

CONTEXTUALIZING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF KAZAKHSTAN

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Abstract. The paper analyzes inclusive education within the context of national education system. As a policy phenomenon the inclusive education is also comprised of the purpose, content and organization of education. By aligning the analyses of education policy reforms and inclusive education development at different levels, the paper illustrates how inclusive education is influenced by other political priorities regarding education and what policy shifts were taken to make and design educational policies to be inclusive. It concludes that inclusive education has gone through enormous fluctuations within the last years, and deeply rooted in special education. While, widening the scope of its coverage of children with diverse needs, the inclusive education largely targets children with disabilities. Regarding policy discourses, the neoliberal ideas as competitiveness, high potential, efficiency, quality come to be central in education documents. Even though the government takes under control social policies, in education sector it took long to define the concept of equity through political reformulations of educational ambitions.

Keywords: inclusive education, education policy, special educational needs, policy analysis.

Аңдатпа. Мақалада инклюзивті білім беру ұлттық білім беру жүйесі жағдайында талданады. Саясат құбылысы ретінде инклюзивті білім беру білім берудің мақсатына, мазмұнына және ұйымдастырылуына да байланысты. Білім беру саласындағы саясатты реформалауды және әртүрлі деңгейлердегі инклюзивті білім беруді дамытуды талдауды салыстыра отырып, мақалада инклюзивті білім берудің басқа білім беру саясатының басымдықтары қалай әсер ететіні және инклюзивті білім беру саясатын жасау және дамыту үшін қандай саяси өзгерістер жасалғаны көрсетілген. Инклюзивті білім беру соңғы жылдары үлкен ауытқуларды бастан кешірді және арнайы білім беруде терең тамыр жайды деген қорытынды жасалды. Сонымен қатар, әртүрлі қажеттіліктері бар балаларды қамтуды кеңейте отырып, инклюзивті білім беру мүмкіндігі шектеулі балаларға көбірек көңіл бөледі. Саяси дискурстарға келетін болсақ, білім туралы құжаттарда бәсекеге қабілеттілік, жоғары әлеует, тиімділік және сапа сияқты неолибералдық идеялар басты орын алады. Үкімет әлеуметтік саясатты бақылауға алғанымен, білім беру амбицияларын саяси реформалау арқылы әділеттілік тұжырымдамасын анықтау білім беруде ұзақ уақытты қажет етті.

Түйін сөздер: инклюзивті білім беру, білім беру саясаты, арнайы білім беру қажеттіліктері, саясатты талдау.

Аннотация. В статье анализируется инклюзивное образование в контексте национальной системы образования. Как явление политика инклюзивное образование также зависит от цели, содержания и организации образования. Сопоставляя анализ реформ образовательной политики и развития инклюзивного образования на разных уровнях, в документе показано, как на инклюзивное образование влияют другие политические приоритеты в отношении образования и какие политические сдвиги были предприняты, чтобы сделать и разработать инклюзивную образовательную политику. Делается вывод о том, что инклюзивное образование претерпело огромные колебания за последние годы и глубоко укоренилось в специальном образовании. При этом, расширяя охват детей с различными потребностями, инклюзивное образование в большей степени ориентировано на детей с ограниченными возможностями. Что касается политических дискурсов, то центральное место в документах об образовании занимают такие неолиберальные идеи, как конкурентоспособность, высокий потенциал, эффективность, качество. Несмотря на то, что правительство берет под контроль социальную политику, в сфере образования потребовалось много времени, чтобы определить концепцию справедливости посредством политических переформулировок образовательных амбиций.

Ключевые слова: инклюзивное образование, образовательная политика, особые образовательные потребности, анализ политики.

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Introduction

Inclusive education becomes an important part of educational policies of many countries around the world today. National governments are becoming required to design their educational policies to meet the learning needs of its entire people, including those being marginalized from compulsory education due to different reasons. Inclusive education, therefore, comes to include the ideas about the purpose and content of education. It also questions the notion of organizing the educational process. Its principles of equity, accessibility, adaptivity are competing with other ideologies in educational policies, like productivity, efficiency and quality.

Countries around the world differ in their path toward inclusion. The way of understanding inclusion and inclusive education in particular contexts paved the way for making emphasis on certain ideas, policies, type of needs and services being designed to be delivered to children with special educational needs. Magnusson et al. (Magnusson et al. 2019, p.1) cite: "tensions arise from different understandings of the inclusion process and value systems". Therefore, it becomes important to observe the position of inclusive education in the educational policy of a country and a value it puts to its development.

With this purpose, the given research will analyze the transition path of educational policy of Kazakhstan from 1991 till the current period of time to see how the educational policies have changed toward inclusion, how they incorporated the ideas about inclusive education, what policy shifts were taken to make and design educational policies to be inclusive and respond to the learning needs of children. Moreover, the study observes the ideologies that come across education and inclusion, and the priorities of the government to make the move toward the current policies on inclusive education. It makes a comprehensive understanding of inclusion, the transformation of education and inclusive education policy. The work puts a value to knowledge about the priorities of government to make shifts toward educational reforms, and consider the position of inclusive education put within the educational context.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative study based on the desk review of policy documents to investigate educational policy shifts toward inclusion. It analyzes educational policy of Kazakhstan from the years of independence through periods of transformation and major reforms. Further, the study contextualizes inclusive education within the educational policy of the country through observation of documents, regulations, laws and state programs for the development of education.

