

## EXAMINING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR CURRENT SITUATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN KAZAKHSTAN UNIVERSITIES

*EXAMINANDO OS OBJETIVOS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO  
SUSTENTÁVEL PARA A SITUAÇÃO ATUAL DAS POLÍTICAS E  
PRÁTICAS DE EDUCAÇÃO INCLUSIVA NAS UNIVERSIDADES DO  
CAZAQUISTÃO*

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sustainable Development Goals become guide for future of education. For the quality of education, countries try to reshape educational policies and strategies. Especially inclusiveness plays a great role to achieve quality of education for the future of education. This research aims to evaluate current situation of inclusive education in Kazakhstan Universities in order to foster existing practices and policies. In this respect, survey and semi structured interview were conducted to determine current situations to 200 participants. It is revealed that definition of inclusive education can be categorized as giving equal education rights, reintegrating students with disabilities into society, inclusion of people with disabilities in the social process, diversity and tolerance, right of access to education. The majority of the research participants expressed a positive opinion towards inclusion. Challenges in inclusive education are infrastructure issues, lack of awareness, teacher lack of knowledge, insufficient training programs and lack of community awareness.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, policies, sustainable development goals, quality.

### **RESUMO**

Os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável tornam-se um guia para o futuro da educação. Para a qualidade da educação, os países tentam reformular as políticas e estratégias educativas. Especialmente a inclusão desempenha um grande papel para alcançar a qualidade da educação para o futuro da educação. Esta pesquisa visa avaliar a situação atual da educação inclusiva nas universidades do Cazaquistão, a fim de promover as práticas e políticas existentes. A este respeito, foram realizados inquéritos e entrevistas semiestruturadas para determinar a situação actual a 200 participantes. Revela-se que a definição de educação inclusiva pode ser categorizada como a concessão de direitos iguais à educação, a reintegração dos alunos com deficiência na sociedade, a inclusão das pessoas com deficiência no processo social, a diversidade e a tolerância, o direito de acesso à educação. A maioria dos participantes da pesquisa expressou uma opinião positiva em relação à inclusão. Os desafios da educação inclusiva são questões de infra-estruturas, falta de sensibilização, falta de conhecimentos dos professores, programas de formação insuficientes e falta de sensibilização da comunidade.

**Palavras-chave:** educação inclusiva, políticas, objetivos de desenvolvimento sustentável, qualidade.

## **Introduction**

Ensuring inclusion and equity in education is the key strategy of achieving SDG4 – Education 2030, which addresses all forms of exclusion and inequalities and this Agenda for Sustainable Development attaches particular importance to the role of AI, innovations and digital technologies in supporting inclusive education based on human rights, empowering socially vulnerable groups “disadvantaged on the basis of gender, disability, social or economic status, ethnic or cultural background, minority languages or geographic location” (UNESCO, 2020, p.5), ensuring gender equality and accelerating the overall progress in promoting lifelong learning opportunities for everyone (Mirici, 2022).

In this regard, the role of AI technologies in inclusive education practices is significant, since it is efficiently used for data tracking and gathering information about learners in crises and emergencies, providing access to learning resources via machine translation technologies, AI-aided mentoring which is helpful in personalized teaching in case of learning difficulties (UNESCO, 2020). Emerging technologies and innovative teaching practices facilitate effective inclusion for all categories of learners including those with learning disorders or those in socially marginalized conditions (isolated communities, refugees, population out of schools or with disabilities).

