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Exploring Elementary Teachers' Experiences in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan

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by

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A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

With the adoption of an inclusive approach to education over the last few decades, the teacher's role in ensuring the educational success of every pupil has come to be considered vital for the success of inclusion. The literature on this issue highlights the view that, because teachers' acceptance is likely to affect their commitment to policy implementation, successful implementation is largely dependent on teachers' positive attitude toward the policy.

Until now, inclusive education in Uzbekistan has been implemented primarily as an internationally sponsored project. To investigate the experiences of elementary teachers in including students with disabilities in regular classes, we recruited nine practicing teachers with at least one year of experience teaching in an inclusive classroom. To ensure that the teachers understood the study and were able to participate in a meaningful way, only teachers who had received training in inclusive education were invited. A phenomenological qualitative research methodology featuring in-depth interviews was applied. This study focused on conducting interviews with teachers who were involved in the UN-sponsored project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan."

The analysis yielded four topics under which all interview data could be grouped. These data were assigned the identity of main themes under which a total of ten sub-themes and thirty-one major codes were grouped. The main findings revolve around four topics: teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with disabilities; teachers' perspectives of the benefits of inclusion; teachers' concerns about including children with a disability; and teachers' expectations about further changes. After an in-depth discussion of critical methodological issues germane to the research findings, the study identifies limitations of the research and provides implications for policy and practice as well as directions for future research.

Keywords:

Inclusive Education, In-depth Interviews, Perceptions, Experiences, Classroom Teachers, Elementary School, Regular Classroom, Uzbekistan

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Glossary of Terms

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Defectology	Study of defect
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MOPE	Ministry of Public Education
PMPC	Psychological-Medical-Pedagogical Commission
Project	UN-Financed Project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan"
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
SWD	Student with Disability

Transcription Symbols

X

(*district*)	Explanatory and clarificatory material
((*laughs*))	Non-verbal behavior
[students with]	Additional material for clarity
<u>under</u>lining	Indicates some form of stress or emphasis in speech
<u>MILD</u>	Said with emphasis
{...}	Omitted material, irrelevant speech, so not included
"You will"	Words or phrases, which have been quoted by participants
disa--	Word truncation, self-interruption
...	An unfilled pause
err, mm, hm	A filled pause

I. Introduction

This chapter begins with a statement of the rationale for the research. The purpose of the research and the research questions are described in turn. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the dissertation's organization.

1. Rationale

Education is considered to be so important to individual development, that the right to primary education is legally guaranteed in most countries in the world (UNESCO, 2005). Moreover, international human rights conventions also recognize the right to education. This right has been established by a range of UN Conventions, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 (Rouse & Lapham, 2013a). It is worth mentioning that in 1990 the Convention on the Rights of the Child was given the status of international law. According to Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments have the responsibility of making the primary education compulsory and accessible for free to all (UNESCO, 2005).

As Thomas and Vaughan (2004) have noted, education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society. Nevertheless, as countries seek to develop their education systems, achieving sustainable improvements amongst students from disadvantaged backgrounds remains a major challenge (Ainscow, Chapman, & Hadfield, 2020). There is a longstanding list of educational inequities that affect groups described as "minority" by virtue of their race, language, ability level, social class, or gender, among others (Harry & Klingner, 2014). If the goal of education is for students to be successful adults who can be contributing members of our society, then they must be provided with the same opportunities to learn (Spencer & Simpson, 2009). In regard to the same opportunities to learn, ensuring inclusive quality education, providing inclusive learning environments for all, regardless of gender and disability – is one of the 17 goals to be achieved by 2030 as stated in the 4th agenda of a newly adopted UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The concept of inclusion it its broadest sense is about providing a framework within which all children - regardless of gender, language, ethnic, cultural origin or ability - can be valued equally, treated with respect and provided real opportunities at school (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). In terms of the latter, the advocacy of persons with disabilities for themselves has transformed the debate about inclusion and localized it firmly as a fundamental issue of human rights (Mittler, 2000). Moreover, the social costs of segregation as many persons with disabilities have argued, are high: the cost of exclusion and segregation is the alienation of people who would otherwise have been able and willing to take a much fuller part in society (Thomas & Loxley, 2007).

With present-day legislation and the disability policy as a basis, participation in school activities is a right for students with a disability (Eriksson & Granlund, 2004). However, in many developing societies, children with disabilities are considered to be the most vulnerable group of the population. These children have to face a range of barriers to attend and complete school (Filmer, 2005) which in its turn hinders their opportunity to exercise their right to receive quality education to the full extent. Uzbekistan is not the exception in this regard. Across the Central Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States region, where Uzbekistan is located, the total number of children who are officially recognized as persons with disabilities, tripled from about 500,000 in 1990 to 1.5 million in 2002 (UNICEF, 2011). Although the patterns of educational provision in the Commonwealth of Independent States region are still influenced by its Soviet legacy, it is important to mention that in spite of limited resources, reforms are occurring in several countries (Rouse & Lapham, 2013b).

In Uzbekistan, children with disabilities primarily receive formal education at specialized institutions that practice medico-pedagogical approaches with rare cases when they study at general schools (Nam, 2019). The Rapid Review on Inclusion and Gender Equality (UNICEF, 2016) outlines that for the time being there is no effective interventions to develop and sustain the inclusion of students with disabilities into general schools (Nam, 2019). The major provision that has been made to the Law on Education that is related to inclusive education in Uzbekistan is the Order by the Minister of Public Education (registered by the Ministry of Justice on 17th of June, 2015 #2685) "On the procedures for transferring of students with physical or mental disorders from one specialized educational establishment to another, or to general

education establishment for learning in inclusive education environment". Nevertheless, it has been argued that there is no national policy or law regulating the inclusion of children into the general schools (Nam, 2019).

A literature review yielded a number of studies (Nam, 2019; Turdiev, 2015; Narolskaya, 2013; Zagirtdinova, 2005) that were conducted on the issues of inclusive development, inclusive education and disability in Uzbekistan. It was identified, that the nature of the studies was primarily the review of policies and neither of them has focused on exploring the actual experiences of the stakeholders of inclusive education in implementing inclusive practices in the country. In this regard, this research is perhaps first of its kind that used a qualitative research method in an attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities in Uzbekistan.

With the adoption of an inclusive approach to education over the last few decades, the teacher's role in ensuring the educational success of every pupil has come to be considered vital for the success of inclusion. Literature on this issue highlights the view that, because teachers' acceptance is likely to affect their commitment to policy implementation, successful implementation is largely dependent on teachers' positive attitude toward the policy. In addition, as research shows, firsthand experiences of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education are considered to be essential guides on the road to inclusion (Rouse & Lapham, 2013a). As Forlin (1998) highlighted, if a policy of inclusive education is to be effective, it is crucial that notice is taken of teachers' concerns and that those concerns are addressed in the immediate future (Forlin, 1998). In the spirit of qualitative research, which is a spirit of exploration (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002), the questions addressed by this research are:

1) What are elementary school teachers' perceptions of inclusion?
2) What are elementary school teachers' perspectives on the benefits of inclusion?
3) What are teachers' concerns about including children with disabilities?
4) What are teachers' expectations regarding further changes for inclusive education for children with disabilities in Uzbekistan?

2. Purpose of the Research

While limited by the lack of reliable empirical data and the lack of research in the context of Uzbekistan (Nam, 2019), this study aims to explore experiences of elementary school classroom teachers in the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. It also aims to present the current situation regarding the development of inclusive education in that country. This research is based on the premise that Uzbekistani teachers' understanding of and attitudes toward inclusive education are set within a cultural context that is different from that of many other contexts, especially from that of western countries. Until now, inclusive education in Uzbekistan has been implemented primarily as an internationally sponsored project. The intention of this research is not to evaluate the program but rather to produce sophisticated empirical data on the research topic.

Rouse and Lapham have stated that if education for all is to become a reality, then inclusion is a necessary precondition (Rouse & Lapham, 2013a); this is true for the countries of Central Asia as it is elsewhere. Children with disabilities should be educated alongside their peers without disabilities in regular education settings to the greatest extent possible. The research conducted through the journey of this dissertation is an attempt to investigate this issue and to thereby contribute to scholarship on one of the under-researched themes in Central Asia (Rouse & Lapham, 2013b). The final purpose of this dissertation is to contribute to the development of inclusive education in Uzbekistan by drawing out implications for policy and practice.

3. Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters including the current one.

Chapter I presents an introduction to the topic, the rationale for the research, the research questions, the purpose of the research, and the organization of the dissertation.

Chapter II is divided into two sections. The first section sets the context for the study by describing overall background information on Uzbekistan and statistical data on people with disabilities. The content and scope of the UN-financed project "Inclusive

Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" is also presented in this section. The second section reviews educational opportunities for children with disabilities. It also presents reviews of definitions of the concept of inclusive education, of the barriers to the process of inclusion, and of studies relevant to teachers' attitudes to and perceptions about including children with disabilities into regular classrooms.

Chapter III describes the methods used in this research for participant recruitment as well as the procedures for data collection and analysis. The ethics of research were also addressed.

Chapter IV presents the results of the qualitative analysis of the interviews.

Chapter V consolidates the research findings through a discussion of the results with reference to previous literature. This is followed by discussion of the limitations of the research and by suggestions offered for future studies. The chapter concludes with a presentation of implications for policy and practice.

II. Literature Review

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section sets the context for the study by describing overall background information on Uzbekistan and statistical data on people with disabilities. The content and scope of the UN-financed project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" is also presented in this section. The second section reviews educational opportunities for children with disabilities. It also presents reviews of definitions of the concept of inclusive education, of the barriers to the process of inclusion, and of studies relevant to teachers' attitudes to and perceptions about including children with disabilities into regular classrooms.

1. Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan

The concept of inclusive education is a relatively new phenomenon within the Uzbekistan education system, with some developments in government policy taking place since the late 1990s. A literature review yielded a body of research that analyzed the social issues people with disabilities in Uzbekistan confront (Zagirtdinova, 2005), inclusive development in Uzbekistan (Turdiev, 2015) and inclusive education (Nam, 2019; Narolskaya, 2013).

1.1 Country Background

Uzbekistan is a presidential republic, where the President is Head of State and coordinates the effective functioning and interaction of all three branches of power: Legislature, Executive and Judiciary (United Nations Office in the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2018). The Republic of Uzbekistan was a constituent republic of the USSR for almost 70 years. In 1991, it declared its independence and is currently one of nine member states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Bordered by Turkmenistan to the southwest, Kazakhstan to the north, Kyrgyzstan to the northeast, Tajikistan to the southeast, and Afghanistan to the south, Uzbekistan has a total area of

448,969 square kilometers. According to the UN Statistics Division (2018), the fertility rate estimated as of 2015 is 2.4 live births per woman. With its population of about 32 million people[1], which is nearly half of Central Asia's population, Uzbekistan is the most populous country in the region. An estimated 90 percent of the population is Muslim, mostly Sunni. Along with Lichtenstein, Uzbekistan is one of the only two doubly landlocked countries in the world. This means that in order to reach the coastline, the residents have to cross two national borders. Uzbekistan is situated along the ancient Silk Road which was an important series of trade routes stretching from China to Europe. By virtue of its strategically important location at the crossroads of Asia, present-day Uzbekistan is a blend of ethnicities, languages and cultures resulting from the rise and fall of various historic empires including Persian, Kushan, Mongol and other empires, each having a considerable impact on enriching of Uzbek history and culture. The population is ethnically and linguistically diverse. An estimated 100 different ethnic groups live in the country. The largest ethnic group is Uzbek making more than 80% of the overall population, followed by Russian ethnic group (5.4%), Tajiks (4%) and Kazakhs (3%). The official state language is Uzbek (from Turkic language family) since 1998. Russian is also still widely in use for interethnic communication. The literacy rate in Uzbekistan is estimated at 99.9 percent, but these figures are not consistent with high a dropout rate, which is estimated at 10 percent in Grade 5 of secondary school.

1.2 Disability in Uzbekistan

Although Uzbekistan recognizes its day of independence as September 1, 1991, the country has had a long history which spans over thousands of years. As Turdiev (2015) highlights, the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 was the politically and economically turning point for Uzbekistan as the country became independent state. After the independence, Uzbekistan adopted the Constitution on December 8, 1992. as its fundamental legal document. Notably, in 1991, the Republic of Uzbekistan has adopted its first law which was the Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities

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[1] United Nations Statistics Division (2018). Summary statistics: Uzbekistan. New York: UN. Available from: http://data.un.org/en/iso/uz.html [Accessed on 4 Nov 2019].

of Uzbekistan. Since the adoption this law, it has been amended in 2008 and 2013 years. This made it more compliant to human rights values (Turdiev, 2015).

As Daniels and Garner (1999) highlight, to subscribe to some form of democratic ideal is to have an aim to include all people in the development of civil society. Despite signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009, Uzbekistan is yet to complete ratification process (The Equal Rights Trust Country Report Series, 2016). According to the article 18 of Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (United Nations, 1969), while the state has signed but not ratified the Convention it is obligated not to defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty (The Equal Rights Trust Country Report Series, 2016).

Article 18. Obligation not to defeat the object and purpose of a treaty prior to its entry into force

A State is obliged to refrain from acts which would defeat the object and purpose of a treaty when:

(a) It has signed the treaty or has exchanged instruments constituting the treaty subject to ratification, acceptance or approval, until it shall have made its intention clear not to become a party to the treaty; or

(b) It has expressed its consent to be bound by the treaty, pending the entry into force of the treaty and provided that such entry into force is not unduly delayed.