Understanding of inclusion, inclusive education and policy

The concept of inclusion comes to existence following the terms "integration", or "as a reaction to the fate of its forerunners as "mainstreaming" (Nilholm, 2006). Whereas, the notion of integration and mainstreaming couldn't achieve more in social justice, inclusion appears to have more radical implications. It implies changes within the system, particularly within the education and school systems. It sees school being changed to the needs of children, valuing and adapting to their differences.

The inclusion concept appeared as a result of discriminatory practices. In a society, where some people are marginalized due to their abilities, race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic backgrounds, and most of them left behind the basic services, inclusion calls for equal treatment and respect of all. As education is considered to be a basic human right, it becomes a foundation for just society (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006, p.2). Ainscow (2004) defines inclusion as an approach to education, which aims to overcome all forms of barriers to learning. Therefore, inclusion echoes diversity, equity and justice by standing against discrimination and marginalization of children with special needs.

However, the concept of inclusion still can be perceived differently among various contexts (Artiles and Kozleski, 2007; Haug, 2017; Krischler et al., 2019). Nilholm points out some dimensions, under which inclusion can be assessed (Nilholm, 2006). These dimension are international and national education systems, teacher education, municipalities, schools (types of

organizational arrangements), classrooms (interactional processes and learning), other situations in the schools (breaks, activities), individual experiences (sense of belonging). Practices in particular contexts can be less or more inclusive in relation to the given dimensions. For instance, how schools are organized technically, professionally and methodologically to engage all children with different needs might constitute about the level of inclusion.

Furthermore, Goransson and Nilholm (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014, p.268) classified the concept of inclusion and inclusive education into four definitions. First is the *placement definition*, where inclusion is seen as a placement of children with disabilities/special needs in general classrooms. Second, *the specified or individualised definition*, in which inclusion is meeting of social/academic needs of pupils with disabilities/special needs. Third, *general individualised definition* sees inclusion as meeting the social/academic needs of all pupils. Fourth, *community definition* interprets inclusion as the creation of communities with specific characteristics. Most of the countries still limit the process of inclusive education just to placing students with special needs in general schools or classrooms.

Today many countries take steps according to international legal acts, to make systematic changes in their education legislation toward inclusion. Policies are important in legitimizing and supporting educational practices (Loreman, 2013). Well designed national legislations and programs will arrange clear frameworks for implementing and fostering inclusive education, organize systematically the process of inclusive education in different levels, and make policy clarifications at any steps for the stakeholders. "A failure to clearly articulate the intentions of the policy-makers at any level can result in a confused system and inconsistent inclusive education policy", - states Loreman (Loreman, 2013, p.9). However, the success in inclusive education development may not be guaranteed with the legislation alone (Yeo et al., 2016), if the policies are not adequately translated into practice. But, educational reforms on the national level are vital for the governments to make inclusive education as a policy agenda for the whole country. As being the most influential policymaker,

governments are eligible to stress on certain policies and put obligations for reaching them, therefore taking their own responsibility in providing social and educational services for all its citizens.

The countries, like the US and the UK became the early runners for inclusive education legislation. The US adopted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990, last amended in 2004, which ensures the right of children with disabilities and special needs to basic and equitable education (Norwich, 2008). The UK in 1981 has legitimized Education Act to quest new integrated educational system, however failing to meet individual needs of children, it paved the way for the evolution of more inclusive educational policy in 1997 Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs through Green Paper. Further, the UK Government introduced Curriculum 2000 based on three inclusive principles as responding to diverse learning needs of pupils, overcoming potential barriers to learning and revising assessment for all pupils (Hodkinson, 2010). From 2000, many countries have started implementing or refining legislation to support inclusive education. For instance, in 2001 Hong Kong issued the Code of Practice under Disability Discrimination Ordinance to facilitate inclusion in schools and eliminate any discrimination based on disability (Yeo et al., 2016). Australia in 2004 enacted the Disability Standards for Education (Forlin, Keen, & Barrett, 2008).

Kazakhstan has participated in international forums and expressed its sharing responsibilities to meet the principles of Education for All agenda. The Law on Education of 2007 (last amended in 2021), Article 1.19-2 defines inclusive education as a process that ensures equal access to education for all students, taking into account special educational needs and individual opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2007). In 2000s the organizational and technological foundations of new organizations, such as a rehabilitation center (RC), an office for psychological and pedagogical correction (PPC), psychological, medical and pedagogical consultations (PMPC) have been developed, which focused on social model of rehabilitation. In 2002 the Law "On social and health care and pedagogical correctional

support for children with limited capabilities” was adopted to secure the rights of children left behind the special education (Rollan, 2021). Kazakhstan took several reforms for the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream/general educational institutions.

Depending on educational policies, different ways of educational inclusion are being implemented around the world. In some countries pull-out integration model is applied, where children attending special schools can be included partially in general schools (Yeo et al., 2016). Or special classes are organized within a general school system. In many countries, including Southeast Asia, some European countries, and also Kazakhstan special educational provisions represent a dual system. Children with severe disabilities are educated in segregated special schools, where children with mild disabilities attend general schools. Overall, the inclusive education as new phenomenon goes through different conceptualizations and policies among different countries. The ways the inclusion and inclusive education is defined, the policy programs and plans are designed to cover less or more children with SEN.