For instance, one of the emerging technologies is telepresence robotics which enables learners with special needs to study at home or in medical institutions and supports continuous education in case of emergencies. Another innovative practice is using AI in computer-supported collaborative learning when learners cannot be found in the same geographic location. In this context AI technologies are applied to managing asynchronous discussion groups (online participants accessing at different times and locations for personal convenience). Moreover, AI facilitates personalized learning by providing a convenient teaching environment for teachers that allows them to focus more on learners with special needs and difficulties. In particular, a virtual teaching assistant helps to eliminate teacher's routine tasks and enables them to use their professional time much more efficiently by concentrating on better communication and learning guidance (UNESCO, 2019). With the active implementation of digital and AI technologies in education, new teaching strategies and practices such as computer assisted learning (Schitteck Janda et al., 2001) or intelligent tutoring systems began to be used in developing countries (Nye, 2015). Furthermore, individual study plans and learning trajectories, learners' preferences, strengths and weaknesses are mapped by AI algorithms advancing opportunities for personalized education. Thus, it has been observed that AI and emerging digital technologies have initiated new inclusive education practices and studying solutions that are currently being tested and restructured in various contexts (Akinwalere and Ivanov, 2022).

Sustainable Development Goals are a guide that guides a more livable world with the development of a society and the creation of societies with high welfare levels. It should renew its institutional goals, especially in terms of quality education, innovation and inclusion, and internalize sustainable development goals. Quality education, in which 17 basic objectives are determined; elimination of inequalities; quality life; In line with the scope of innovation and technology, restructuring of education and training programs is inevitable. In particular, increasing the social responsibility and project management skills of learners and spreading awareness of social contribution should be among the priorities for universities.

The dissemination of inclusion strategies in the education system in eliminating inequalities within the sustainable development goals, and the support of assistive technologies in technology are among the research topics that should be considered. Although the researches draw attention to the contribution of technology to the reform in human life and education, artificial intelligence applications and life, studies in the context of inclusiveness, elimination of inequalities and institutions related to sustainable development goals are not included.

Education refers to an inevitable process that people are involved in in order to continue their lives from the day they were born. It is only possible with education for people to develop themselves, create new behaviors or change their behaviors according to the environment and changing conditions in which they live their lives. Today, education is seen as the right and the most basic need of every human being, and it is an indispensable necessity in today's world for everyone to benefit from this right. People are involved in life with some physical, economic, social and cultural characteristics that differ from each other.

In a century that focuses on an education system based on active and active participation by doing and living the knowledge acquired by the learner and the individual themselves, with a modern and democratic process, by not only supporting the development of students at the standard level, but also including and including students with special needs, it will meet the individual needs of all

individuals and their individual needs. The program should be developed by focusing on differences and social needs (Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 2018).

These education programs, in which individual differences are taken into account, include all individuals as well as students with unconditional special needs and aim to turn the individual differences of students with special needs into an advantage. Individuals with special needs are individuals who, like everyone else, have equality in benefiting from all the opportunities provided to the society and benefit from activities such as education, transportation and health with equal opportunities (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Al-Shammari, et. al, 2019).

In the understanding of contemporary education, individuals have begun to be seen not as individuals who need to be separated from society and education due to these differences, but as an element of social wealth who can benefit from education under equal and fair conditions. It is only possible with inclusive education practices that these people, who have different characteristics from each other, receive a systematic education in the same environment and conditions, without being excluded from the society (Nilholm, 2020). Inclusive education emerges as an education model that provides and aims to provide individuals with the skills of individual living and to have the competence to fulfill their social roles and duties, despite their differences in physical, social, cultural, economic or any other field (Moberg et. al, 2020).

### ***The Need for the Study***

Each student has different learning styles, past experiences, readiness levels, interests, sensory, cognitive and socio-cultural characteristics (Öztürk & Palancı, 2015). These differences create a disadvantageous situation for some students due to factors such as the structure of the existing education systems, the perceptions and practices of the stakeholders, and may prevent them from participating in the education process and receiving a quality education. Today, the number of studies emphasizing the importance of inclusive education practices for all students to receive a quality education is increasing rapidly all over the world (Forlin and Chambers, 2011; OECD, 2010; Rajeswari, 2017; UNESCO, 2016). Although there is

no clear definition for inclusive education, which has a long history but has increased in importance recently, countries make definitions according to their own conditions and situations, and interpret and apply inclusion. However, international organizations and many institutions have defined inclusiveness by mentioning some common points.