In Uzbekistan, the state-provided assistance to the persons with disabilities are primarily overseen by five state ministries: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Education and Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education (Turdiev, 2015). Across the Central Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States region, the total number of children who are officially recognized as having disabilities increased in number three times as many from about 500,000 in 1990 to 1.5 million in 2002 (UNICEF, 2011). As it is highlighted in The Equal Rights Trust Country Report Series (2016), there is no clear consensus on the number of persons with disabilities in Uzbekistan, yet in the 2012 report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the government of Uzbekistan reported that there were about 850,000 persons with disabilities in the country, which equates to around 2.83% of population. However, the State Committee on Statistics

reports 592,500 people with disabilities in Uzbekistan as of 2014 (Statistics Committee, 2015) 87,900 of whom are children and adolescents through the age of 18. These numbers fall well below World Health Organisation estimates on the global prevalence of disability, which says that on average 15% of the population has some form of disability (The Equal Rights Trust Country Report Series, 2016). The estimate statistics that only two percent out of over thirty millions of Uzbekistan people live with some form of disability, shows how far it is from international disability indicators (Turdiev, 2015).

Historically, people with disabilities in the Soviet Union were invisible (Alur & Timmons, 2009). Official recognition of disability was rare (Thomson, 2002) and the process of determining and responding to the needs of persons with disabilities was extremely medicalized (Alur & Timmons, 2009). In the Soviet period, state attitudes toward persons with disabilities was characterized by denial (Alur & Timmons, 2009). When the Soviet Union held the Moscow Olympic summer games in 1980, the country refused to host the Paralympic games, claiming that the country had no persons with disabilities (Philips, 2009). The Soviet representative's reply to whether they would host the games was swift, firm, and puzzling (Philips, 2009): "There are no invalids in the USSR!" (Fefelov, 1986 cited in Philips, 2009).

In Uzbekistan, a person is officially recognized as having a disability based on a medical certificate that states the type and degree of disability. People with disabilities still face daily discrimination, as well as physical barriers to education, employment, recreation, family life and more (Turdiev, 2015). School buildings across the region are inaccessible to many with mobility issues due to their physical disabilities (Turdiev, 2015). As it was described by Rouse and Lapham (2013b) many schools lack indoor toilets, and outdoor latrines are not accessible to people with physical disabilities in the countries of Central Asia; this is true for Uzbekistan as well. In addition, one of the greatest obstacles to the integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream community in Uzbekistan is the lack of equal access to quality education and the discriminatory systems of access to education (Turdiev, 2015). The majority of special schools are boarding institutions (maktab-internat); therefore, children with disabilities usually have to live away from home and often obliged to travel long distances away from their homes to attend one of these institutions (Turdiev, 2015).

1.3 Educational System in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, pre-school education is not compulsory. However, constitution provides eleven years of further education which is compulsory and available free of charge. Thus, all Uzbekistanis are entitled to get free education regardless of gender, geographic or socio-economic status. This begins with four years at primary school and is followed by two phases of secondary education taking five and two years respectively. As it is described in the table below (Table 2.1), the primary school begins at the age of seven. The next five years are spent at a secondary school, which is from ages ten to fifteen. Following that, there is a choice of between two to three years of upper education at either general education school or academic lyceums and vocational colleges. As it is clarified by Nam (2019), academic lyceums are there to prepare students to enter higher educational institutions and provide them with a certificate of completed secondary education, whereas the curriculum of vocational colleges is designed to develop students' vocational skills and provide diploma of specialized secondary education (Nam, 2019).

Table 2.1 Schooling System in Uzbekistan

Age	Schooling System		
18	High School (at general education school) 2 years	Academic Lyceums 3 years	Vocational College 3 years
17			
16			
15	Secondary School 5 years		
14			
13			
12			
11			
10	Primary School 4 years		
9			
8			
7			

The educational system in Uzbekistan is centralized and hierarchical with the Ministry of Education (MOE) at the top. The MOE is responsible for drawing up policies and overall education plans, while regional governorates, or main departments of public education, are held responsible for the implementation and supervision. Higher education is available at a number of national and international universities, that offer education on budget (free of charge) and contract (self-financing) basis. Education is provided in the Uzbek, Russian, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Tajik, Kyrgyz and Turkmen languages (Human Rights Council, 2018).

1.3.1 Primary Education in Uzbekistan

As UNESCO (2005) states, every country has its own definition of primary education that needs to be transformed into a comparable standard in order to assess progress towards international goals. For the purpose of international comparisons, International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), the standard framework used to categorize and report cross-nationally comparable education statistics, has defined primary education with its main criteria "a) systematic instruction in fundamental knowledge, skill and competencies; b) typical entrance age and duration; and c) instruction organized typically by one main class teacher" and subsidiary criteria "a) part of compulsory education" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

According to ISCED, one of the main criteria for the definition of primary education is that instruction is organized typically by one main class teacher (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Similarly, in elementary schools of Uzbekistan, there is only one teacher for all subjects with the exception of separate teacher Physical Education and Foreign languages as a rule. Starting from fifth grade students move up to secondary school, where they will have a different teacher for each subject, with the exception of the cases when one teacher can teach all related subjects, like Uzbek/Russian and Literature, Physics and Chemistry and other subjects. The student-

teacher ratio in elementary schools of Uzbekistan was estimated as twenty-one students per one teacher in 2017[2].

In Uzbekistan schools, there are classroom teachers and subject teachers at schools, from elementary through high school. As the general education teacher, the classroom teacher in elementary school is responsible for teaching the core curriculum. Moreover, the classroom teacher has the main responsibility when it comes to monitoring and supporting social development of the students. Also, the classroom teacher has a fundamental role when it comes to organizing the interdisciplinary teaching as well as teaching the compulsory topics. Every class has a classroom teacher. For classroom teaching, a teacher is paid separately. The classroom teacher gets 100 percent of this allowance in case if there are thirty-one or more student in the class, 80 percent - for twenty-six to thirty students, 70 percent - for twenty-one to twenty-five students, 60 percent - for sixteen to twenty students, and 50 percent - if the class is comprised of less than fifteen students.

1.4 Education for Children with Disabilities in Uzbekistan

According to official statistics, 110,00 children (as of 2017 data provided by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics for World Bank Group) were legally recognized as having a disability in 2016, representing almost 1 percent of the school-age population (World Bank, 2018). However, international estimates of children with severe or moderate disabilities vary between 4.5-5.0 percent of the school-age population. The indicators for the number of children with disabilities in Uzbekistan suggest that these numbers could be significantly underestimated (UNICEF, 2018). As UNESCO reports, ninety percent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school. According to Narolskaya (2013), the national ministries reported almost 87,900 children with disabilities in Uzbekistan in 2012, of which

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[2] Korean Statistical Information Office

http://kosis.kr/statisticsList/statisticsListIndex.do?menuId=M_02_01_01&vwcd=MT_RTITLE &parmTabId=M_02_01_01#SelectStatsBoxDiv Accessed Nov. 18, 2019

around 54,177 (61.16%) were in different types of institutions including orphanages and special boarding schools for children with a range of disabilities and 9,243 (10.5%) were assigned to be educated at home.

The Article 3 (Main Terms) of Law "On Guarantees of Child's Rights" of Uzbekistan, which was passed in 2007, gives the definitions for a child with deficiencies in physical and (or) mental development, where it says

> Child with deficiencies in physical and (or) psychic development – a child with physical, intellectual, sensory (emotional) and (or) mental impairments, which are not sufficient for giving disability.

It is followed by a definition of a child-invalid (which means child with disability), where it says

> Child–invalid a child, who owing to limitation in the performance of daily activities due to physical, intellectual, sensory (emotional) and (or) mental impairments is in need for social care, protection and is recognized as disabled in the manner prescribed by law.

1.4.1 Special Education in Uzbekistan

Paternalistic attitudes toward disability in Uzbekistan have been extended to children with disabilities which in its turn in many cases lead to institutionalization and separation from mainstream education of these children (Turdiev, 2015). As a result, children with disabilities primarily receive formal education at specialized institutions that practice medico-pedagogical approaches (Nam, 2019). The majority of special schools, or specialised educational institutions, are boarding institutions, so-called maktab-internat (boarding school), which in most cases oblige children with disabilities to live away from their homes. And these children, who are isolated in specialized schools, often have to travel hundreds of kilometers away from their homes to attend one of these institutions.

According to the Article 12 of the Regulation "On State Specialised Educational Institutions (Special Schools, Boarding Schools) for Children with deviations in physical or psychiatric development", there are eight types of specialised educational institutions. They are named in accordance with their type of specialization, ranging from type I to type VIII.

- Type I – boarding schools for the deaf (with hearing loss) children;

- Type II – boarding schools for the partially hearing and late-onset hearing loss children;

- Type III – boarding schools for the visually impaired (blind) children;

- Type IV – boarding schools for the partially sighted and children with late-onset blindness;

- Type V – boarding schools for children with severe speech impairments;

- Type VI – boarding schools for children with orthopedic impairments;

- Type VII – boarding schools for children with mental developmental delay;

- Type VIII – special schools, boarding schools for children who are mentally retarded.

In Uzbekistan, the following categories are identified as eligible for special education services by law and can be admitted to abovementioned specialised educational institutions (as stated in article 23 of the same legislation):

- Children with hearing impairments (deaf, partially hearing and late-onset hearing loss);

- Children with visual impairments (blind, partially sighted and late-onset blindness);

- Children with severe speech impairments (alalia, dyslalia, aphasia, rhinolalia, dysarthria, mental and speech developmental delay, stuttering);

- Children with orthopedic impairments (paralysis infantilis cerebralis (cerebral palsy), scoliosis, poliomyelitis, myopathy, osteomyelitis, amputation, growth underdevelopment – dwarfs);

- Children with mental developmental delay;

- Children who are mentally retarded;

- Children with complex defects (children who have 2 or more deficiencies in their development).

The content of the articles was translated exactly as was found in the original source. The finding shows, that the nomenclature of the disabilities is based on Soviet psychological-pedagogical and medical literature which was in use by 1990s. They do not even reflect the ICD-10, the tenth revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD), a medical classification

list by the Worlds Health Organization (WHO), which contains codes for disease, signs and symptoms, abnormal findings, complaints, social circumstances, and external causes of injury of diseases, which took place in 1989 from September 25 to October 2. It is clear that the unchanged old-fashioned diagnostic tools are still in use in Uzbekistan, whereas DSM-5, or Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, is the current version of the taxonomic and diagnostic tool. The latter was updated in 2013.

Article 25 of the regulation has specified the disability categories that are not eligible to be admitted to specialised educational institutions. Children, who belong to the following categories of disabilities, have to be referred to the relevant institutions of Uzbekistan's Ministry of Health or home-based individual education should be organized for them.

- Profoundly mentally retarded children (oligophrenia, or mental retardation in imbecile form, idiotia);
- Children with profound deficiencies in behavior, children with impairments in emotional-volitional sphere (of organic nature);
- Children with profound orthopedic impairments, who cannot independently move and take care of themselves;
- Blind-deaf-mute;
- Those who suffer from frequent epileptic seizures (epileptic dementia with daytime and frequent night-time seizures);
- Those who suffer from urine and feces incontinence due to organic damage of central nervous system.

1.4.2 Inclusive Education in Uzbekistan

The development of inclusion in Uzbekistan can be traced back to 1996 (Akhunova, 2007). Children with disabilities primarily receive formal education at specialized institutions that practice medico-pedagogical approaches with rare exceptions when they study at general schools (Nam, 2019). As Nam (2019) has argued, a closer examination of the legislation addressing education for children with disabilities reveals that it does not guarantee equal educational opportunities for

children with disabilities alongside their peers without disabilities. It is worth to mention, that in article 320, or the order of the Minister of Public Education No. 2685, from June 17, 2015, "On the approval of the regulations to transfer students with physical or intellectual disabilities from one specialized educational institution to another specialized educational institution or to a general educational institution for teaching them in an inclusive (integrated) setting", the word "integrative" is used in parentheses. In addition, the terms inclusion and integration, as well as that of inclusive education and mainstream education are used interchangeably in a leaflet of the project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs". Similarly, World Bank (2018) states, that Uzbekistan's existing legislation is unclear, which makes adoption of effective inclusive education measures and practices difficult. For example, current legislation makes no reference to ways in which mainstream teachers and schools should adapt their teaching and learning methods to accommodate different needs of learners, especially students with disabilities.

In 2009, government of Uzbekistan adopted the "National Concept of Inclusive Education", which highlights the need to provide quality education to all children irrespective of their social, physical, and intellectual conditions and capabilities (World Bank, 2018). Moreover, Uzbekistan's education sector plan for 2013-2017 included a strategic direction to support the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream education, as well as key measures such as: 1) improvement of education infrastructure to accommodate students with different needs; 2) enhancement of capacity of teachers and school administrators to identify and respond to diverse needs of learners; 3) development of a dedicated monitoring and evaluation strategy for special needs education; and 4) awareness raising on benefits of inclusive education (World Bank, 2018).

Pre-service teacher training is also a challenge in Uzbekistan and the rest of the region (Nam, 2019). Pedagogical universities do not prepare professional for inclusive education (OECD, 2009; Rouse & Lapham, 2013; UNICEF, 2011). As a rule, in pre-service teacher education programs, beginning teachers are introduced to theoretical and practical (formal) knowledge about teacher (Papieva, 2006). There have not been many changes in the curriculum at teacher training colleges and universities since Soviet times (Nam, 2019), except for Marxist-Leninist content that has been removed (Papieva,

2006). As it is described by Kerr (1990), the student teachers study three interrelated disciplines:

1. **Special Disciplines**. In special disciplines, student teachers study a particular subject such as Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Literature, History and so on. This portion of the curriculum makes about 70 percent of the total course of the study.