IE as international policy

From its existence the United Nations has been insisting the governments and international community in ensuring the human rights, the rights for people with disabilities and other minorities, the right for basic and quality education. In 1948 all countries for the first time on international level enacted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights thus accepting the rights of people for education. The Article 26 declares the right of every person to education. The Article 5 of the Declaration proclaims the value of “*humanistic vision of education and development*” which should be (United Nations, 1948, article 5):

... directed to the full development of a human personality and to the rise of respect to the rights and freedoms of people. Education should lead to mutual respect, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and should support the functions of the United Nation in ensuring peace and stability.

Recalling the right for education the UNESCO in 1960 adopted the Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960). This became the first instrument which covered the right to education more broadly. State parties take the responsibilities to eliminate any legal acts and administrative policies which have a discriminate view on education. Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-General in 1999-2009 says: “*As an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalised adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty, and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities (Matsuura, 1999).*” Education accessible for everyone is therefore intended to build the communities which strive for democracy and justice together.

Later, the right to education for marginalized groups of people as with disabilities strengthened with other international frameworks as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) signed in 1989 and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) dating back 2006. The Article 23 of the UNCRPD protects the rights of children with intellectual and physical disabilities declaring that:

States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community (United Nations, 1989, article 23.1).

It also calls states to provide for a disabled child the access to:

“education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development” (United Nations, 1989, article 23.3).

The significant step toward the inclusive approach in education became the

international conference “Education for All” in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. 155 states and 160 governmental and non-governmental organizations took part and adopted the Framework for Action to reach the goals. The World Declaration on Education for All signifies that *“Every person – child, youth and adult – shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs”* (United Nations, 1990, article 1.1). The conference opened a new wave in the development of education.

To further the purpose of Education for All, the international community comes as one in the World Conference 1994 held in Spain and adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education. It was the most vital move toward defining the inclusive education as a policy priority for all states. It calls national governments to *“work towards ‘school for all’ – institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning and respond to individual needs”* (UNESCO, 1994, preface). Proclaiming the fundamental right to education for every child, inclusive education and inclusive schools are believed to be:

The most effective means of combatting discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994, Article 2).

The conference calls upon national governments to take shared responsibility in their legislation and policies to make inclusive education a wide political objective, to implement mechanisms and strategies for planning and monitoring educational provisions for children with SEN.

Following that, the Dakar Framework for Action adopted in 2000 sets the goal of all children benefiting from education, to make the education develop the talents and personality of the learners and *“improve their lives and transform their societies”* (UNESCO, 2000, Article 3). Furthermore, the Incheon Declaration of 2015 with goals aimed at 2030 defines education as *“rights-based and inspired by a humanistic vision of*

education and development, based on the principles of human rights and dignity, social justice, peace, inclusion and protection, as well as cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity and shared responsibility and accountability” (UNESCO, 2015, article 5). It calls states to commit to *quality education* (Article 9) and promote *lifelong learning opportunities* (Article 10). The Incheon statement implies the quality education as developing and strengthening the necessary hard and soft skills and values which can lead to prosperous living (Article 9). These declarations aimed at achieving inclusive education require the national governments to revise their education systems making it consistent with universal norms of equitable, quality and accessible education.

Overall, the international legal acts and declarations put the objective of inclusive education beyond just educational context. It rests deep in the principles of human rights, equity, social justice and building just society toward more inclusive communities. Moreover, they give emphasis on those with special needs or disabilities whom the inclusive education or education for all should cover. The given above statements demonstrate the individualist (self-development of a person) as well as collectivist (building communities) view of inclusive education (Magnusson et al., 2019). These views can be subject to different conceptualizations of inclusive education among countries paving the way for diverse prioritization and constructions of inclusive education within their educational policy and practice. Hence, it becomes substantial to examine how countries put particular inclusion ideals in their policies for further understanding of inclusive education priority in the education system.

Current context of education in Kazakhstan

In order to analyze the position of inclusive education in the educational context of Kazakhstan, it is important first to look at the educational system of the country. It is worthwhile to emphasize the transformation periods and the priorities of highest significance in the educational policies to see the vision of the whole country's education.

Since gaining independence in 1991 Kazakhstan began a new period of education

development. It is characterized by national self-determination, the search for optimal ways of development, the dynamics of constant reforms and integration processes (Mynbayeva et al., 2014). Kazakhstan has taken great efforts to enact such educational reforms that would produce competitive human capital. Being devastated in the Soviet era, the country was struggling to build a welfare state, thus implemented enormous reforms in the economic sector. Without economic growth it was impossible to develop the educational sphere, as without highly qualified human capital there would be no economic progress. The main task on the agenda of the new government, therefore, was the development of competitiveness, as well as the intellectual potential of the population in the international labor market.

