

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article analyzes international standards and advanced foreign practices in creating an inclusive educational environment in higher education institutions (HEIs). It also highlights the conditions created for students with disabilities in the national education system of Uzbekistan, legislative reforms, and ways to eliminate existing challenges.

Keywords: inclusive education, higher education, international experience, national model, integration, students with disabilities, inclusive culture

Introduction

Access to education for all and equality are fundamental principles of modern society. Inclusive education refers to the full involvement of every individual in the general educational process, regardless of their physical, mental, or emotional condition.

While inclusion was previously discussed mostly within the framework of preschool and school education, today, developing this system in higher education institutions (HEIs) has become a global necessity. Higher education serves as an essential bridge for youth with disabilities to achieve social integration and economic independence.

International Experience of Inclusion in Higher Education

Developed countries have established long-standing, fundamental experience in creating an inclusive environment in higher education. International practice can be broadly analyzed through three major regional models:

1. The US and UK Experience (Legal and Infrastructural Approach)

The *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* in the United States and the *Equality Act* in the United Kingdom impose strict obligations on higher education institutions.

- “Reasonable Accommodation”: Universities are required to adapt building architecture (ramps, elevators, specialized restrooms), learning materials (Braille, audiobooks), and examination systems (providing extra time) to the specific needs of each student.

- Specialized Support Centers: Every university operates inclusive support centers. They assist students not only in their academic endeavors but also with accommodation in student dormitories and career placement.

2. The Scandinavian Model (Social Integration Approach)

In Sweden, Norway, and Finland, inclusion is an integral part of social culture. Higher education in these countries is completely free, and the government provides students with disabilities with personal tutors (personal assistants), free transportation, and state-of-the-art technological tools (such as speech-to-text software).

3. The Asian Experience (Japan and South Korea)

These countries rely heavily on digital and robotic technologies to support inclusion in higher education. Advanced systems such as online platforms, robotic assistants, and captioned lectures are fully integrated for students with hearing or mobility impairments.

National Experience and Reforms in Uzbekistan

Developing an inclusive higher education system in Uzbekistan has become a top priority of state policy in recent years. The following key steps highlight the formation of the national model:

1. Legal Framework and the Quota System

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “*On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*” and the new edition of the Law “*On Education*” established the legal foundation for inclusive education.

- **Privileged Quota:** A 2% additional quota based on state grants was introduced for admission to HEIs specifically for persons with disabilities. This system has opened doors to higher education for thousands of young people.

2. Infrastructure Modernization

A strict requirement to create a “barrier-free environment” has been imposed on all newly constructed and renovated university buildings. Ramps, tactile paving, and specialized elevators are being installed systematically.

3. Digitalization and Methodological Support

Efforts have begun to create audio versions of textbooks for visually impaired students and to equip university libraries with specialized computer software (such as the *JAWS* screen reader).

Existing Challenges and Strategic Solutions

A comparative analysis of international and national practices reveals several challenges that still need to be addressed to ensure full inclusion in our national higher education:

Existing Challenges	Strategic Solutions
Architectural Barriers: The lack of elevators and specially equipped facilities in older university buildings.	Fully renovating existing buildings based on international <i>Universal Design</i> standards.
Shortage of Specialized Staff: Faculty members lack specific methodological skills to teach and support students with inclusive needs.	Introducing dedicated inclusive pedagogy modules in professional development courses for professors, and establishing a system of specialized academic tutors.
Psychological Barriers: Insufficient development of an inclusive culture within society and among the student body.	Conducting social projects and training seminars at HEIs that promote equality, tolerance, and mutual support.

Conclusion

Developing inclusive education in higher education is not merely about granting students with disabilities the right to attend classes. It is about laying the foundation for them to become fully fledged, independent, and economically active members of society. Implementing international best practices while harmonizing them with our national values and capabilities will elevate the higher education system of Uzbekistan to a brand new level.

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