2. **Social Disciplines.** Although formerly all social disciplines were heavily based on Marxist-Leninist philosophy, nowadays, this portion of the curriculum is being replaced to concentrate on generic social disciplines including subjects like Basic Psychology and Sociology.

3. **Pedagogical Disciplines**. As Kerr (1990) states, this portion of the curriculum includes Pedagogy, History of Education, Educational Psychology, Child Development, and Teaching Methods, in general and in particular to a specific subject, for instance, Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages.

Major documents in Uzbekistan relevant to inclusive education as described by Nam (2019) are as follows:

– Resolution of the Ministries of Public Education, Health, Labour and Social Protection of Population No. 2519, from October 24, 2013: "On the approval of the provision on the Psychological-Medical and Pedagogical Committee (PMPC) for referring children to specialized institutions (schools, boarding schools)";

– Order of the Minister of Public Education No. 2685, from June 17, 2015: "On the approval of the regulations to transfer students with physical or intellectual disabilities from one specialized educational institution to another specialized educational institution or to a general educational institution for teaching them in an inclusive (integrated) setting";

– Resolution of the Ministries of Public Education and Health No. 2691, from June 30, 2016: "On the approval of the regulations on organizing home-based education for children with physical or intellectual disabilities and those who need a long-term treatment".

According to Nam (2019), currently, only departments of Defectology offer a 32-hour inclusive education course, however a similar course with a focus on inclusion for subject teachers, elementary school teachers, and psychologists has not yet been introduced. Also, in the framework of the inclusive education project, the Republican

Centre for Social Adaptation of Children has developed a 24-hour programme for teachers and psychologists which has been approved by Tashkent State Pedagogical University but is still being considered by the Ministry of Public Education (Nam, 2019).

The key issues hindering inclusive education in Uzbekistan, according to World Bank Group (2018), include: 1) unclear legislation regarding ways to include children with special or diverse educational needs in mainstream education; 2) the predominance of a medical approach in both legislation and policy discourse; 3) insufficient or even lack of qualified staff to provide professional support to children with special or diverse educational needs in mainstream schools; 4) insufficient supply of teaching and learning materials for children with special education needs; and 5) weak cross-sectoral collaboration between line ministries (e.g., Ministry of Health, Ministry of Preschool Education, and Ministry of Public Education).

1.5 "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan", UN-Financed Project

In Uzbekistan, as it is the case of many other developing countries, the major initiatives in the area of disability had been introduced by international, bilateral and multilateral organizations (Turdiev, 2015). In 2012, several projects have been piloted (with assistance provided from UNICEF, UNESCO, Asian Development Bank, and the Fund for Support of Social Initiatives) that helped to include 28,890 children with disabilities into 5,900 general education schools (Education Sector Plan, 2013). During the period from 2005 to 2016 the following major internationally financed projects have been implemented in Uzbekistan (Nam, 2019):

- The UNICEF project – "Implementation of a Child Friendly Attitude through Inclusive Education (2005-2006);
- The Asian Development Bank project – "Basic Education for Children with Special Needs (formerly, Improving Access and Quality of Basic Education to Disadvantaged Children" (2006-2009);
- The US Agency for International Development project – "Equalisation of Educational Opportunities for Children with Disabilities in Uzbekistan" (2009-2010);

‒ The European Union project – "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" (2014-2016).

The most recent of all abovementioned internationally sponsored projects is "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" project, funded by European Union. The project set up in May 2014. Notably, the project was launched in a response to a need for the provision of additional support to the government's legal, financial and technical frameworks regarding the development of an inclusive education system. The project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" intended to improve the quality of education for children with special needs aged 2–10 and to promote their inclusion into the regular kindergartens and general education elementary schools in Uzbekistan. As it was reported later, after the project came to an end, it has resulted in integrating of more than 1,200 children with special needs into inclusive classrooms of fifteen pilot kindergartens and fifteen pilot general education schools in five geographical regions of Uzbekistan - Tashkent (a capital of Uzbekistan, largest city with a population of approximately 2.5 million people), Samarkand (with a population of approximately 504,000 people), Namangan (with a population of approximately 475,000 people), Khorazm (with a population of approximately 150,000 people) and Surkhondaryo (with a population of approximately 140,000 people) regions. In addition, the project has resulted in developing the final draft of the National Strategy on Inclusive Education for the period from 2015 to 2017.

Picture 1.1 Scope of "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan", the UN-Financed Project[3]
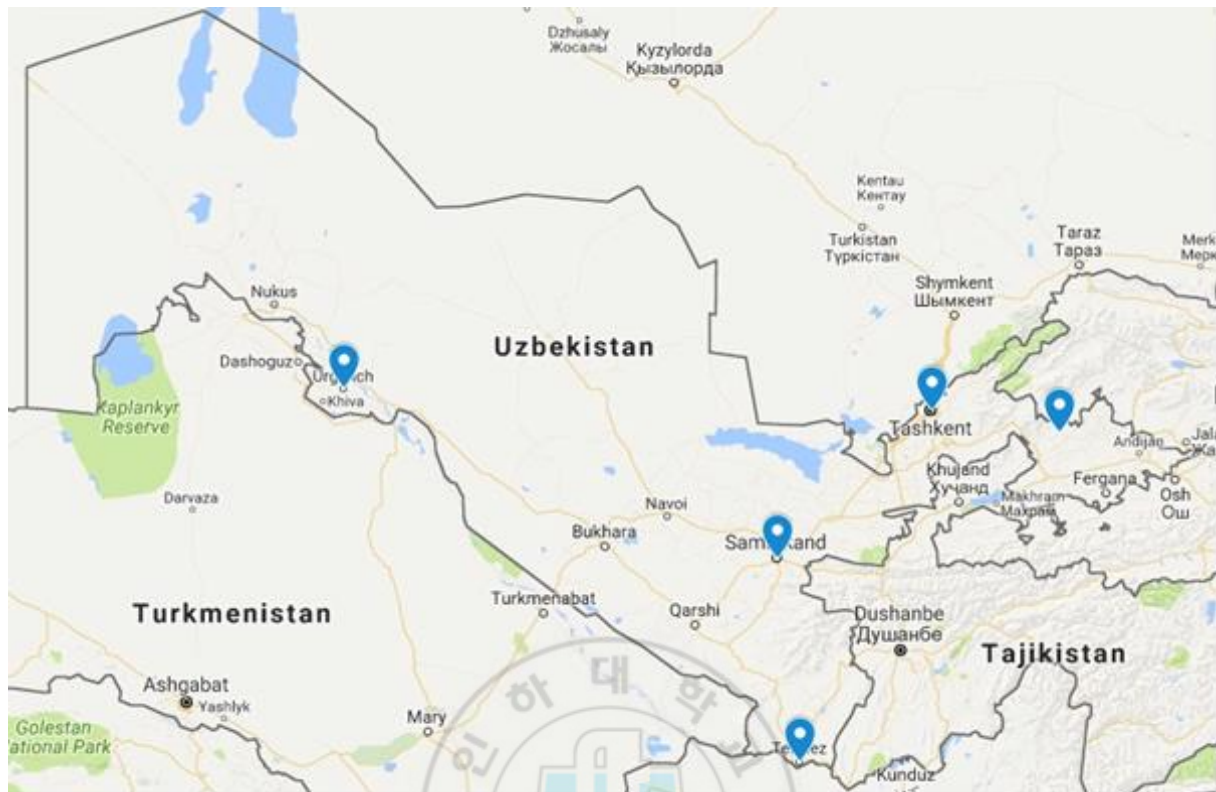
2. Inclusive Education

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) contend that philosophies regarding the education of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have changed dramatically over the past decades and several countries have led in the effort to implement policies which foster the integration and, more recently, inclusion of these students into mainstream environments. Internationally, inclusive education is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that responds to diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001). It is worthwhile to mention that the early efforts to achieve education for all (EFA) did not specifically mention the education of children and young people with disabilities (Rouse & Lapham, 2013b). Nevertheless, the link between inclusive education and EFA has subsequently been stressed (UNESCO, 2005 in Rouse & Lapham, 2013b). As Rouse and Lapham (2013b) argue, because children with

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[3] Cities, encompassed by the Project, are indicated with " 📍 " symbol.

disabilities are the most likely to be excluded from education in many parts of the world, EFA cannot be achieved without inclusive education. For this reason, the Education for All Campaign and the Millennium Development Goals have focused the worlds' attention on ensuring that no child is excluded from receiving a primary education (UNESCO, 2005). However, despite global efforts to promote universal primary education, there were still 115 million children of primary school age out of school during the period from 2001 to 2002 (UNESCO, 2005).

2.1 Definitions of Inclusion

Grabb (1997, in Peterson & Hittie, 2010) noticed that it remains true that societies have difficulty dealing with those seen as different – with what sociologists call "the other". Adults and children with disabilities have been the most segregated of all people (Peterson & Hittie, 2010).

Understandings of inclusive education have changed over time, with the gradual move from extreme levels of segregation towards greater inclusion (Cologon, 2014). A paradigm shift in the way governments, local education authorities, researchers, teachers, parents and other professionals have conceptualised notions of inclusive education can be observed in the past few years worldwide (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002). Nevertheless, despite the globally accepted importance of inclusive education, the interpretation of the concept still remains ambiguous (Van Mieghem, Verschueren, Petry, & Struyf, 2018), ranging from "inclusion as concerned with disability" and "special educational needs" to "inclusion as a principled approach to education and society" (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). Ainscow (2005, p.15) sees inclusion as "the process of addressing barriers to the presence, participation and achievement of pupils in local neighbourhood schools." In their research Qvortrup and Qvortrup (2018) proposed three levels of inclusion that should be considered in a comprehensive definitions of inclusion:
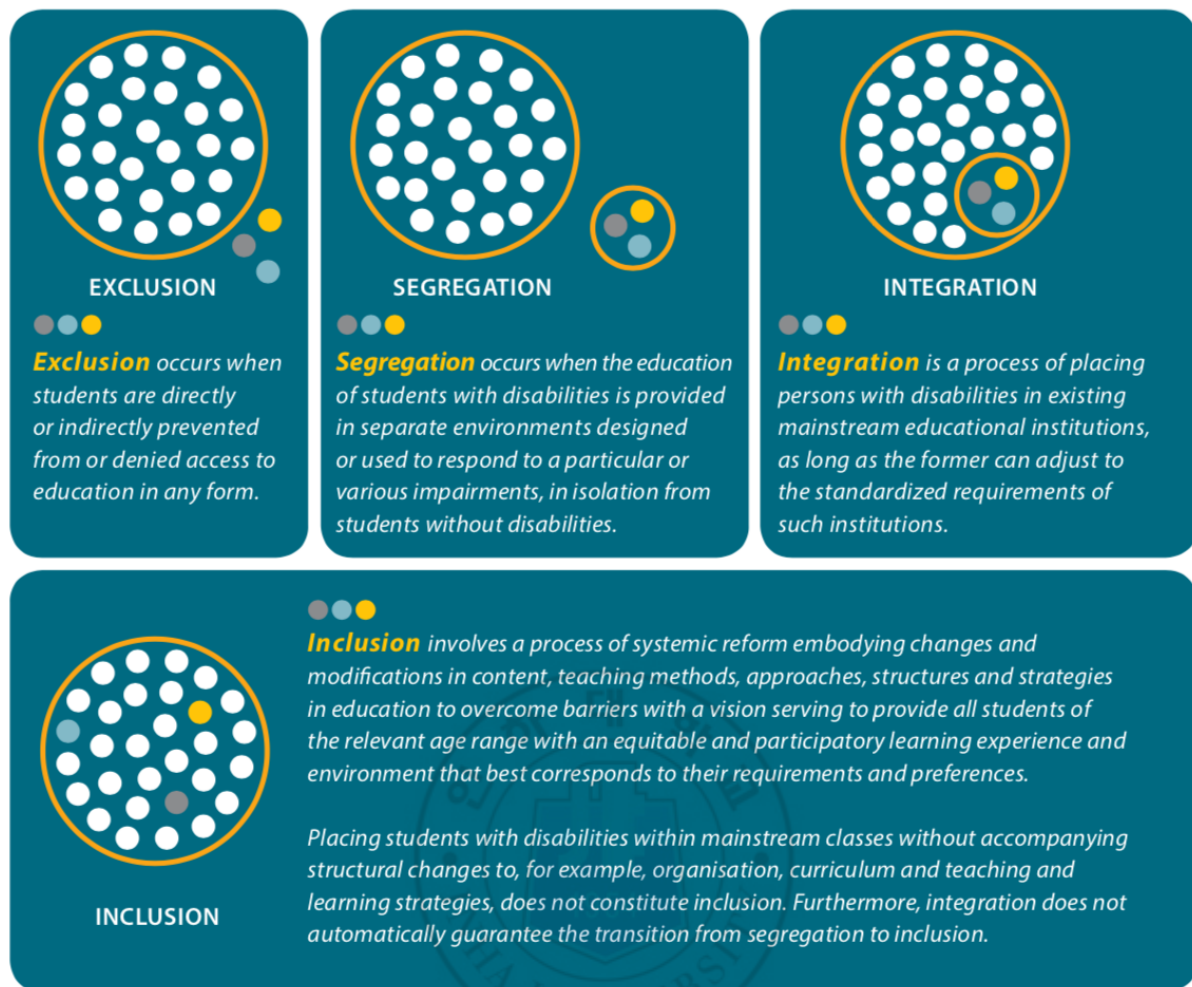
1) The numeric level: Is the student physically included in the community?