Along with it the main significance was put on the building and strengthening of national idea of the state. The national idea is intended to unite, accumulate the vector of each person's development with society as a whole and make it belong to it. So, it is the education which takes a role in politics to "reproduce state (leading) ideologies" by the aim of unifying the nation, forming patriotism and translating the national ideas of the state in educational programs and textbooks. All years of Kazakhstani independence were characterized by a public search for the national idea of the state (Akhmetova & Issayeva, 2005). President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A.Nazarbayev in his annual addresses to the people of Kazakhstan clearly defined the goals and objectives of the state reforms, the priorities of economic, political and social development. In his first Address in 1997 called "*Prosperity, Security and Well-being of all Citizens*" President defined a strategic plan with policy priorities and missions to which the country should strive for (Nazarbayev, 1997). N.A.Nazarbayev set ambitious goals of the Kazakhstani vision by 2030 ("Kazakhstan-2030" Strategy). This vision aimed at creating the image of "Central Asian Leopard" in international arena, which symbolizes elitism, independence, intelligence and courage, and becomes an example for other developing nations. The significance was put on the improvement of nation's health and education to guarantee the economic rise of the country. Moreover, as the economic development alone cannot

guarantee the well-being of the nation, the country's efforts should be directed to the improvement of the citizens' health and education.

Later on, the next Address of the President to the nation 2011 "Let's build the future together" defined the basic values of Kazakhstan as *freedom, unity, stability and prosperity* (Nazarbayev, 2011). These values were underlined with the unifying idea of the "*competitiveness of the nation*" in all consecutive addresses. The idea of nation's competitiveness is fixed in education development programs and has a great influence on the country's education system and policy. Moreover, the educational and upbringing ideals have been constructed according to the state directions of reforms as "first economy, then politics" and building of a "smart economy". They predetermined the conditions and opportunity for putting forward a new Kazakh and Kazakhstani national idea. The strategic program documents – "Kazakhstan – 2030" (Nazarbayev, 1997) and "Kazakhstan – 2050" (Nazarbayev, 2012) identified the educational ideal being associated with the formation of a competitive specialist, a "*highly educated nation*". The need for the formation of "a new Kazakhstani patriotism as pride of the country and its achievements" was emphasized. In one of the priority goals in the "Kazakhstan – 2050" address, President puts value on the disclosure of Kazakhstani people's potential. He states: "Our path to the future is connected with the creation of new opportunities for unlocking the potential of Kazakhstanis. A developed country in the 21st century means a state with active, educated and healthy citizens." (Nazarbayev, 2012).

In the government statements education is discussed as a tool for the future, where it usually comes as a part of a triad in social policy – Education, Health and Welfare. All the addresses of the presidents of Kazakhstan, the directions and priorities set by them are closely related to the development of education and social policy. In addition, they appear in legislative education acts and state programs for the education development. The education sector has gone through several reforms and stages since independence and even nowadays it incorporates best practices and integrates to international standards. According to the most recent research made

by Mynbayeva et al. (2014) the development of Kazakhstani education system is divided into *three main stages* as 1991-1995, 1996-2006 and 2007-present time periods (Table 1). The years of 1995 and 2007 were chosen as milestone or transfer periods, as in 1995 the Constitution of new Kazakhstan has been adopted, and 2007 is the year of new Law "On Education" which legislatively fixed the direction of state education for integration into the world education community.

The first stage was named by the author as a period of crisis as it was marked by the negative trends took place in the education system, which was a consequence of the socio-economic problems. The transition from authoritarian and centralized system under market conditions was complicated by the lack of financial capacity of the central and local budgets. The optimization policy has led to the destruction of the preschool education system and the mass liquidation of preschool institutions. Secondary general education schools, especially rural ones, found themselves in a critical situation, many of which, including small ones, were closed. The outflow of teachers into the sphere of business and entrepreneurship had a negative impact on the level and quality of secondary general education (Mynbayeva et al., 2014). The state has been struggling with the formation of a legislative framework corresponding to the changed conditions. The main questions on the agenda were assigning state grants for education to citizens; the creation of legal basis for the implementation of new approaches to the economic support of the sphere through the rational use of budgetary funds; attracting extrabudgetary funds to education and expanding the financial autonomy of educational institutions (Balakhmetova, 2011).

Starting from the second period (1995-2006) positive changes have taken place due to the development of democratization processes and economic transformation. During this period the system of higher education is characterized by the most dynamic shifts as there was a great demand on skilled labor force. Hence, it was the first to be significantly transformed in Kazakhstan (Mynbayeva et al., 2014). "A new model for the formation of a student contingent of state institutions in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (1999) was developed as a result of such

changes. It was designed to increase the objectivity of assessing the knowledge of applicants, to select the most gifted youth among those entering state universities under the state order. This model has become the first stage in improving the mechanism of admission rules in the country's universities (Balakhmetova, 2011). Later, the higher education as a locomotive led to the transformation of a secondary education. These changes found their normative and legal form in the Law "On Education" in 1999.

The Ministry through the law divided the competencies of different levels of education management, thus paving the way for decentralization reforms. Funding of school education was given to local executive bodies – akimats. The Ministry, on the other hand, carried out general coordination of work and continued to make major decisions. In higher education the regulation "On the Higher Educational Institution of the Republic of Kazakhstan" of 1995 defined the issues of academic freedom and autonomy of universities. Due to financial burdens the country encouraged the launch of private higher education institutions, which later gave impetus to the rise of other private education institutions in pre-school and secondary education.