In terms of providing the justifications and aims of inclusive education, individuals should be able to find the opportunity for cognitive development, provide social development, and protect their environment and health by recognizing their body and the environment they live in (Lindner & Schwab, 2020) emphasizes the importance of inclusive education. Because it offers areas, opportunities and information in terms of comprehending daily life skills of students with special needs, increasing their mental development, knowing and recognizing their personal body, protecting their health, being aware of their environment, enriching them in terms of language development and social development (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprabhan, 2016).

Today's understanding of inclusive education basically covers all children with or without special education needs who cannot benefit from social, economic, cultural and educational opportunities equally and fairly, and emerges as an approach emphasizing that they should benefit from the right to education (Magnússon, 2019). For this reason, inclusive education has expanded to benefit many groups, including refugees, girls, disabled people, low-income families, ethnically and religiously minority groups, who are deprived of their right to education for many cultural, ethnic, social, economic and educational reasons.

Education was defined as a fundamental right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In addition, education has a critical importance in tackling global poverty, improving health opportunities and enabling individuals to take an active role in society. Inclusive education, on the other hand, in its simplest form, is everyone's access to education, which is one of their most basic rights, without being excluded (Naukkarinen, 2021). The inclusive education approach supports all children to have equal and systematic learning opportunities, regardless of their differences (UNICEF, 2012).



Inclusive education encompasses a wide range of strategies, activities and processes aimed at achieving a universal right of quality and appropriate education. This approach seeks to adapt the system and society to combat discrimination, embrace diversity, encourage participation, and overcome barriers to participation in learning and education for all individuals. Inclusive education; It is part of a broad strategy that promotes inclusive development with the aim of creating a world of peace, tolerance and social justice, the sustainable use of resources and the fulfillment of fundamental rights and needs (Ari et. al, 2022).

Inclusive education is the reorganization of the institutions and educational processes in which all students receive education, regardless of language, race, religion, gender, economic and social differences, in line with the current conditions and needs of the child (Adams, et. al, 2021). In this respect, inclusive education is an important step for all individuals to receive education under equal and fair conditions. This research aims to reveal the current state of inclusive education in Kazakhstan universities. The fact that there is not enough research in this direction in the literature reveals the importance of the study. In addition, it is anticipated that the results of the research will lead to future research.

To actualize the aims of this study, the following research questions were raised;

1. (Research question for the quantitative part)
2. What the views of participant on the definition of inclusive education?
3. What the views of participant on the appropriateness of inclusion?
4. What the views of participant on the challenges of inclusive education?
5. What the views of participant on inclusive education law?

## **Methodology**

This research is descriptive research in accordance with the survey model. Descriptive research is a type of research that tries to determine the existing situation or event as it is (Karakaya, 2009). In this direction, the situation of Kazakhstan universities towards inclusive education has been examined. In this

context, a mixed method was used in this study (Creswell, 2004). Adequate answers were given to the research questions to be answered with quantitative data. In addition, the participants then answered the qualitative questions.

The universe of the research consists of Kazakhstan universities with number of 220. Purposive sampling method was used to determine the sample. The scale was used in the collection of quantitative data. In the collection of qualitative data, a semi-structured interview form created by the researchers was applied. The analysis of quantitative data was analyzed based on statistics. Qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis technique.

## Results and Discussion

### *Quantitative Findings*

Table 1 – Questions of Study

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SS</i>
1. Should every student feel like they are attending a university where the highest achievement is possible?	220	2,00	5,00	4,60	1,00
2. Should students understand that different degrees of conformity to school rules may be expected from different students?	220	1,00	5,00	3,42	1,37
3. Should teamwork between staff be a model for the collaboration of students?	220	1,00	5,00	4,33	1,22
4. Should there be positive rituals for welcoming new students and new staff and marking their leaving?	220	1,00	5,00	3,53	1,38
5. Should all students be encouraged to appreciate the achievements of others?	220	1,00	5,00	4,09	1,35
6. Should building a supportive school community be seen as important as raising academic achievement?	220	1,00	5,00	3,76	1,41
7. Should attitudes about the limits to inclusion be challenged?	220	1,00	5,00	3,02	1,05
8. Should there be a shared understanding that inclusion is about increasing participation in the school?	220	1,00	5,00	3,32	1,32
9. Should there be a shared understanding that inclusion is about increasing access to the school?	220	1,00	5,00	3,75	1,39
10. Should all members of the school take responsibility for making the school more inclusive?	220	1,00	5,00	3,51	1,35
11. Should a variety of backgrounds and home languages be seen to make a positive contribution to school life?	220	1,00	5,00	3,64	1,42