2) The social level: Is the student socially active in the community?

3) The psychological level: Does the student perceive him- or herself as being recognized by other members of the community? Is there a sense of school

belonging?

As Bryant and her colleagues (2020) state, the term inclusive education usually means that students with disabilities access the standard curriculum in the general education classroom. They add that in the USA, the basic concepts of inclusion and integration of students with disabilities into the public education system have their roots in the original Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) law that was passed in 1975, even though before 1975 many children with disabilities were denied access to public education (Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2020).

However, confusion sometimes occurs between the terms "integration" and "inclusion" (Cologon, 2014). Whether the focus is within education or beyond, the term "inclusion" suggests the form of change that is different from that implied by the term "integration" (Daniels & Garner, 1999). As Foreman (2011) proposes that integration involves asking "*Can* we provide for the needs of this student?", whereas inclusion involves asking "*How* will we provide for the needs of this student?". Meyer and Bevan-Brown (2013) argue that unlike integration, which is a term, describing placement in general education classrooms without special education supports, inclusion entails providing additional services to students in regular classrooms. Furthermore, Thomas and Loxley (2007) highlight that inclusion is about more than merely the integration of children from special schools into mainstream schools. The paradigm of inclusive education suggests that schools restructure themselves to cater for all students, without regard for the level of their abilities or background (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Research shows, that the difference between these concepts is important to reflect upon, therefore the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2016) highlights the importance of recognizing the differences between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion as they are illustrated in Picture 2.1. This is followed by another illustration of the difference between being integrated and being included (Picture 2.2).

Picture 2.1 Differences between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion

EXCLUSION

Exclusion occurs when students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form.

SEGREGATION

Segregation occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments designed or used to respond to a particular or various impairments, in isolation from students without disabilities.

INTEGRATION

Integration is a process of placing persons with disabilities in existing mainstream educational institutions, as long as the former can adjust to the standardized requirements of such institutions.

INCLUSION

Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.

Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organisation, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion.

Source: United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities General Comment No. 4 (United Nations, 2016) as illustrated in Hehir and colleagues (2016)

As it is proposed by D'Alessio (2012) in her research on inclusive education in Italy, exclusion is not a straightforward notion and it may take different shapes. It is worth mentioning that segregation can occur socially within so-called "inclusive" setting when children are not give opportunity to participate, learn, and grow together (Cologon, 2014). Similar to integration, this can involve moving "special" education from segregated setting into a regular education setting, but without any genuine efforts to bring about inclusion (Cologon, 2014). As a result, children therefore remain segregated and excluded within a so-called inclusive setting (Cologon, 2014). D'Allessio (2011) has termed this phenomenon a "micro-exclusion".

Picture 2.2 Difference between being integrated and being included

Integrated

Included
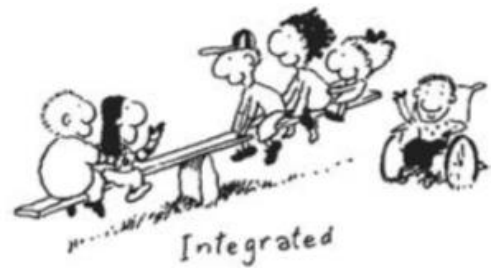
Source: "One of the Kids", published by the Disability Council of New South Wales, written by Wendy Stroeve and illustrated by Kerry Millard, in Cologon (2014)

The way people, groups, and cultures think about what it means to have a disability affects the way they interact with people with disabilities, and those interactions in turn become events that influence individuals' outcomes (Branson & Miler, 2002; Winzer, 2007 in Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2020). It has been argued that the responses such as low or unreasonably high expectations may have a long-term negative result on individual's outcomes (Harry, 2007). Different disciplines, cultures, and individuals disagree about what disabilities are or how to conceptualize them (Lynch & Hanson, 2004; Utley & Obiakor, 2001 in Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2020). Many psychologist, education professional, and medical professional describe children and youths in terms of various characteristics, such as intelligence, visual acuity, academic achievement, or behavior (Bryant et al., 2020). In its manual, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-5), the American Psychiatric Association (APA) describes many characteristics that help to describe or define a condition or a disability due to the fact that they set the individual separate from what is called normal, typical, or average (APA, 2013). In this common approach, human

characteristics or traits are described as a continuum; at one end, very little of the target behavior is observed, and at the other end an unusual amount of the trait is expressed in Bryant, Bryant, & Smith, 2020). Bryant and her collegues (2020) turn to four different ways of thinking about disabilities: 1) the deficit perspective on disabilities; 2) the cultural perspective on disabilities; 3) the sociological perspective on disabilities; and 4) people with disabilities as members of a minority group.

It is important to mention that disability studies characterizes the medical model as an essential approach that "defines disability as a property of the individual body" rather than the social environment and that is concerned with matters related to the etiology, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments (Siebers, 2006). The critics believe that at the heart of the medical model is an ableist view that depicts people with disabilities as deficient and inherently inferior to people without disabilities, and thus it is they, not society, who are most in need of change (Berger, 2013). Whereas in contrast, the social model of disability asserts that it is not an individual's impairment or adjustment but the socially imposed barriers such as the inaccessible buildings, the limited modes of transportation and communication, the prejudicial attitudes that construct disability as a subordinate social status and devalued life experience (Berger, 2013). Notably, the social model of disability was first articulated by disability activists in Great Britain in the early 1970s, having extensively influenced the thinking of disability activists and scholars in the United States, who came to view the elimination of such barriers as a matter of legally protected civil rights (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2010; Wendell, 2013). The shift from the individual and his or her impairments to the social context was proposed by Minow (1990) in her analysis of the options facing a school system when educating a child who is deaf.

2.2 Barriers to Inclusive Education

The concept of inclusion has been a point of controversy over the past few decades with its numerous definitions and philosophies and often can have negative connotations to some educators and parents (Spencer & Simpson, 2009). Unfortunately, this has been a response to situations where students with disabilities have been placed in general education classrooms with minimal supports and an

untrained teacher (Spencer & Simpson, 2009). The push for the inclusion of diverse learners into the general classroom setting has not always been echoed by increased knowledge, collaboration, and preservice experiences for future teachers (Fuchs, 2010). While legislations on inclusion have enabled student with disabilities to be more included, general classroom teachers still sometimes feel inadequately prepared to successfully meet the needs of diverse students in the classroom (Fuchs, 2010). Inclusion requires a fundamental shift from attributing educational failure to children's characteristics toward analyzing barriers to participation and learning that are blocking student opportunity in school (Ainscow, 2007). Common concerns that are repeatedly mentioned by teachers in terms of their practice of implementing inclusive education include large class sizes, physical accessibility, behavior problems, the requirement to meet the educational and social needs of students with and without disabilities, designing and implementing curriculum and instructional adaptations, evaluations, additional or extra work and responsibility, lack of paraprofessional staff, lack of support from school administration and lack of training (Avramidis et al., 2000; Das et al., 2013; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Hemmings & Woodcock, 2011; Sharma et al., 2009). As Bhatnagar and Das (2014) stress, in order for the professional development programs to be more effective, ongoing opportunities must be made available to the teachers. According to Sharma and Mahapatra (2007), the greatest barrier to inclusive education is the negative attitudes towards differences by society. This is followed by the physical barriers and barriers such as inability of the curriculum to meet the needs of a wide range of different learners, the lack of adequate training for teacher staff as well as additional barriers in language and communication, socioeconomic factors, organization of the education system, policies.

2.3 Teachers' Perceptions about Including Students with Disabilities

Teaching is ranked in complexity in the top quartile of all occupations and is recognized as a challenging occupation (Forlin, 2004) and a key element in the successful implementation of the policy of inclusive education is considered to be the views of the personnel who have the major responsibility for implementing it, that is teachers (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Historically, teachers in regular classrooms have

not felt prepared to teach exceptional students, preferring to leave the job to trained specialists (Willis, 2007). The role of regular teacher is now affirmed as being a critical determinant in the success or otherwise of the practice of inclusive education (Forlin & Lian, 2008).

A major criticism of the inclusion movement is that enthusiasts have advocated for radical changes in the responsibilities of regular classroom teachers without showing that regular educators actually support these changes. Lieberman (1985) was one of the first to note that the Regular Education Initiative was not an initiative led by regular educators, but by special educators. In his critic for merging regular and special education, Lieberman used the analogy of "a wedding in which we, as special educators, have forgotten to invite the bride [regular educators]" (p. 513). In fact, drastic changes in education, as educating children with disabilities in regular classrooms, have been found to increase the complexities of a progressively more difficult and demanding job (Loreman, Deppeler, & Harvey, 2010).

General educators who teach in inclusive classrooms have much to say about inclusive education and it is important to understand general educators' views because they have direct experience teaching students with and without disabilities in the same classroom. In addition, general educators can share important insights and considerations that deserve further attention by those advocating for inclusive education. There is a large body of international studies carried out to understand in-service and pre-service teachers' attitudes and concerns about including students with disabilities in regular classrooms (Agbenyega, 2007; Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Round, Subban, & Sharma, 2015; Shah, Das, Desai, & Tiwari, 2013; U. Sharma, Ee, & Desai, 2003; U. Sharma, Forlin, Loreman, & Earle, 2006; Yadav, Das, Sharma, & Tiwari, 2015). The issue of workload is found to be a source of major concern for many teachers (Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, & Eloff, 2003; Talmor, Reiter, & Feigin, 2005; Williams & Katz, 2001). Furthermore, studies state that extra time is reported to be required by teachers to modify programmes and curriculum materials which found to be another major concern (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). In her research on teachers concerns, Forlin (1998) identified personal and administrative issues that were likely to act as potential stressors of inclusion. Analysis of teachers' responses under the theme of personal issues indicated five major categories of concerns by teachers regarding

inclusive education, namely, personal emotions, acceptance, expectations, personal efficacy, and cooperation and collaboration.

III. Methods

This section outlines the methods used in this research. To investigate the experiences of elementary teachers in including students with disabilities into regular classes, we recruited nine practicing teachers with at least one year of experience teaching in an inclusive classroom. To ensure that the teachers understood the study and were able to participate in a meaningful way, only teachers who had received training in inclusive education were invited. A phenomenological qualitative research methodology featuring in-depth interviews was applied. This research focused on conducting interviews with teachers who were involved in the UN-sponsored project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan."

1. In-depth Interviewing Method

According to Bertaux (1981), if given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on. In addition, Vygotsky (1987) has argued that every word that people use in telling their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness. Individuals' consciousness in its turn gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) notes that it is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience.

Interviewing is considered to be one of the most appropriate methods employed in qualitative research (Hassanein, 2015). As in Introduction to his book, "Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies", Robert S. Weiss states, "Through interviewing we can learn about places we have not been and could not go and about settings in which we have not lived. We can learn also, through interviewing, about people's interior experiences. We can learn what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions. We can learn how events affected their thoughts and feelings. We can learn the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their

work, and their selves. We can learn about all the experiences, from joy through grief, that together constitute the human condition" (Weiss, 1995, p.l). Therefore, interviewing is considered to be an essential method used to understand others as it allows the researcher to access individuals' beliefs, experiences, wishes, and intentions in their own words rather than the words of the researcher (Hassanein, 2015). Interview is also a very sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and lived meanings of the subjects' everyday world (Hassanein, 2015).

Interviewing method is widely used in social and educational research. There are different types of interviews. Most commonly distinguished ones are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The structured interview is characterized by predetermined questions with fixed wording, which as a rule is prepared beforehand. This, in its turn, gives extremely little opportunity to the researcher to make modifications. In this very sense, the structured interview has signs of data collecting methods in a quantitative approach (Hassanein, 2015). On the contrary, in unstructured interview, the questions to be asked to the research participants are not set in advance, and the conversation can go in any direction within the area of research. In between comes the semi-structured interview, in which the researcher has a general idea of where he wants the interview to flow, and what should come out of it in the end (Hassanein, 2015). The questions in this type of interview are more flexible and less structured, as well as formulated before the interview begins, however the ordering of the main and support questions is varied as the interview unfolds (Radnor, 1994). The questions allow the researcher to guide the interview by exploring the issues and topics that are listed in advance (Merriam, 1998). The interviewer has the freedom to introduce new material into the discussion, which is relatively new and had not been thought of beforehand, but which arises during the interview session (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

This research has applied the semi-structured interview because of its distinct advantages over the other abovementioned types of interviews. We assumed that semi-structured interviewing method would allow us to obtain a comprehensive data from the participants regarding their views and opinions about what works well in the inclusion process, what needs to be changed or adjusted, as well as their accounts on the reasons underlying their judgments. Also, using the semi-structured interview would give the research participants a voice with a certain degree of freedom to talk

about what is specifically significant to them within the designed framework of the study (Hassanein, 2015). More specifically, using semi- structured interviews would help identify new research questions not previously taken into account, by drawing on the participants' views of what is being studied (Hassanein, 2015).

Most of the interview questions were prepared in advance based on the literature review and findings from the series of interview sessions with seven Uzbekistani teachers during the pilot study. However, in conducting the main interviews, the order and the wording of the questions were modified, and some questions were added or varied as the interview unfolded to ensure the participants grasped the meaning of questions. Additionally, some questions were added for later interviews as a result of earlier participants' responses. The interviews were guided by a list of topics that covers the research questions.