The new and current law "On Education" signed in 2007 meets the needs of economic and social modernization and takes into account international requirements for new educational systems. The current stage is marked by significant transformations in the education system according to international standards. The State Program for the Development of Education and Science (STDES) for 2005-2010 set the priorities of finding the best ways to adapt the higher education system to the conditions of a market economy. More and more autonomous and private educational institutions have been opened to provide pre-school and secondary education. The financial burden, the lack of capacity to build necessary school places for increasing population make state to attract private sector to build these institutions, by promoting public-private partnership it calls for the provision of dormitories, school cafeterias and school transportation measures. The government launched per-capita funding to government and private schools in 2018 by providing financial means

calculated for each student. This makes schools to control its savings and expenditures from allocated money. As a result, the system of per-capita funding encouraged more private sectors to engage in the provision of educational services by the launch of new private institutions.

Furthermore, there was growth in the number of lyceums and gymnasiums concentrated mostly on best and bright students and select them on competitive basis. Elite schools as Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) were launched in every region of Kazakhstan from 2008 and cover only “elite” or gifted students to study in (Makoelle, 2020). It is arguable that children with learning difficulties are behind of this quality education in best or even good schools of the country as these schools admit students according to their capabilities. While the NIS schools translated the new curricula and updated content of education to all schools, teachers in general schools face barriers to effectively implement it and meet the individual needs of children with SEN due to the large class size, weak methodologies in designing individual plans and assessment strategies (Rollan, 2021). By the approbation of NIS experience the 12-year model of school education was planned under STDES 2010-2020. Its goal was to increase the competitiveness of education, the development of human capital by ensuring the availability of quality education for sustainable economic growth (Mynbayeva et al., 2014).

However, along with the priority in quality education the educational documents call for a reachable education to all citizens of Kazakhstan, for creating conditions to achieve basic knowledge and self-realization and disclosing their potential. This becomes more evident in the recent years with the last changes in legislation and STDES 2021-2025, in which one of the priorities are given to the creation of necessary conditions for all children including those with special needs and limited capabilities (Ministry of Education, 2019). It is obligatory for

general/mainstream schools which are state-owned to implement inclusive education principles and accept a child with SEN to be educated in its educational institution.

The last time frame is also associated with the reforms at all level of the education system, including updated content of education, new curricula, new legislation and amendments to legal acts, revised teacher education and advanced trainings for special teachers. It can be also observed through government statements for the increasing stimuli for public-private partnership to attract private sectors in opening new school places, organizing catering and transportation thus responding to the children with needs and covering most learners to education. Thus puts the equity and availability of education to be the priority of the government in the educational policy. The quality of education is agreed to depend highly on teachers, therefore taking into account initiatives by government for increasing salaries for teachers, strengthening the status of pedagogue, revising teacher education and advanced training courses, measures to attract candidates for the teaching specialties. As regards inclusive education, teachers were to receive advanced courses in special education and have additional payments for the learners with SEN.

Overall, the transformations in the education system since the independence of Kazakhstan is defined by the shift from centralized education system towards more decentralized one. The quest for the national ideals and state development paved the way for the economic terminology and market rationality to gain ground in the education policies. This also became the foundation for the privatization of education. The neoliberal ideas as *competitiveness*, *high potential*, *efficiency*, *quality* come to be central in education documents. Even though the government takes under control social policies; in education sector it took long to define the concept of *equity* through political reformulations of educational ambitions.

Table 1 – Alignment of educational policy analysis of Kazakhstan

Time period	Analysis of governance in educational policy of Kazakhstan	Analysis of inclusive education in educational policy of Kazakhstan
1991-1995	<i>Period of crisis</i> Formation of legislative framework (Law on Education 1992) Return of compulsory 9-years education Assignment of state grants in higher education Launch of Bolashak International Scholarship (1993)	<i>Following the past</i> The presence of the form “D9”– category of “unteachable” children Medical model of disability Questioning of education to children with disabilities
1996-2006	<i>Period of stabilization</i> Modernization of higher education system and update of its content Decentralization in the governance and financing in education Broadening of academic freedom in higher education institutions	<i>Special education reconsidered, deinstitutionalization</i> Development of social model of disability Law “On Social and Medical Correctional Support for children with limited capabilities”, 2002 Development of early intervention services Deinstitutionalization in the social policy sphere: opening of rehabilitation centers, cabinets for psychological and pedagogical consultations
2007-present	<i>Period of modernization and international integration</i> Modernization of secondary and higher education (2010-joined Bologna Declaration) Rise of privatization of education Launch of elite institutions: Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (from 2008); Nazarbayev University (from 2010) Updated curriculum and content of education (from 2016 gradual transfer of NIS experience to other schools) 12-years of secondary education Per-capita funding of education (gradual transfer of schools from 2018) Adoption of the Law “On the Status of Teacher” in 2019	<i>Intense reforming in inclusive education</i> Changing conceptualizations of inclusive education State reforms of 2011-2015, 2016-2019 and 2020-2025 Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children with Disabilities in 2015 Additional payment for teachers having child with SEN in class Provision of teacher assistants from Sept.2020 Standards of pupil with SEN ratio in general classes Decentralization in governance of schools: increased role of school leaders The organization of psychological and pedagogical support service in schools with inclusive education

Source: compiled by the author based on the sources Mynbayeva et al., 2014, Ministry of Education, 2007, Suleimenova, 2021, National Academy named after Altynsarin, 2021.

Inclusive education policy of Kazakhstan

Special and inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan have gone through considerable changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Most research on the analysis of inclusive education policy and practice was contributed by the professors of Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education as M.T.Makoelle, M.Somerton, J.Helmer, R.Kasa and others. They investigated the development of inclusive education in Kazakhstan from different angles and took participation in the revision

and initiation of the normative framework on inclusive education.