12. Staff should understand the origins of discrimination as intolerance to difference.	220	1,00	5,00	3,46	1,34
13. Attention should be paid to the way intolerance to difference may be interpreted as racism.	220	1,00	5,00	3,05	1,12
14. It should be recognized that all cultures encompass a range of views and degrees of observance.	220	1,00	5,00	3,72	1,43
15. Staff should avoid seeing barriers to learning and participation as produced by deficiencies or impairments in students.	220	1,00	5,00	3,62	1,34
16. Staff should understand that practices must reflect the diversity of students within the school.	220	1,00	5,00	3,58	1,42
17. Students should understand that practices must reflect the diversity of students within the school.	220	1,00	5,00	3,64	1,40
18. Barriers that arise through differences between school and home cultures should be recognized.	220	1,00	5,00	3,14	1,25
19. It should be understood that anyone can experience barriers to learning.	220	1,00	5,00	3,66	1,45
20. Staff should avoid labeling children according to notions of ability.	220	1,00	5,00	4,00	1,31
21. Staff should avoid contrasting mainstream and 'special needs' students.	220	1,00	5,00	4,01	1,36
22. Staff should attempt to counter stereotyped attitudes towards people with impairments when they are seen, for example, as objects of pity or heroic battlers against adversity.	220	1,00	5,00	3,87	1,38
23. Cultures of the school should be equally supportive of boys and girls.	220	1,00	5,00	4,43	1,15
24. There should be an emphasis on the appreciation of difference rather than conformity to a single 'normality'.	220	1,00	5,00	3,61	1,34
25. Diversity should be seen as a rich resource to support learning rather than as a problem.	220	1,00	5,00	3,75	1,38
26. Gay and lesbian people should be valued by the school as part of human diversity.	220	1,00	5,00	2,78	1,43
27. Staff should see disability as being created when people with impairments encounter negative attitudes.	220	1,00	5,00	3,50	1,38
28. There should recognize that knowledge about their impairments makes a limited contribution to planning education for students?	220	1,00	5,00	3,11	1,16
29. The exclusion of students with severe impairments should be understood to reflect limitations of attitude and policy more than practical difficulties.	220	1,00	5,00	3,23	1,06
30. All staff should be involved in drawing up priorities for school development.	220	1,00	5,00	3,84	1,38
31. The views of students should make a difference to what happens in school.	220	1,00	5,00	3,60	1,43

32. There should be a variety of occasions when parents/care givers can discuss the progress of and concerns about, their children.	220	2,00	5,00	3,69	1,39
33. Staff should understand the roles and responsibilities of the governors (administrators).	220	2,00	5,00	3,88	1,37
34. The school should involve local communities, such as elderly people in activities in the school.	220	1,00	5,00	3,49	1,37
35. I feel confident that I can work in Universities with inclusive classrooms.	220	1,00	5,00	3,52	1,33
36. I am confident that I can address the behavior management needs of students in an inclusive setting.	220	1,00	5,00	3,39	1,33
37. All students should participate in inclusive settings.	220	1,00	5,00	3,52	1,33
38. I have been taught strategies that will assist me in helping all students learn.	220	1,00	5,00	3,55	1,35
39. I am confident that I will have appropriate resources to be successful in an inclusive setting.	220	1,00	5,00	3,40	1,32
40. I have been prepared to work with all students within an inclusive setting.	220	1,00	5,00	3,41	1,30
41. All students can receive a quality education in an inclusive setting.	220	1,00	5,00	3,51	1,36
42. I am confident that I can successfully collaborate with other teaching professionals in an inclusive setting.	220	2,00	5,00	3,50	1,40
43. I am confident that I can work with students with various learning needs in an inclusive setting.	220	1,00	5,00	3,44	1,34
44. Ensuring that inclusion is successful at my school will be my responsibility.	220	1,00	5,00	3,40	1,33

Source: Researchers.