2. Research Participants

Prior to deciding on questions for an interview guideline as well as a set of criteria for teachers to participate in a study, researcher has conducted telephone interviews with seven Uzbekistani regular schoolteachers for a pilot study. These teachers had experience of teaching students with disabilities (home-based, in most of the cases), but did not have a history of receiving a training on inclusive education. The pilot study showed that teachers, who had not received special training were actually not aware of the inclusive education. Teachers were found to confuse the term of "inclusive education" with "interactive methods" of teaching.

For this reason, to investigate the experiences of elementary teachers in including students with disabilities in regular classes, we recruited nine practicing teachers with at least one year of experience teaching in an inclusive classroom. To ensure that the teachers understood the study and were able to participate in a meaningful way, only teachers who had received training in inclusive education were invited. A phenomenological qualitative research methodology featuring in-depth interviews was applied. This study focused on conducting interviews with teachers who were involved in the UN-sponsored project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" (Project). This study aimed at exploring inclusive teaching

experience of classroom teachers. Subject-specific teachers were not involved in this study. This was due to the fact that classroom teachers are considered to be the ones who spend most of time at school with their class, therefore they know the students better than anyone else at school and if there are difficulties in working in inclusive classrooms they are the first persons who we have to ask.

A qualitative method was employed to answer the research questions. In-depth interviews were conducted with regular education teachers across five cities of Uzbekistan. The participants of this study were nine general education teachers who worked at eight Uzbekistan public school teaching Grade 1 through Grade 4. The reason for selecting elementary grade teachers was that the Project, we mentioned above, encompassed children between the ages of two to ten, intending to promote their integration into regular kindergartens and primary schools. In Uzbekistan, children go to school at the age of seven. The elementary school is from Grade 1 through Grade 4 in Uzbekistan as it was illustrated in Table 2.1 in the previous chapter.

Teachers were selected to be interviewed for this research based on the following four criteria:

(1) be a regular elementary school classroom teacher;

(2) have experience of including a student with disability in their general education classroom;

(3) have experience of including a student with disability in their general education classroom for a period of not less than a year;

(4) have received a training on inclusive education.

The gender of the teachers, who participated in this research was females. This, in its turn, reflects the statistical data on the percentage of female teachers in elementary schools in Uzbekistan. The data on percentage of female teachers in elementary schools of Uzbekistan shows that in 2016, the percentage of female teachers comprised 90.8 percent[4]. Teachers' teaching experiences ranged from two to twenty-two years. All teachers reported that they had received more than one training organized in the framework of the Project.

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[4] Korean Statistical Information Office
http://kosis.kr/statisticsList/statisticsListIndex.do?menuId=M_02_01_01&vwcd=MT_RTITLE&parmTabId=M_02_01_01#SelectStatsBoxDiv Accessed Nov. 18, 2019

This study was specifically interested in conducting interviews with teachers who were involved in teaching in inclusive settings. Therefore, in order to reach out to teachers who met a set of certain criteria for participating in interviews, the schools, that were encompassed by the UN-sponsored project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" (Project) had to be visited. The teachers, who agreed to participate in this research, were teaching at schools, where full-time inclusion of children with disabilities had been practiced for a year. Due to the number of reasons, the interviews at three out of eleven schools, visited by the researcher, were not possible to conduct. The teachers, that were available in two of those schools did not meet the criteria for participation in the research, whereas teachers in the third school were sent to the cotton fields. Prior to visiting each of the city, the researcher had contacted the coordinators that were assigned to each region in the framework of the Project. As a result, the study situated itself in eight general education schools across five regions of Uzbekistan.
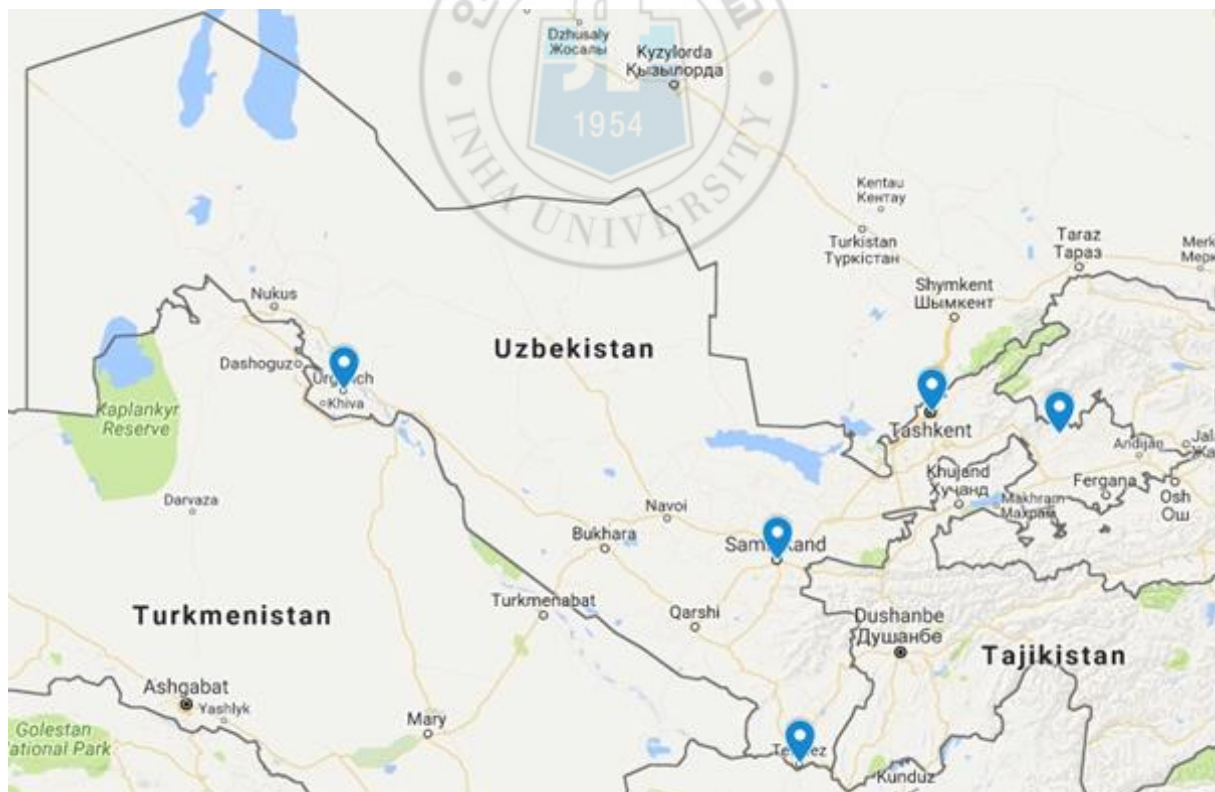
Picture 3.1. Fields of Research in Uzbekistan.[5]

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[5] Cities, where research was conducted, are indicated with " " symbol.

A summative information on interview participants' background information is presented in a table below.

Table 3.1 Participants' Background Information

| INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS | SCHOOL | AGE | TEACHING EXPERIENCE (YEARS) | INCLUSIVE CLASS | | | |
				Grade (Elem)	Class Size	Number of SWD[6]	Student's Characteristics
Makhbuba	A	42	10	1	27	3	Physical Disability; Intellectual Disability; ADHD
Dilbar	A	40	10	3	30	1	Intellectual Disability
Zulfiya	B	38	19	1	33	3	Speech and Language Impairment; Intellectual Disability; Physical Disability
Nazokat	C	42	21	1	37	3	Intellectual Disability; Physical Disability (2)
Mekhribon	D	47	21	3	28	3	Physical Disability (2); Intellectual Disability
Noila	E	37	15	2	32	4	Physical Disability (2); Speech and Language Impairment; Intellectual Disability
Mukhabbat	F	25	2	3	30	8	Speech and Language Impairment (4); Intellectual Disability; Physical Disability (3)
Ekaterina	G	39	16	3	40	2	Speech and Language Impairment; Dysgraphia
Maftuna	H	45	22	3	42	3	Physical Disability; Intellectual Disability; Burn Injuries

[6] SWD – student with disability

34

The profile of each of the 9 interview participants is presented below.

Makhbuba (School A)

Makhbuba has been teaching for ten years. At the time of the study she was teaching in Grade 1. Makhbuba has two students with disabilities in her first-year classroom. One – has a cerebral palsy, which affects her muscles, and the other - "had lots of impairments in his brain". The condition of the latter affected the student's ability to speak, which in its turn, was delayed greatly, as well as thinking ability, brain development and overall development, as it was described by the teacher. The teacher's student, who has a cerebral palsy, does not use any assistive technology to move around, even though "she falls down a lot". In addition, the student's handwriting was described as being poor.

Dilbar (School A)

Dilbar works at the same school as Makhbuba. She has been teaching for ten years as well. At the time of the study she was teaching in Grade 3. She recognizes the fact that she has little experience in working with children with disabilities. The student who is included into her class joined in the second term of Grade 3. Prior to being referred to the general school, this student was taught at home for the period of two and a half years. Moreover, Dilbar is responsible for a student with disability who is taught at home. The diagnosis of this student was told by the student's mother, but the teacher admits that she doesn't remember it clearly. In her interview, when talking about academic performance of the child included in her class, she tends to make a comparison with the child educated at home.

Zulfiya (School B)

Zulfiya has a teaching experience of nineteen years. At the time of the study she was a first-year teacher. Zulfiya has thirty-three children in her class. Three of them are students with disabilities. First student has problems with speech. Zulfiya tells that this student started to speak in the third term of Grade 1. The second student has an intellectual disability, while the third one has a physical disability.

Nazokat (School C)

Nazokat has been teaching at school for twenty-one years. At the time of the study, she had taught in Grade 1. "Inclusive" students in her class are the students who were diagnosed as having a bad eyesight. Nazokat mentions that she has had a student with disability in her class several years ago. She makes some important points on how these classes are different.

Mekhribon (School D)

Mekhribon works at school for twenty-one years as well. She is a third-year teacher. Mekhribon has an experience of teaching a student with disability at home. She sounds confident about her knowledge in the sphere of inclusive education. Mekhribon conducts trainings in inclusive teaching for other teachers like her. The teacher is convinced that she has three "inclusive" students in her class even though one of these students was assessed as a regular student by psychological-medical-pedagogical commission.

Noila (School E)

Noila has been teaching elementary grade students for fifteen years. At the time of the study she was teaching in Grade 2. Noila works in the school located not far from the school D. The teacher from School D recommended to interview her. As Mekhribon told, Noila was the most knowledgeable and strongest in the area of inclusion in the region. She is reportedly known as the most dedicated teacher, who has worked mainly with students who cannot walk, or so-called "severe" students. She has an experience of the teaching a student with disability at home before.

Mukhabbat (School F)

Mukhabbat is a novice teacher. She has two years of teaching experience at school. At the time of the study she was teaching in Grade 3. Mukhabbat was working in two different schools at the time of interview. She sounds very positive and quite enthusiastic about inclusive education. The teacher has eight "inclusive" students in her regular class. Out of this, three students were described as "logopaedical", which meant having speech and language impairment, three - had visual impairment, another one

had both "logopaedical" and visual impairment, whereas the last student was "falling behind".

Ekaterina (School G)

Ekaterina has been teaching at elementary school for sixteen years. At the time of the study she was teaching in Grade 3. Ekaterina's ethnic background is Russian. Initially, Ekaterina had majored in Russian Philology and afterwards retrained to elementary education due to the increasing demand in Russian-speaking elementary school teachers. However, she admits that the first time she has ever heard about the inclusive education was three years ago, when the trainings on inclusion started in the framework of the newly launched Project.

Maftuna (School H)

Maftuna has been working at school longer than any other research participant. She has twenty-two years of teaching experience. Maftuna has majored in Psychology of Elementary Education. She mentioned that she was also qualified for a career path of psychologist, however she opted for elementary school teaching. She has been teaching in elementary school classes since graduation from the university. At the time of the study she was a third-year teacher. She admitted that she was extremely concerned about inclusive teaching in the beginning due to the lack of engagement with persons with disabilities previously. She was sure that the most severe student was the one that was in her class, when talking about the student who "had birth traumas". The other student that was included in her class has sustained severe burn injuries.

3. Data Collection Procedure

This section describes the procedure of collecting data for the research. This description ranges from outlining the procedure for obtaining the permission to conduct the study to explaining the actual process of conducting interviews in the fields of research.

3.1 Permission to Conduct the Research

To gain access to general education schools, a written permission from the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan was required. For this purpose, the Single Portal of State Services of Uzbekistan was used. A letter requesting for written permission to conduct the research was sent to the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan on July 12, 2016. The letter was written in Russian. The written permission was obtained in July 18, 2016 under the registration number 03-03/1-7-2024. The letter of permission was received within a week. However, there was an issue. The letter of permission mentioned only the schools located in the capital city of Uzbekistan, Tashkent. This required sending an inquiry for a separate letter of permission to conduct the research in the remaining part, four cities of Uzbekistan: Namangan, Urgench, Samarkand, Termez.

The second written permission from the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan was received on September 4, 2016. Later it was found that this written permission had to be signed by the Local Departments of Public Education of Republic of Uzbekistan in each city. This additional bureaucratic process of getting a signature on the written permission required a particular amount of time. It had to be undertaken in two cities under the study, Tashkent and Termez. The school administration in remaining three cities was satisfied with the written permission obtained from the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In addition, the permission of the Project ("Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan") manager was obtained as well in order to conduct the research in schools, encompassed by the Project. When visiting a school under the study, first thing the researcher had to do was to meet a principal of the school, introduce to a study and present the written permission from the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The principals of the schools wanted to make a copy of the ministry-issued written permission.