The system of special education during the USSR was specified by distinguished school system, where children with disabilities have been kept in specialized correctional schools (Makoelle, 2020) or being at home education. Stepaniuk argues that “the Soviet ideology promoted a culture of its own perfection and productivity among former Soviet states, its citizens, and globally by removing and placing people who looked or behaved differently in segregated institutions” (Stepaniuk, 2018, p. 3). In order to raise the image of communism and

working class, the Soviet rule excluded “nonproductive” people in segregated settings who were considered as being dangerous to violate the established norms. The historical path, political systems and social policies affected the attitudes and treatment toward people with disabilities and differences in societies. Disabilities were seen as ‘deficits’, and those with disabilities are seen to have medical intervention to be protected and corrected (Rollan, 2021; Phillips, 2007). Therefore, the Soviet rehabilitation paradigm was based on ‘defectology’ (‘the study of defects’). Specialists qualified in defectology (defectologists) worked with the people having disabilities to ‘find and fix their defects’ (Rollan & Somerton, 2019). Moreover, the term “invalid” meaning “incapable, disabled” has been widely used from the Soviet times till recently. It was deeply incorporated in pedagogical practices of the post-Soviet countries and those people were excluded from school system after being labeled with having ‘invalidnost’- ‘disability’.

The stigmatization attitudes presented by Soviet philosophy of difference and incapability strongly influenced the educational systems, teaching practices and school settings of post-Soviet states. Some of its thinking still dominates the educational perceptions and values in the region (Stepanuik, 2018). Even though the countries reconsider and make changes in their legal norms toward integration and inclusion of people with disabilities, the discriminatory views yet can be found in societal attitudes.

Kazakhstan inherited from the Soviet Union the educational policies and approaches toward the people with disabilities. So, in the first period (1991-1995) most of the children with particular diagnosis or deficits were not even covered by education, there were kept in the centers by social protection offices. As there are many types of developmental disorders, for many children the path to the educational process was closed. For example, during the Soviet times there was a statistical form D-9 “unteachable children”. All of them stayed permanently in the houses for the disabled children organized by the social protection system or were kept at home (Figure 1). Until 2002 most of the children with moderate and severe disabilities were left out from education and mostly received medical and social services from the government. The health facility institutions and orphanages for children were organized to provide medical treatments, and under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of population the boarding houses for disabled served as institutions to keep these children for certain periods of time. The guardians of these children receive financial aid from the government under social protection policies. There were eight specialized/segregated preschool and school institutions for different category of disabled children with visual and hearing impairments, speech disorders, intellectual disabilities, orphans, etc. Moreover, some general schools have had correctional special classes for the children with minor disabilities.

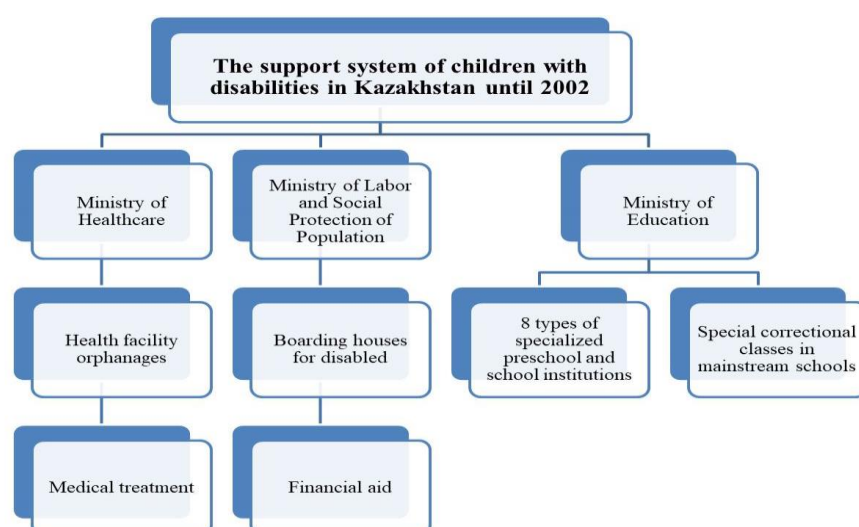


Figure 1 – The support system of children with disabilities in Kazakhstan until 2002

Note: Adopted from Suleimenova (2021). Inklyuzivnoe obrazovaniye v Kazakhstane: evolyuciya i perspektivy razvitiya. (Inclusive Education in Kazakhtsan: Evolution and Perspectives for Development). Conference paper. Almaty: RSPC SALR.

After gaining independence with the purpose of democratization and integration to the international norms and standards, Kazakhstan participated in world conferences related to special and inclusive education and took gradual changes to reform its education, particularly, providing opportunities for those who were excluded from the system. The former Republican Scientific and Practical Center for Social Adaptation and Labor Rehabilitation (RSPC SALR), now the National Scientific and Practical Center for Correctional Pedagogy, in 1999-2002 has participated in the UNESCO project to implement the ideas of the Salamanca declaration. Conferences were held with UNESCO and the SOROS Foundation in Kazakhstan, a methodological guide and the National Action Plan were written on the issues of inclusive education, which was submitted later to Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan (Suleimenova, 2015). The actions were taken to include children with SEN, despite of that, it mainly covered children with disabilities.