From the Table 1, Item 1 which asked the question “should every student feel like they are attending a university where the highest achievement is possible” have the highest mean value of 4.60, followed by Item 23 asked the question about the cultures of the school should be equally supportive of boys and girls and the mean value of 4.43 indicated that participants supported the view that school culture should equally backed both girls and boys. Item 3 asked the question should teamwork between staff be a model for the collaboration of students and the mean value of 4.33 shows that participants supported the notion that teamwork between staff can be applied as a model for the collaboration of students. Item 20 asked the question about staff avoiding the labeling of children based on the notions of ability with another high mean value of 4.00 indicated that participants’ views supported

staff to avoid labeling children based on the notions of ability. Item 26 which asked the question about valuing gay and lesbian people by the school as part of human diversity have the least mean value of 2.78, followed by Item 7, 13, and 28 with 3.02, 3.05, and 3.11 respectively. These results indicated that participants supported the notion that student should feel like they are attending university where the highest achievement is possible.

### **Definition of Inclusive Education**

The research asked participants for definitions of inclusive education. The themes created according to the definitions put forward by the participants are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Participant views on the definition of inclusive education

Theme	Participant Opinion	
	N	%
Giving equal education rights	187	39
Reintegrating students with disabilities into society	112	21
Inclusion of people with disabilities in the social process	103	20
Diversity and Tolerance	65	12
Right of access to education	54	10
Total View	521	100

Source: Researchers.

Regarding the definition of inclusive education, the participants expressed their views as giving equal right to education (n187), reintegrating students with disabilities into society (n112), diversity and tolerance (n65), the right to access education (n54), inclusion of people with disabilities in the social process (n103).

“Involving children with disabilities into the learning process.” P6

“Involving people with special needs in the educational and social process”  
P17

“The possibility of joint education and upbringing of healthy children and children with disabilities and / or the creation of conditions for children with disabilities to receive an equivalent education.” P27

“Inclusive education means supporting and integrating all students into the society, regardless of their capabilities, peculiarities, if we want to include Kazakhstan in the ranks of a competitive country. It should have its own scheme.” P153

“Inclusiveness in education is the inclusion of all subjects of the educational process in the general educational process.” P214.

**Appropriate for Inclusion**

“Is inclusion always appropriate?” The questions were asked and the answers given by the participants are given in Table 3.

Table 3 – Participant views on the appropriateness of inclusion

Theme	Participant Opinion	
	N	%
Yes	140	64
No	80	36
Total View	220	100

Source: Researchers.

The majority of the research participants expressed a positive opinion towards inclusion. The answers of the participants in this direction are as follows;

“Yes. This is explained by the fact that society has always consisted and consists of people with different needs.” P71

“Not always, it all depends on the degree of impairment in psychophysical development, if we are talking about students with disabilities.” P100

“No, depending on the specialty and related training requirements.” P162

“Yes, because all people should be equal and have the right to receive an education, regardless of their differences, whether mental or physical.” P166

“When receiving education on an inclusive basis, people with special needs open up opportunities that can be attributed to pluses. That's why. I think inclusiveness is appropriate.” P196

***The Greatest Challenge to Inclusion***

“What is the greatest challenge to inclusion?” The answers given by the participants to the question are analyzed in Table 4.

Table 4 – Participant views on the challenges of inclusive education

Theme	Participant Opinion	
	N	%
Infrastructure issues	122	29
Insufficient materials and equipment	98	24
lack of awareness	56	14
Teacher lack of knowledge	54	13
Insufficient training programs	43	10
Lack of community awareness	41	10
Total View	414	100

Source: Researchers.