3.2 Conducting Interviews

The process of data collection took four months including the time that was needed for getting the letters of permission issued by the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan as well as getting an additional signature from the Local Departments of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan to conduct the research. Interviews were conducted between the end of August and the middle of October in 2016 (see Table 3.2 Interviews). To develop a greater understanding of the general education teachers' experiences in including students with disabilities into regular education classrooms, individual in-depth interviews with each teacher were conducted. In total, nine participants participated in this research.

The interview guideline was developed based on previous studies in this area and the findings of the pilot study. Semi-structured interview guideline was used in order to elicit responses focusing on the topic at hand. Interviews employed open-ended questions. All of the nine interviews were conducted in person with a follow-up over the telephone with three of the teachers. During interviews, participants were asked ongoing follow-up questions, thus providing the opportunity to verify the data being recorded. Each interview began with a review of the purposes of the research as well as explanation of the content of the informed consent letter. With the exception of interview session with Nazokat and Mukhabbat, each interview was conducted in the natural environment for a teacher, their classrooms. The interviews with two teachers, that were mentioned above, were conducted in the teachers' office. The interviews lasted, on average, one hour each. All interviews were audio-recorded using Sony ICD-UX560 voice recorder and transcribed carefully by notating every word said from the recording. Names of all research participants were changed into pseudonyms. In order to show her gratitude to teachers for participating in the study, the researcher prepared souvenir gifts (pens, bookmarks) from Korea and gave to each of the teacher participants.

Table 3.2 Interviews

| Interview Participants | Interviews | | Follow-up (Phone Call) |
| | First Interview | | |
	Date	Place	
Makhbuba	August 29	Classroom	
Dilbar	August 29	Classroom	
Zulfiya	September 3	Classroom	
Nazokat	September 4	Teachers' Office	
Mekhribon	August 30	Classroom	
Noila	August 31	Classroom	October 5
Mukhabbat	September 5	Teachers' Office	October 7
Ekaterina	September 6	Classroom	
Maftuna	September 7	Classroom	October 12

Interviews were conducted in Uzbek and Russian languages. Some of the interview participants used either Uzbek or Russian (Dilbar, Zulfiya, Nazokat, Mekhribon - Uzbek, Mukhabbat – Khorazm region dialect of Uzbek, Ekaterina and Maftuna – Russian), whereas the rest of the teachers, Makhbuba and Noila, preferred to use a mix of two languages - Uzbek and Russian. Ethnic backgrounds of the research participants also varied: eight Uzbek teachers and one Russian teacher. All of the participants were females. For conducting interviews, the researcher was guided by the recommendations, outlined by Irving Seidman in his book "Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences" (2013).

4. Data Analysis

Interview data was analyzed following step-by-step guide suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). It is worthwhile noting that thematic analysis is a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research. In 2006, Braun and Clarke published an article that described to novice researchers how to use thematic analysis in a step-by-

step manner. In this article, it was noted by Braun and Clark that thematic analysis was a foundational method of analysis that needed to be defined and described to solidify its place in qualitative research. In their research, Braun and Clarke (2006) provided an outline guide through the six phases of analysis. Microsoft Excel was used to code and thematically analyze qualitative data (Bree & Gallagher, 2016). The different phases of thematic analysis are presented in table below.

Table 3.3 Braun & Clarke's (2006) Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the process of thematic analysis starts when the researcher begins to notice and look for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data. This may occur during the data collection. The endpoint of the process of thematic analysis is the reporting of the content and meaning of patterns in the data, where "themes are abstract constructs the investigators identify before, during, and after analysis" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

The first phase involved transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, along with noting down initial ideas This "familiarization phase" of thematic analysis, enabled to think "actively and analytically" about the data to create initial impressions that were pertinent to the research question which also assisted with the identification of connecting and contrasting patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Some very early initial impressions in this phase included "limitations caused by curriculum", "different way of conducting the lesson", "disabling physical environment of the school', "teacher's attainments in working with student with disability", and "sticking to standard requirements".

The second phase was about coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This phase involved performing a "complete coding" exercise on the whole data, including "everything and anything" that might be relevant to answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Due to the fact that the sample was not big, the coding was done manually. Hence, this phase involved labelling codes with words and phrases that were both explicit and "data-derived", as well as "participant-generated" and interpretive (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The scholarship-based knowledge and experience of teaching was applied to make further sense of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke's (2013) notion of "inclusivity" was applied. The work through each audio track and transcript with broad question in mind was implemented. From this process, codes from the data were initially derived.

The third phase involved assembling codes into potential sub-themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential sub-theme and re-focusing the analysis to identify categories where codes combined and contrasted to form patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This process involved reviewing codes and data within them, to find relationships between the codes and differences. This enabled to gather clusters of codes into categories which addressed the research questions in a meaningful way. Each code represented one idea and a subtheme had a "central organizing concept" (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The next phase involved checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set and generating a thematic "map" of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In this stage, the provisional subthemes were reviewed and refined returning to the coded data to ensure they fitted together within each theme. Reworking the themes and moving main codes and sub-themes around was necessary until a thematic diagram was created for each main theme (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The fifth phase involved ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The process of defining, refining and renaming the themes was carried out. This phase has revealed something new to report in the research findings.

The final, sixth phase, gave the final opportunity for analysis of selected extracts and relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature as well as producing a scholarly report of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This phase of analysis involved returning to the entire data so that the findings from the themes could be viewed again within the larger context of the international literature relating to teachers' experiences in inclusive education, providing further understanding of the significance of their experiences in including student with disability into regular classrooms.

5. Research Ethics

Data collection and analysis were carried out with the utmost care for the ethical issues. Research ethics was approved by Inha University's Institutional Review Board (160809-1A). The research took longer than anticipated to develop deeper understanding of issues related to inclusion of children with disabilities in Uzbekistan. This study has achieved the following types of triangulation: data triangulation (as the data was gathered from a number of teachers) and location triangulation (as the data was gathered throughout five regions of the country, at eight schools). Furthermore, internal validity of this study, or the extent of which results can be interpreted accurately, is increased owing to the description and presentation of data collection and findings and the detailed data analysis involved. As for external validity of this study, or the extent to which the results can be generalized, it could be strengthened owing to the number of participants involved, the variety of contexts explored, and the degree of accuracy of the data collected. The reliability for this qualitative research could be increased for the reason that the study was conducted in five geographical regions. The collected interview data was analyzed following the step-by-step guide suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

IV. Results

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis of the interview data collected in Uzbekistan schools. The interviews were transcribed in full and analyzed in terms of emergent themes. The analysis yielded four topics under which all interview data could be grouped. These data were assigned the identity of main themes under which a total of ten sub-themes and thirty-one major codes were grouped. The main findings revolve around four topics: teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with disabilities; teachers' perspectives on the benefits of inclusion; teachers' concerns about including children with disabilities; and teachers' expectations regarding further changes.

Table 4.1 Main Themes, Sub-themes and Major Codes

	MAIN THEME		SUB-THEME	MAJOR CODES
1.	Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities	1.1	Inclusive Student	• Language about disability • "Inclusive" – a student with disability
		1.2	Inclusive Education	• New fancy term for old practice • Change in policy and practice
2.	Teachers' Perspectives on the Benefits of Inclusion	2.1	Benefits for Students With Disabilities	• Students forget about their disabilities • Opportunity to socialize
		2.2	Benefits for Students Without Disabilities	• Students learn about diversity • Students learn about "savob"
		2.3	Benefits for Teachers	• "Started to view them differently" • Opportunity to grow • "We also do it for savob"
3.	Teachers' Concerns about Including Children with Disabilities	3.1	Structural and Organizational Issues	• Class size • Degree of disability • Physical accessibility • Workload and lack of time • Lack of resources • Curriculum • Continuity of inclusive education
		3.2	Personal Issues	• Deciding to accept • Lack of engagement • Lack of training • Expectations
		3.3	Socio-Cultural Issues	• Social view of disability • Disability and religion
4.	Teachers' Expectations about Further Changes	4.1	Societal Awareness Towards Inclusion	• Raising awareness about inclusion
		4.2	Structural and Organizational Changes	• School and classroom physical structure • Class size • Degree of disability • Curriculum • Support • Teacher education

1. Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities

Teachers' comments regarding to what they know about inclusion varied widely, ranging from little understanding of inclusion to suggesting quite reasonable familiarity with this notion. These views revolved around two sub-themes: inclusive student and inclusive education. Each of these points will be highlighted by turn.

1.1 Inclusive Student

A range of conditions contributed to the fact that teachers came across the conceptual issues when it comes to inclusive education practice. Owing to experience working in inclusive settings and receiving training in inclusion, teachers had formed a certain idea of who the inclusive student was and what the inclusive education was about.

1.1.1 Language about disability

There was a general tendency among teachers to be cautious about their word choice when talking about the children with disabilities that were educated in their general classrooms. While referring to students without disabilities as "normal", "healthy", "usual", soon after the interviews started, it was noticed that teachers tended to refer to their included student with disability as "inclusive". If the teacher had more than one student with disability, the plural form of the word would be "inclusives" (Zulfiya-5-28). The adjective "inclusive" was transformed into a noun. As a rule, the plural form of the noun - "inclusives", was used to refer to and talk about students with disabilities as a category. Moreover, teachers also made use of the term "inclusive education" to refer to the student with disability.

> {...} there are 33 students in my class. Out of 33, 30 are normal kids, 3 are inclusive education. (Zulfiya-1-14[7])

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[7] Participant's Name – Transcript Page Number – Line Number

Although there was one case when during the interview session Zulfiya, a first-grade teacher, referred to her student with disability as a "defect", it was evident from the interview data that overall she tried to use appropriate inclusive language. Throughout the interview sessions, the word "inclusive" was primarily used on its own and meant a category of students with disabilities. The next excerpt from interview with Zulfiya shows that teachers tend to use the word "inclusive" (Zulfiya-2-11) to refer to persons with disabilities in general, regardless of the type of disability they have. Teacher tells about the student with speech problems. In this way, they try to avoid using the word nogiron, or disabled.

> His mother is a very intelligent woman. She takes a good care of her son. She did not give up on him because of the fact that he is inclusive or something. (Zulfiya-1-37)

When talking about the students with disabilities in her class, Nazokat was noticed to take her time seeking for the right word to refer to the student with disability. The usage of the word "nogiron", which is an equivalent of "disabled" in Uzbek, was noticed to be avoided repeatedly during the interview sessions with teachers. The next excerpt from interview with the teacher shows, that while telling about the number of students with disabilities in her class, she pauses for some time in an attempt to choose the right word instead of using the word "nogiron", an Uzbek equivalent for "disabled".

> Even if it is an inclusive class, I have 37 [students], because only in case if there are 2 or 3 err... disa-- disa-- (.) the class would be comprised of 25 students. (Nazokat-5-5)

As Nazokat shares, referring to students with disabilities as "inclusive" or students who are "in need of help" (Nazokat-5-19) instead of "nogiron", an Uzbek equivalent for "disabled", was recommended to teachers during trainings on inclusive education.

> [We were suggested] not to refer to them as "nogiron"... [they told rather to] refer to them as "inclusive"... well... needing err... "in need of help". (Nazokat-5-14)

Moreover, teachers were considerate about their word choices while describing the disability of the student that was included in their classes. Doing so, they made an effort to eliminate any possible "rudeness" (Zulfiya-5-31) in their language.

> Ah, I have one inclusive (*mentions student's name*) whose right hand does not function properly. And there is a little err... what do we call it... he drags his leg when walking. Well, it is rude to say that he is lame. He hobbles. (Zulfiya-5-28)

1.1.2 "Inclusive" - a student with severe disability

An excerpt from the Hollywood movie "Like Stars on Earth", that was demonstrated during the training on inclusion, left Zulfiya questioning the main character, Ishaan's belonging to the category of students labelled as "inclusives". In this movie, Ishaan was an elementary school student, who had a dyslexia.

> I humbly say, that this child was not an inclusive student. He was just a child who lagged behind. [A child] who was deprived of attention. (Zulfiya-14-34)

It is also worth mentioning that the analysis of the interview data indicated that some teachers considered students with apparent or visible disabilities, or as they would call "severe" disabilities, to be "inclusives". As a rule, students with physical disabilities, who used wheelchairs, were assumed to have been "severely impaired".

Ekaterina's included students did not have visible disabilities. When the interview session with her was coming to an end, Ekaterina kindly suggested the researcher to pay a visit to one of the boarding schools, located nearby. She said that her friend worked there. The reason for such a suggestion to visit this special education institution was that "they do not have any usual students at all there" (Ekaterina-7-20), hence, "all of the students staying there were inclusives" (Ekaterina-7-26). Teacher assumed that the boarding school would make a better site for the present research.

> If you want, I... they have moved to another place recently. You can visit. I will give you the telephone number. {...} (*Teacher dictates the telephone number of her friend and tells her name*). I will tell her that you will call her. She will show you where the school is, introduce the principal and teachers to you. There, well, all of the students are inclusive students. (Ekaterina-7-21)

Maftuna uses the phrase "heavily inclusive" to refer to the student with disability who is included in her class. The student's disability is more severe than any other students with disabilities she ever had in her experience before.