The developments in the special and inclusive education led to the understanding

of the necessity for diagnostic and advisory service centers and interagency cooperation, as there were many categories of children with developmental disabilities not covered by education. In this regard, deinstitutionalization has taken place, to reform the existing institutions focusing on social model of disability into new organizations as rehabilitation centers (RC), offices for psychological and pedagogical correction (OPPC), psychological medical and pedagogical commissions/consultations (PMPC) (Suleimenova, 2021). The new Law “On Social and Health Care and Pedagogical Correctional Support for children with limited capabilities (disabilities)” enacted in 2002 has equipped the legal norms on the organization of special education and organizational and technological foundations of new organizations (Figure 2). The form D-9 “unteachable children” was excluded. It made possible for children with mild mental retardation (for example, with Down's syndrome) to study in a special school, and not be in the houses for disabled under the social protection system.

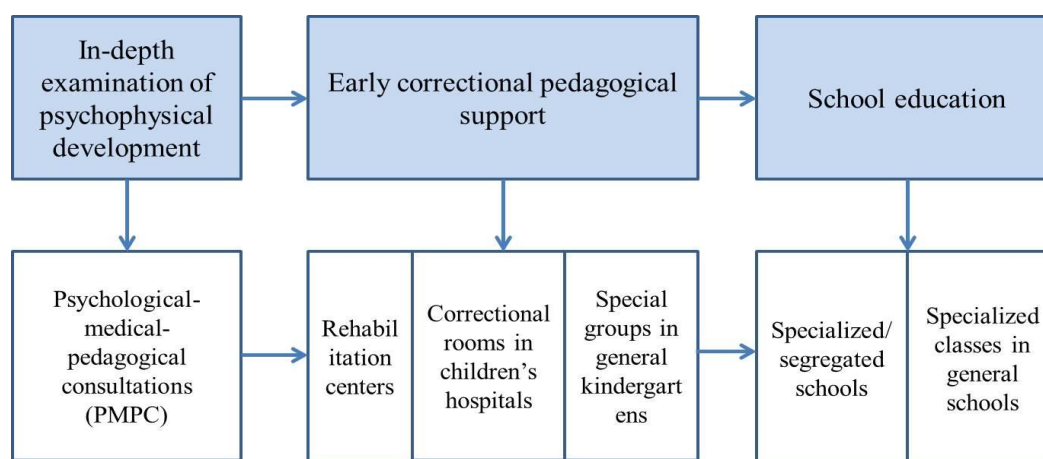


Figure 2 – The system of special education

Note: Adopted from Suleimenova (2021). Inklyuzivnoe obrazovaniye v Kazakhstane: evolyuciya i perspektivy razvitiya. (Inclusive Education in Kazakhtsan: Evolution and Perspectives for Development). Conference paper. Almaty: RSPC SALR.

Thus, the second time frame (1996-2006) was characterized by the development of special education and reconsidering the system of delivering services to the children

with disabilities. Most of the children were able to receive necessary help and support in terms of education, health care and social security. Deinstitutionalization has taken

place to revise and reopen past institutions to cover more children with disabilities and respond to their needs.

All of these steps were the prerequisites for the development of inclusive education in Kazakhstan in the third phase of education reformation. Nevertheless, until recently there was no clear understanding of what inclusive education constitutes of it, as it was defined within special education and reflected the medical model of disability (Rollan, 2021; Makoelle, 2020). The Law “On Education” has gone through several changes to conceptualize the inclusive education. In 2010 amendments, it defines inclusive education as joint training and education of persons with disabilities, providing equal access for them with other categories of children to the relevant educational curricula, correctional pedagogical and social development support through the provision of special conditions (Article 1, p 21-3) (Ministry of Education, 2007). In most recent changes (26.06.2021), the definition for special educational needs was attached just for those having health issues: “children with SEN are children who experience permanent or temporary difficulties in obtaining education due to health, in need of special or general education curricula and educational programs of additional education” (Article 1, p 19-3). Just at last, in 03.05.2022 amendments the concept of SEN becomes extensive covering any needs or difficulties children can face during education: “people (children) with SEN - people (children) who experience permanent or temporary needs in special conditions for receiving education of the appropriate level and additional education” (Article 1, p 19-2) (Ministry of Education, 2007). Moreover, Makoelle (2020) also argues that language and terminology used in inclusive education in Kazakhstan represents mostly the correctional pedagogy and it is essential to review some terminology and their correlation with inclusive education.

The legal documents of Kazakhstan, as Law “On education”, “On the rights of the child in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, “On social and health care and pedagogical correctional support for children with limited capabilities” and “On social protection of the persons with disabilities in the republic of Kazakhstan” protect the rights of children with special needs and disabilities to

education (UNICEF, 2014 cited in Rollan, 2021). The government guarantees free basic and accessible education for all children despite of their capabilities. Kazakhstan through its participation in international conferences declares shared commitments to the principles of inclusive education. The development of state programs as planning instruments was the results of these commitments. The State Program for the Development of Education and Science for 2020-2025 set the criteria for all educational institutions to implement and develop inclusive education. For instance, until 2025 100% of all preschool and school organizations and 70% of all colleges and universities should create conditions for inclusive education (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Several amendments have been made to the laws from 2021 mentioned above, which made considerable changes in the sphere of inclusive education and special support for children with SEN. These changes have been related to (Law on Education, 2007):

