote region or from a socially vulnerable group – will have an equal chance to develop, learn and participate in society. This resonates with the principles of inclusive education and humanistic pedagogy, which value diversity, individuality and equality of opportunity.

It is a continuous process: teachers and schools are constantly learning, improving and adapting so that every child can thrive. At the core of inclusion is the creation of an educational environment where all students feel valued, respected and supported, and have the chance to reach their full potential. This requires a profound rethinking of conventional approaches: a transition from segregation to a truly fair and open education system.

METHODS

Based on the principles of social justice, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) [2] and the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) [3], many European countries have developed policies and introduced practices that promote the development of inclusive education [4,5]. As a result, more and more children with special educational needs are taught together with their peers in regular schools, and the number of specialized educational institutions is

decreasing. However, even in the Global North, a number of difficulties remain. The main one is the lack of a common understanding of the essence of inclusive education. Researchers, politicians and teachers of pedagogical universities interpret this term in different ways [6, 7, 8]: from the view that special education itself is already a form of inclusion, to the belief that inclusion implies joint education of all children in one environment [9, 10, 8]. Magnusson [11] notes that "the ways in which the concept is operationalised, interpreted and defined vary greatly both in research and in practice, between and even within countries" [11, p. 678].

These different discourses are found in many societies, but the debate is particularly lively in those regions where inclusive practices have only recently been introduced – in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union [12, 13]. One factor contributing to the difficulties is the historically highly segregated model of education, which continues to influence the views of teachers, parents and the general public.

There are two – somewhat opposing – discourses on inclusive education, encapsulating two positions that underlie many of the current debates on inclusive education. The first of these ('inclusive for some') represents the idea that people with special needs have a right to the highest quality education, which can best be provided by specially trained staff in a specialised and often segregated environment, while the second ('inclusive for all') represents the idea that all people, given their different needs, should have equal opportunities to learn together in a regular educational environment.

On the one hand, the special education system creates special conditions that meet the medical and pedagogical needs of students, but on the other hand, it hinders their social integration, limiting the life opportunities of people with disabilities. Ensuring the right of people with disabilities to education faces many challenges that arise in the process of reforming the educational system and social policy towards them. As the social function of education strengthens, the opportunities for introducing innovative approaches to the vocational training of such people expand. Inclusive (joint) education becomes a humanistic alternative,

which can significantly reduce the processes of marginalization of people with disabilities.

The integration of these people into the educational process of mass educational institutions is a new approach for education.

In 2020, some published publications claimed that inclusive education is a dream or ideology that does not take into account real circumstances. In one such article [14], a university professor who regularly writes about education refers to a recent study conducted in Estonia on the added value of education for children's cognitive abilities. The study showed that 80% of children's knowledge and skills can be explained by individual abilities and the home environment, and only 20% by the influence of school. The professor argued that children with disabilities can be included, but it is problematic to include children who have been brought up according to completely different principles or who have significant cognitive impairments. He specified that inclusive education will only be possible in societies that are very homogeneous, most importantly in terms of child-rearing methods and family values. This will lead to a situation where there will be little difference between children's behavior and similar norms and rules will be used. He pointed out: "Inclusive education is a mirage created by our sense of justice, but its implementation places young people in a learning environment that does not correspond to their home preparation and developmental needs. They are simply too special and different for everyone to be able to learn together without anyone suffering." He concluded that we simply need different environments for different children. Based on the above, the main principles of inclusive education can be defined [15-17].

RESULTS

The main principles of inclusive education include fundamental ideas and rules on which the educational system is built, accessible to all students, regardless of their physical, mental, social or other individual characteristics. These principles are aimed at ensuring equality, fairness and participation of each student in the educational process (Table 1).

Table 1
Basic principles of inclusive education

Principles	Explanations
Equality of opportunity	Every child should have access to education according to his or her needs and abilities.
Acceptance and respect for differences	Diversity is seen as a resource, not a barrier. Individual differences are respected and taken into account.
Accessibility of the environment	Educational infrastructure, learning materials and teaching methods must be adapted to the needs of all students, including those with disabilities.
Support and Maintenance	The system should include mechanisms of pedagogical, psychological and social support for students, teachers and parents
Participation of all stakeholders	Not only education authorities, but also families, public organizations, specialists in the field of correctional pedagogy and health care should participate in the development and implementation of inclusive policies

Studying the entire period of development of inclusive education, the evolution can be divided into three stages:

1. The stage of isolation (until the middle of the 20th century): Children with disabilities or special educational needs were taught separately or did not have access to education at all. There were special institutions, but they were isolated from the main education system.

2. The stage of integration (1960-1980s): The inclusion of individual students with disabilities in regular schools began, but without adapting the programs and environment. Students had to "adapt" to the system, and not vice versa.

3. The stage of inclusion (from the 1990s to the present): After the adoption of such international documents as the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994), the understanding of inclusion as a deeper and more systemic approach began to actively develop. The education system began to adapt to the needs of all students.

This asserts that inclusive education is not only a pedagogical approach, but also an ideological position aimed at building a humane, fair society. This is the way to ensure that every child, regardless of their characteristics, feels part of the general educational process and has the opportunity to fully realize their potential. To form an educational environment accessible to everyone, it is necessary to use special educational programs, adapted teaching and upbringing methods, as well as use textbooks, manuals and didactic materials developed taking into account the special needs of students. It is important to ensure the availability of technical training aids, both for individual and collective use, to provide the services of an assistant (assistant) providing technical support to students, and to organize individual and group remedial classes. An integral part is ensuring unimpeded access to educational institutions and creating other conditions necessary for the full development of educational programs by children with disabilities.

According to psychological and pedagogical research, the fundamental principle of creating an inclusive environment for students with disabilities is the principle of conformity. It requires taking into account the age and individual characteristics of students, as well as adapting pedagogical influence to their capabilities.

The most important principles of inclusive education include:

• the principle of early inclusion, ensuring the development of social interaction skills in children from an early age;

• the principle of correctional support, implying targeted assistance in overcoming difficulties;

• the principle of socialization, aimed at integrating children into society;

• the principle of individualization and personification, ensuring that the personal characteristics of each student are taken into account;

• the principle of integrative support, implying the coordination of all participants in the inclusive process;

• the principle of active participation of parents, emphasizing their responsibility for the development of the child;

• the principle of a value-based and tolerant attitude, forming respect for the participants in the educational process and their activities in an inclusive environment. Inclusive education plays an important role in the development of the personality of students, promoting the formation of such qualities as humanism, tolerance, mutual assistance, and helps children with disabilities adapt to life in society.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is an integral part of a sustainable and fair society. Its implementation requires profound changes in approaches to learning, the organization of the educational environment, the training of teachers and the attitude of society towards people with special needs. The transition to inclusion is not only a pedagogical reform, but also a change in public consciousness. Only through the recognition of the value of each person and the creation of conditions for their full participation in the educational process can we talk about real progress in the field of education. The evolution of inclusive education shows that inclusion is the path to a future in which all children have equal chances for development, learning and participation in society.

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