> Actually, this is the 1st school year, I have "heavily inclusives" [in my class]. Oh, I always had these [students in my class who were] sick in the head. However, they were not called "inclusives". It's now only. Actually, it's been a year since I have this severe child. (Maftuna-1-35)

However, the teacher was not aware of the diagnosis of the student included.

> Oh, he has, you know... oh, what was that he has, oh... Honestly, I do not even know how that [is called]. (Madina-2-20)

> He both [has not been right] in his head and development of his right hand [and] leg. Oh, God offended [this] poor kid. (Maftuna-2-15)

1.2 Inclusive Education

Interview data suggests that teachers view the current practices of inclusion from two opposing perspectives. A part of interview participants shared a perspective that "inclusion" was just a new fancy term that was coined to denote the old practices of a similar nature, while the other part viewed inclusion as a new educational practice.

1.2.1 New fancy term for old practice

Perhaps, one of the continually mentioned view on inclusion was the similarity of it with the practices teachers had in their classes from long before. Some of the teachers were quite sure that the current practices of educating students with disabilities were of the same nature with the ones they used to practice in the past. Maftuna begins her discussion of inclusive practices by stating that these practices existed from long before, and it is just the change in terminology. Speaking about her students, teacher states,

> But in those years we somehow did not count them [children with disabilities] inclusives. It's been a year since this came into trend. And before, we just taught, we had 3 to 4 these [students], hyperactives. However, we never counted them as inclusives. [We counted them] as usual children. (Maftuna-2-4)

For most of the teachers the only thing that deemed to be different was a "new" term (Zulfiya-18-26).

> {...} even 2-3 years ago, the word "inclusive" was not used at all. However, {...} if there were 10 parallel classes, for example, there would be one child with disability anyway. (Zulfiya-18-18)

However, as interview proceeded, a part of teachers was found to be talking about their experience of teaching students with disabilities. The practices of home-based education, so-called "individual education", for a student with disability were mentioned repeatedly. Teachers reflected on their practice of teaching a student with disability at home following the "individual plan" that they had to develop. Students with disability were admitted by schools but educated at their homes. These students had designated teachers from regular schools, that would come to their homes twice or three times a week and teach a school subject.

The application of some elements of home-based teaching in their inclusive teaching was obvious in the interview data. During the lesson, teachers, as a rule, would give "individual tasks" to student with disabilities to complete. Doing so they could keep working with the students without disabilities, with the rest of the class.

Dilbar believed she was doing a right thing to student with disability included into her regular classroom by cautioning her Physical Education teacher about being cautious and not giving any task to her. The teacher directly states,

> I ask [student's name] whether she wants to go to PE lesson. I reassure the teacher, ask him not to give any task to her. [I tell him] that she will just sit there and observe ONLY. She [the student] is happy [about being present at PE lesson]. She says, "Children are playing!". (Dilbar-3-28)

In this way, to Mekhribon, the mere placement of the student with disability into the general education school was considered to be an inclusion. The teacher was convinced that inclusion takes place "{...} even if the school is not given the name of 'inclusive education', even if it is not a pilot school, even if the teacher does not have any understanding [of inclusion]" (Mekhribon-11-6). She added later about the difference between the so-called inclusive school and regular school: "It is just not

named [inclusive school], and it does not get the support that we get" (Mekhribon-11-17).

1.2.2 Changes in policy and practice

One of the major things mentioned by teachers that made the previous practices of teaching students with disabilities different was the placement, that students were educated in general school, not at homes like previously. Zulfiya highlighted the importance of inclusion by comparing side by side the situations of being educated in the regular school setting and home-based individual education setting that was offered by the government previously. The teacher was convinced that being included into general education school was very beneficial to students with disability. Zulfiya emphasized her stance by stressing the fact that even professor would not be able save the situation of absence of socialization in home-based education. In Uzbekistan, professors teach only in higher educational institutions. The teacher qualifies her perspective that being included into general education school is more beneficial to student with disability when she states,

> Now they [students with disabilities] are not educated at home, but along with these healthy [students]... Being educated at home is different anyway. That's the different environment. Even if professor comes to your home to teach you, that's different. Here [at school], he sees the school, classroom, socializes with his friends, this is a different thing. (Zulfiya-19-1)

The official recognition of the fact that children with disabilities should be taught in general education schools was reported to be something new for teachers. Perhaps, this very novation lead Mekhribon to share the perspective that "[the fact of] coming to general education school itself (*pauses for a second*), involving a child with special needs into the general education school [is an inclusion]" (Mekhribon-11-6).

A part of interviewed teachers had newly received students with disabilities to be included in their classes. However, another part of teachers already had those students in their class, and the students were identified as having a disability by the medical commission. Ekaterina fell under the latter group of teachers. Two students in her class were evaluated as students with special needs or disabilities by psychological-

medical-pedagogical commission. This commission had been organized in the frameworks of the Project. It is worth mentioning that training on inclusive education was an eye-opening experience in case of Ekaterina. The elementary teacher with sixteen years of teaching experience, elaborates on the fact that it was three years ago, that she learnt about inclusive teaching for the first time. Ekaterina alludes to the value of the training on inclusive education when she states, "After that training, I started to view them differently". She acknowledged that she barely had an idea of what the inclusive education was when she stated,

> By the way, I didn't even know that these very kids should be taught by inclusive methods. I thought, that these are usual children, that they are lazybones, or they are kind of... you know... After those very trainings, I started to view them differently. (Ekaterina-6-29)

Maftuna begins the discussion of her experience in teaching in inclusive classroom by stating that she always had "inclusives" in her class, with the exception of the fact that those children were called in a different way. However, what made her experience different from previous ones was the severity of the student's disability, when she admits, "I have to say, I have never had such a severe child".

> [I have] never had such severe ones [students]. Like a bolt from the blue, the most, most severe one happened to come to my class. Before this, the most severe case was probably when the eyesight [of the student] was very poor or -- (Maftuna-4-21)

Nazokat, reiterates the perspective of several interview participants, stating that teaching students with disabilities was not a new practice for her. However, she mentions another point that distinguishes the current practices from old ones. Now, according to Nazokat, students with disabilities were being given the official referral from the "special center", the National Center for the Social Adaptation of Children, which was a key stakeholder organization for the Project. Another point of distinction mentioned by the teacher was that the educational authorities now recognized that children with disabilities should be included into general education schools.

> This [practice of teaching students with disabilities] existed from long before. It is not new for us. What is new for us is that they [the students with disabilities] are being referred by the special center. What is also new for us is

that they [educational authorities] tell that these children should be taught in general schools. We have taught these kinds of children a lot [before]. (Nazokat-9-38)

But then again the teachers are found to be well aware of the main principles of inclusive education that make it different from integration. They were well aware of the need for adjusting the school, the class, educational plan and other things to a student with a disability when they stated,

> {...} it is the school that has to be adjusted to the child in inclusive education. It is not the child [who needs to adjust] to the school, but the school has to be adjusted to the child. (Mekhribon-14-18)

> I have adjusted it [a work plan] to special needs of children that I am teaching. Well, it is said here [in inclusive education] that school adjusts [itself] to the child, it is said. The work plan is also adjusted to a child. I am also adjusted [to a child]. And [his] classmates [without disabilities]. Everyone is adjusted to him [student with disability]. (Noila-2-13)

Noila continued by assuring that by doing these adjustments they are not "raising the student to the sky".

> Doing so, we are not raising the student [with disability] to the sky. (Noila-2-17)

2. Teachers' Perspectives on the Benefits of Inclusive Education

As Loreman and his colleagues (2010) argue, a rationale for the inclusion, or its benefits, not been communicated to the stakeholders involved in the process, appears to be the major reason why school inclusion may not work. Data analysis indicated that there was a range of different perspectives on benefits of inclusion among the interview participants. Teachers mentioned that the result of the work they were implementing will be evident at some time in the future, stating directly that the results of inclusion can be seen in 3-4 years. Nevertheless, at the time of the interview, they could confidently note a range of benefits of inclusive education for its stakeholders. Broadly, teachers' perspectives on benefits of inclusion could be categorized into three groups: benefits of inclusive education for students with disabilities, benefits for their

classmates without disabilities and benefits of this new educational initiative for teachers themselves. These are now discussed separately.

2.1 Benefits for Students With Disabilities

Despite many obstacles that were found to be undermining the successful implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan, teachers' interpretations of benefits of inclusion were of a quite positive nature. Thus, it was possible to identify that the rationale for including the student with a disability into the general classroom was well communicated to the "agents of change", the teachers. Through the analysis of interview data, the benefits of inclusion to children both with and without disabilities as perceived by teachers were identified. Interviewed teachers shared their beliefs regarding the benefit of inclusion which allows students with disabilities to forget about their conditions and benefit of inclusion that gives them the opportunity to socialize with their peers without disabilities.

2.1.1 Students forget about their disabilities

Teachers shared their beliefs about what it meant for children with disabilities to be included into the general school. According to the interview participants, being included into the general school made it possible for students with disabilities to think of themselves as "healthy" children, reminding that there was not much difference between them and their classmates without disabilities. Noila tells about the student with cerebral palsy in her class, who used a wheelchair by virtue of his disability,

> He was very happy to be here. We would not hurt him at all. He would think [that everything was] fine [with him] {...}. (Noila-3-40)

She then recalled the dialogue she once had with that included student.

> He would think [that everything was] fine [with him]. "Teacher, I will also play football [someday], right?", he would ask me. He was very happy when I replied, "You will. You will play a great football". (Noila-4-1)

Further, teachers shared their perspective that for the children with a disability studying at general school, being with "normal" children at general school served as something that would "not let them get caught up in their shells" ("qobig'iga o'ralib qolmaydi") (Dilbar-11-9) and made them forget to some extent about their physical conditions and "flaws" they had. Mekhribon and Mukhabbat reiterated this notion when they stated,

> [You know] children tend to follow their peers, aren't they? As the result, they try to get rid of the flaws they got looking at the healthy child. You know, they try to follow the children [without disabilities]. They try to be like these children [without disabilities]. Just like these healthy children. (Mekhribon-6-28)

> These children [with disabilities] are trying to be like normal children to a certain extent. (Mukhabbat-8-6)

Mekhribon illustrates her perceived importance of including children with disabilities into regular classes when she states that children with disabilities are going to benefit from studying with "healthy" children rather than with "their own kind" as follows.

> The major aim of inclusive [education] is to have these children with physical disability, deficiency live feeling that they are needed in this society, that they are equal citizens in this society. [It's] the most important. To live feeling that people, surrounding ones, they need them. If they [students with disabilities] study with the children like themselves [children with disabilities], they will always be in contact with people their own kind. I think, that rather it is better for them to get assistance from healthy children. It will be more comfortable for them to live. It will be easier for them to join the society [afterwards]. They will not be lonely. If they grow up with the children their own kind, after they step into the independent life, I think it will be much more difficult for them to join the society. However, children who study within the society, at general education schools like this, I think, everything will be alright with them. They will have a good future as well. (Mekhribon-14-30)

2.1.2 Opportunity to socialize

In interviews with the teaching staff, valuing beneficial aspect of inclusion, expressed in an opportunity for children with disabilities to socialize with children without disabilities, was observed repeatedly. The teachers seemed to voice similar

ideas, although expressed and illuminated in their own individual style. Interview participants believed that being able to exercise their right to get education in regular school gave children with disabilities a feeling of happiness and a sense of membership and belonging. Dilbar alludes to the value of being included and being welcomed in school when she states,

> The child is happy about coming to school. The child is happy about joining [other kids]. (Dilbar-4-37)

Another teacher highlighted the importance of school inclusion through side by side comparison of the realities of being educated in the regular school settings as compared with the home-based individual education setting. Zulfiya was convinced that being included into general education school was much more beneficial to students with a disability. She emphasized her stance by stressing the fact that even professor would not be able to save the situation of lack of socialization, one of the disadvantages of home-based education for children with disabilities. It is worth mentioning that in Uzbekistan, professors teach primarily in higher educational institutions. Zulfiya qualifies her perspective that being included into general education school is much more beneficial to children with a disability when she states,

> Now they [students with disabilities] are educated not at home, but along with these healthy [students]... Being educated at home is different, anyway. That's the different environment. Even if professor comes to your home to teach you, that's different. Here [at school], he [the child with a disability] sees the school, classroom, socializes with his friends. This is a different thing. (Zulfiya-19-1)

Similarly, when talking about the benefits of inclusive education to students with disabilities, other teachers backed up their arguments with their previous experience of teaching students with disabilities. The work of educators was used to be based on so-called "individual working plans". Teachers had to visit homes of children with disabilities to teach a school subject. Isolation, experienced by students with disabilities was now reported to be replaced with the socialization, owing to the opportunity to attend the school along with their peers. Collectively, teachers were echoing the importance of the opportunity of socialization, which was given to the student with disabilities owing to a new educational initiative. Noila tells,

The child [student with disability] is happy that he is socializing with children. That is different from having a teacher come to your house. The fact that he [child with a disability] socializes with children is different from that. (Noila-7-26)

They talk to each other. He [student with cerebral palsy] is happy that he is talking to children. (Noila-7-37)

This is a child who would sit at home and do what his parents asked to. That is boring, of course. It is quite different thing to come here [to general education school]. (Noila-8-2)

As it was emphasized by Makhbuba, the first grade at elementary school was considered to be an adaptation period for all children regardless the degree of their ability. Consequently, the first year in school for a student with disability was "a double load" (Makhbuba-1-30). The teacher believed that achieving the "social adaptation" by children with disabilities constituted the "foremost purpose" of the implementation of school inclusion (Makhbuba-10-20). As for Zulfiya, the purpose of their inclusive teaching was "at least partially, to educate students with disabilities with healthy children".