- establishing the right of a child to study at a school close to his residence (Ch.5, Art. 26:2) and the right of parents to choose the educational institution taking into account individual characteristics of the child (Ch.6, Art.49:1)
- increasing the responsibility of school leaders for creating conditions for children with SEN (Ch.2, Art.6:2:1);
- expanding the category of children with SEN, including not only children experiencing learning difficulties due just to health, but also those who find it difficult to study for various economic, social and other reasons in accordance with international standards (for example, children of migrants, children from socially vulnerable families, etc.);
- establishing state guarantees in the field of education for persons with SEN, conditions for their continuation of lifelong learning at all levels of education;
- introducing the psychological and pedagogical support service for children with SEN in the educational process;
- ensuring the variability of curricula for children with SEN, educational organizations are given the right to adapt standard curricula for children with SEN, taking into account their level of development (Ch.6, Art.47:2);

- introducing the assessment of special educational needs, taking into account per capita funding;

- launching a state educational order for special psychological and pedagogical support, which is replaced by local executive bodies in educational institutions from September 1, 2022.

Taking into account the responsibility for meeting the special needs, the service for psychological and pedagogical support (SPPS) has been organized in general schools with a group of specialists (speech therapists, special teachers, psychologists, teacher-assistants) (Yelisseyeva & Yersarina, 2019). The corporate fund “Bolashaq” and charity foundation “Dara” take active participation in opening resource centers in general schools thus supporting schools to include children with SEN. The study carried out by Helmer et al. (2020) observes the development and the role of resource centers as a response to creating inclusive environment and support the “transformation of mainstream schools into inclusive educational communities”. These resource centers have been effective in providing help and guidance to all stakeholders as well as to other neighborhood schools. The SPPS of the resource centers works closely with the specialists of other schools in their district helping them with documentation and methodological support.

The development of inclusive education became also possible due to the rise of civil society activism (Rollan & Somerton, 2019). More and more parents and caregivers of children with special educational needs and disabilities start demanding their rights, the rights of their children to education and well-being. More parental organizations are taking initiatives to further the ideas of inclusion in social media, educating the society on the rights of people with disabilities and launching centers for rehabilitation and inclusive practices (Ashyq Alem, Ozim platform, Clover Foundation, etc.). The major charity and corporate organizations as Dara and Bolashak participate in governmental discussions on the policies of inclusive education, put forward the development of inclusion and take actions in opening resource centers in schools and supporting stakeholders with technical and methodological strategies. Rollan and

Somerton (2019) argue that: “The activism of NGOs is central to educational reforms in the sphere of inclusion. In this instance, NGOs are serving as the catalysts for and the instigators of this reform process. They are active participants in policy revisions, ensuring their implementation and monitoring their outcomes... Through their actions, they inform parents, the state, and the public more broadly about the rights of children with disabilities to receive quality inclusive education”.

Overall, as can be seen from the timely analysis of the government policy in the sphere of inclusive education, it can be argued that it gone through several changes and conceptualizations and still under transformation. Inclusive education in Kazakhstan is deeply rooted in special education. The reform in special education started earlier in 1999 and country's commitments to international declarations and conventions became the prerequisites for the development of inclusion in education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to show the importance of the relationship between inclusive education and the context of education policy. The analyses were used to demonstrate the political priorities and ideologies in regard to education and inclusive education. The results discussed above show the necessity for the analysis of national education policies and how they incorporate and represent the values of inclusive education and relate to practical outcomes.

The observations also illustrate that inclusive education is highly influenced by the past approaches and historical legacies. Different and changing definitions of who is covered by inclusive education have been recognized, which mainly encompass the children with disabilities. Even though the inclusive education recently was defined as it is identified by international institutions, the governments tend to adapt the policies depending its local conditions. As Magnusson et al. (2019) argues the education system is the outcome of an interaction between politics, ideological arenas in the policy and practice.

As regard to inclusive education, the sphere is developing and moving forward.

Nowadays its values as *equity* and *availability* compete with other political ideals and priorities regarding education system. The change in the socio-political structure of Kazakhstan, the implementation of activities aimed at the democratization of society in accordance with the international legal documents of the UN contributed to the formation of a new position, the attitude of the state and society towards people with disabilities, including the education of them. At present, Kazakhstan has proclaimed the priority of the individual's interests over the interests of society through guaranteed observance of the rights and freedoms. Therefore, within the framework of the state programs Kazakhstan provides for the gradual development of inclusive education so that children with SEN and disabilities

really have the opportunity to fully learn and gain knowledge on an equal basis with the others.

The development of inclusive education is indicated by the course of educational policy toward more internationalization and country's commitment to international frameworks on the development and provisions of human rights and inclusive education. The analysis of inclusive education development in Kazakhstan makes it evident that it firmly roots in special education and is deeply affected by the country's historical context. The demonstrated continuous fluctuations in the legislations show how ideals and ambitions toward inclusive education are changing and developing.

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ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ БІЛІМ БЕРУ САЯСАТЫНДАҒЫ ИНКЛЮЗИВТІ БІЛІМ БЕРУДІ КОНТЕКСТУАЛИЗАЦИЯЛАУ

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КОНТЕКСТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ ИНКЛЮЗИВНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЙ ПОЛИТИКЕ КАЗАХСТАНА

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