Opinions of the participants regarding the difficulties of inclusive education are infrastructure problems (n122), insufficient materials and equipment (n98), lack of awareness (n56), lack of teacher knowledge (n54), insufficient training programs (n43), lack of community awareness (n41). The answers given by the participants are as follows;

“Formation of an understanding that meeting the needs of the individual in development is a priority.” P20

“Lack of necessary psychological and pedagogical training of teachers in practice.” P31

“Lack of flexible educational standards. Inconsistency of the curricula and the content of the education of the mass school with the special educational needs of the child. Lack of special training for the pedagogical staff of an educational institution of a general type, ignorance of the basics of correctional pedagogy and special psychology. The lack of ideas among the teachers of mass schools about the features of the psychophysical development of children with disabilities, the methods and technologies for organizing the educational and correctional process for such children. Insufficient material and technical equipment of the educational institution for the needs of children with disabilities (lack of ramps, elevators, special educational, rehabilitation, medical equipment, specially equipped training places, etc.). The absence in the staffing table of educational institutions of a general

type of additional rates of non-psychological (deaf-eyesgogs, speech therapists, psychologists-psychologists, typhlopeyesgogs) and medical workers.” P105

“lack of teachers who know how to work with inclusive children stereotypes that inclusive people should study separately.” P138

“Inclusive education requires constant modernization. We need special conditions. Sometimes there are deviations from the national curriculum that does not allow students to continue their education.” P196

***The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Inclusive Education***

Research participants were asked for their opinions on the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Inclusive Education. The answers of the participants were gathered under five themes.

Table 5 – Participant views on the law on inclusive education

Theme	Participant Opinion	
	N	%
Agree	118	46
No idea	72	28
Provides equal education rights	34	13
Eliminates discrimination	23	8
Training programs should be adapted	12	5
Total View	259	100

Source: Researchers.

46% of the participants stated that they agreed with the law. Other answers of the participants were expressed as I have no idea (n72), provides equal education rights (n34), eliminates discrimination (n23), and education programs should be adapted (n12).

“Agree with changes” P55

“To make education as accessible as possible for all children, including those with SEN and HIA.” P100

“I agree” P122

“I do not know” P168



“It is necessary to create favorable conditions in universities and conduct some administrative measures to introduce an understanding of the term inclusiveness.” P219

## Conclusions

From the quantitative analysis, it is undesirable that the findings indicated that the resentment against gay and lesbian people in the school environment is yet to be eradicated despite the inclusive education campaigns.

Participants were first asked to define inclusive education. When the definitions made are examined, the participants stated that they provide equal opportunities for inclusive education, ensure accessibility, and enable people with disabilities to integrate into social life and society. These definitions obtained are similar to the definitions of inclusive education made in the literature. According to İra and Gör (2018) and Kırılmaz (2019), they define the inclusive education approach as the process of enabling children in the disadvantaged group to benefit from their right to education in a qualified and appropriate way and to integrate them into society.

In the study, participant views on the appropriateness of inclusive education were examined. There are also participants who state that it is not suitable when it is determined that the majority of the participants consider it appropriate. Similarly, Sudakova (2018) states in the research that not all children can be included in inclusive education.

Participant views on the difficulties of inclusive education were determined as infrastructure problems, inadequate materials and equipment, lack of interest, inadequate teachers, insufficient public awareness and unsuccessful education programs. Studies with similar results have put forward some suggestions in this regard. Alnahdi, et al. (2019) suggest that it should be compulsory for teachers to receive training for inclusive education. Majoko (2018), on the other hand, mentioned similar infrastructure, material and equipment deficiencies.

In this research, which was carried out to reveal the inclusive education situation in Kazakhstan universities, the views on the developed inclusive education law were examined. It was concluded that the majority of the participants had a positive view towards the law. It is strongly proposed that inclusiveness as part of eliminating inequalities within the frame of sustainable development goals should be considered in education system for welfare of society.

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