Our purpose is to do our best to educate these children with healthy ones, even if will be [only] partially. (Zulfiya-10-30)

Maftuna has summarized thoughts of many teachers when she stated,

Still, the school has helped him [the student with a disability] very much. Also, his mother says, that he is raring to school so much. {...} Well, he has the aspiration to [come to] school. (Maftuna-7-26)

2.2 Benefits for Students Without Disabilities

When it comes to benefits of inclusion for students without disabilities, these were expressed in terms of learning about diversity and learning about "savob" or doing good things in the name of God. Moreover, teachers were found to put their efforts to raise disability awareness and empathy towards students with disability among students without disabilities and encourage friendship among all students.

2.2.1 Students learn about diversity

Despite the teachers' concerns regarding some issues that hinder the implementation of inclusive practices in their schools, a majority expressed that the presence of the student with disability contributed to growth and tolerance among their classmates without a disability. Teachers seemed to voice similar ideas when it comes to a positive effect of including a student with disability in their class on students without disabilities. "It is one hundred percent thing" (Makhbuba-5-24), emphasizes Makhbuba, when discussing about the difference she has observed between students in two shifts (morning and afternoon) of elementary grade classes she currently teaches.

All of the teachers mentioned that there was a favorable acceptance of children with disabilities by their non-disabled peers. Teachers reported that non-disabled peers were very accepting towards included students in their classrooms. In some cases, peer acceptance was expressed in terms of "letting sit down together" like it was mentioned by Dilbar.

> [Students say], "Teacher, Latifa is doing this, Latifa is doing that". Children like her, [they are] accepting her. They let her sit with them. (Dilbar-10-14)

Also, acceptance of the student with disability was expressed in terms of protecting the student with disability, as well as helping to move around within the school.

> Children are protecting them [students with disability] all the time, every time, in any kind of situation. {...} they hold her from both sides and go downstairs for Physical Education lesson. (Makhbuba-6-25)

Moreover, teachers were found to have developed their personal strategies in implementing inclusive teaching where children both with and without disabilities would benefit. The strategies of each teacher differed according to the grade level at which the student with disability joined the class and the degree of disability of the student included. One of Makhbuba's strategies was "not stressing children's disability", "not asking children without disabilities for help". She did not want the "overprotection" of the child with disability to take place. Teacher just applied wait-and-see approach until children without disabilities "naturally" started helping and

protecting the student with disability themselves. Makhbuba shares her observation that the classmates of the student with cerebral palsy have learned not to overreact in certain situations, to keep quiet and not to tell anything when the included student does something not that ordinary. For example, if the student drops her bottle and spills the water, her classmates simply help her wipe the water quietly so lesson can continue smoothly without interruption.

> I do not tell the children [without disabilities] to protect her [student with disability], to do whatever she asks for. Healthy children have to regard her as a regular child. [They have to understand that] this child is just like them, but her needs are a bit different, she just needs more help. The classroom environment is formed with this idea. (Makhbuba-6-9).

Ekaterina, in the very beginning of the interview session with her, emphasized that the students in her class did not even know what the meaning of the term "inclusive" was and who the included student in their class was. There was a reason behind Ekaterina's decision not to tell the rest of the class about "included" children. She did not want the students with disabilities to be viewed differently by their classmates without disability.

> I never focus on… I do not talk about that at all. When someone asks [whether this is inclusive class or not], they [the class] are excited about it, saying "Our class is inclusive. Oh, that's good!". I am not going to explain them what this means. If I do it, then it will… they will view these [included] children in a different way. Therefore, I do not talk about it at all. (Ekaterina-2-28)

The students with disabilities in Ekaterina's classes studied in her class from Grade 1, even though it's been a year since they started to be counted as "inclusives". However, in case of Mekhribon, it was the beginning of Grade 2 when the teacher got informed about a new student with disability who was going to join the class shortly. The teacher's strategy to develop children's understanding of disability was different from Ekaterina's. Whereas the disabilities of Ekaterina's "inclusive" students were not evident or visually identifiable, the female student, who was going to be included into the regular class of Mekhribon had a physical disability. She could not walk. Later Mekhribon was informed that this student would not be able to join the class due to the

long commute issue, however she remembers what she had to do to prepare the class then.

> We prepared children, I personally prepared them. I told them that we should help her, accept her. That we will definitely help her. Well, you have to improve the psychological environment for this, you have to elevate it. (Mekhribon-12-32)

In interview with Maftuna, the teacher told about the strategy she undertook to make inclusion for the student who was severely burnt and his classmates a better experience.

> When he came to my class for the first time, you know, [his] father put a mask on him, put a cap [on him]. I asked him, "Why do you separate him from everyone?". I told him, "Let children get used to him, to the way he looks like". And I told the children, "One should never laugh at a human tragedy, this could happen to anyone. One should help, not to feel bad for, but help. Just sit and think, what if it was you, and if no one wanted to sit with you, be friends [with you]. Would you feel good?". I used to have conversations in the classroom without this child. And then there was no need [for it]. They, thanks God, my class is... err... they will never do anything [bad towards him], they will not laugh at him. (Maftuna-7-37)

2.2.2 Students without disabilities learn about "savob"

Teachers made a reference to the fact that students without disabilities in their inclusive classrooms were rather caring and thoughtful owing to the presence of the classmates with disabilities in the same classroom. Including children with disabilities into regular classrooms in some cases was associated with "savob", a term that is used in a religious context. "Savob" means a reward from Allah for a good deed - doing good things in the name of God. Mekhribon believed that inclusion would result in cultivating within children without disabilities the trait to perform "savob" deeds.

> Humaneness is developed within the children [without disabilities]. Children learn about not being indifferent to people around, about giving a hand to another person, about "savob". This is what they learn, they get to feel kindness. (Mekhribon-6-24)

2.3 Benefits for Teachers

When it comes to benefits of inclusion for teachers, the findings show that these were expressed in terms of the fact that teachers started to view children with disabilities differently as a result of trainings in inclusive education. Moreover, the cases in which teachers regarded school inclusion as an opportunity to grow professionally were identified. Also, it was found that for some of the teachers, inclusive teaching was another opportunity to gain "savob", or a reward from Allah for a good deed.

2.3.1 "Started to view them differently"

As Ekaterina, a teacher with sixteen years of teaching experience, reported, there were neither "courses [related to inclusive education] in professional development institutes" (Ekaterina-3-12) nor any mentioning about inclusive education in her preservice training. Trainings that were organized in the framework of the Project were described by Ekaterina as "an eye-opening experience". Ekaterina elaborates on the fact that it was 3 years ago, when she learnt about inclusive teaching for the first time. She alludes to the value of the trainings in inclusive education when she states, "After that training, I started to view them differently". She acknowledged that she hardly had an idea about inclusive teaching before the training when she stated,

> By the way, I didn't even know that these very children had to be taught by inclusive methods. I thought, that these are usual children, that they are lazybones, or they are kind of... you know... After that training, I started to view them differently. (Ekaterina-6-29)

2.3.2 Opportunity to grow

The psychological-medical-pedagogical commission, which is responsible for diagnosing the children and referring them to regular schools, did not confirm that Mekhribon's student had a disability. However, Mekhribon, assured that the student needed help, developed an individual plan on her own for working with the student. She could and was willing to apply the knowledge she obtained from the trainings in inclusive education.

But I still work with her, because I have learned how. It is not important that her diagnosis has to be confirmed. (Mekhribon-18-39)

The difficulties that the teachers had to come across on the road to implementing school inclusion did not stop Mukhabbat from her clear intention to implement responsible inclusion for her students. Lack of knowledge in the area of teaching children with disabilities was fixed by "studying literature on defectology" independently (Mukhabbat-4-18). Defectology, or the "study of defect", is a branch of science that is concerned with the study of the principles and characteristics of the development of children with physical and mental disabilities as well as the problems of their training and upbringing. After trying out some practical recommendations from the books, Mukhabbat came to a conclusion that she could use some strategies that were described and make the learning possible.

"So, I can do it this way" [I thought], "he is learning". {...} and he has learned 1-2 letters. Now he is doing really well. Only 3 letters left. (Mukhabbat-4-18)

As for Noila, she "had worked with these kinds of children from long before", and she had never stopped learning about new approaches to teach them. She had an experience of working with children with "intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy and speech delay", usually in home-based settings. Noila viewed the new educational initiative as a self-development opportunity in her career as a teacher.

But during this period, I have never just sat and wait. You know Shayhant? There is a boarding special school, Shayhant. {...} It is for [children with] intellectual disabilities. I would go there, find the defectologists and talk to them. "I have these [children]", I would say, doing this *((knocks on the desk with her fist))*. And they would teach me. I would save on my usb card everything [they had], games, everything. And, then, look, I would come here [to school], go to the speech and language therapists and ask them to give [any material that would help me to work with my students with a disability]. (Noila-12-33)

I am just an ordinary schoolteacher. If I do not work on [improving] myself, if I do not try, no one will ever pay attention to me. People are recognizing me now for all of the work I have done. (Noila-13-25)

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2.3.3 "We also do it for savob"

The word "savob" was mentioned by the majority of teachers during the interviews. In fact, "savob" is a term related to Islam which means "a good deed or action". A good deed or action that will be rewarded from God, or Allah in Islam. The reward will be in the form of getting an access to the doors of "Jannah", or the Paradise. Needless to say, that Jannah (Paradise), where an eternal carefree life is bestowed, is the wish of every Muslim. For entering Jannah in hereafter, a Muslim has to do all good deeds and actions possible in worldly life. Allah Almighty described the Jannah many times in Holy Quran: "{...} in it are rivers of water, the taste, and smell of which are never changed. Rivers of milk, the taste of which will remain unchanged. Rivers of wine that will be delicious to those who drink from it and rivers of clear, pure honey. For them will be every kind of fruit and forgiveness from their Lord." Including children with disabilities, teaching them in regular classrooms was associated with "savob" by some of the teachers, as follows:

> {...} he is my student. You, actually, need to do savob. (Mukhabbat-2-23)
>
> That's true, it's difficult for us, it's not easy. First of all, we are also teaching them for savob. (Zulfiya-10-21)

3. Teachers' Concerns about Including Children with Disabilities

The analysis of the interview data showed that there is a variety of teachers' concerns that should be addressed in immediate future in order to establish successful inclusive education in Uzbekistan. Under this theme the concerns of teachers about inclusive education will be discussed. Based on the analysis, a fairly wide range of concerns could be identified. All types of concerns were shown to be related, and they interacted together to affect teachers' understanding of and attitudes towards inclusion. For the purpose of analysis, they were categorized into three main categories: structural-organizational, personal and socio-cultural issues.

3.1 Structural and Organizational Issues

Teachers in this research proposed a range of external reasons as to why inclusion was perhaps not as successful as it should be. Structural and organizational issues, discussed in this section, refer to factors related to the educational system and school context and daily practices like class size, degree of disability, physical accessibility, workload and lack of time, lack of resources and curriculum issues.

3.1.1 Class size

While the official statistical data as of 2017 indicates that the student-teacher ratio in Uzbekistani elementary schools was twenty-one students per one teacher, the class sizes of teachers, who participated in this research were found to be much larger than this - ranging from twenty-seven to forty-two students.

The interviewed teachers felt daunted by large class sizes. They identified a dilemma in seeking to meet individual needs in the context of large pupil-teacher ratios which characterized the general education classes in most Uzbekistan regular schools. Most teachers were worried that class size would significantly affect the extent to which inclusion was successful. Class management was another issue that most teachers attributed to the class size. Teachers felt that it was difficult to control these large class sizes in the case of inclusion.

3.1.2 Degree of disability

It was found that teachers were generally not accepting of the full inclusion model. A degree of disability of the students that had been included was repeatedly mentioned during the interview sessions. As Makhbuba directly stated, "Working with children with severe disabilities causes lots of difficulties, but few results." Ekaterina shared her own trepidations about the severity of degree of disabilities encompassed by inclusive education. The teacher considers that the students with severe forms of disabilities should be educated in special institutions.

> Nevertheless, I believe, the ones with mild disabilities should be included. For students with severe disabilities there should be separate institutions, like the [special] school we have [in this district]. There are [students with] very severe forms. I have visited that school. Those children, who have severe forms [of disability], they tend to show aggressive behavior. (Ekaterina-4-15)

Although attainment of equality of educational rights is interpreted to mean greater full-time inclusion in regular schools, there were a few teachers among the interview participants who questioned the appropriateness of this for all children with a disability. This has confirmed the finding of earlier researches in another countries. Inclusion of "severe" children was felt to be hard for both the teacher and the student. Generally, teachers believed that including student with mild disabilities was the best option. While teachers were convinced that children with mild disabilities only should be included in regular classrooms, they were conscious of the need to cater for the majority of the students in their classes and to ensure that the rights of the "healthy" children were not disadvantaged in any way.

3.1.3 Physical accessibility

Physical barriers, as disabling design of school, was the next major barrier to include and being included. The interview data suggests that the physical environmental barriers of school restricted children with physical disabilities from attending the school. Moreover, as it was repeatedly mentioned by teachers, the long distance from home to the nearest inclusive school, very limited number of schools that adopted inclusive policy affected parents' decisions to bring their children with disabilities to the regular school. "Diversity is a norm (Mekhribon-13-8)", Mekhribon was convinced. She believed that the school had to be adjusted to the student with physical disability even if this student was the only one who had a disability.

> {...} even if there is only one [student with disability], even if there is only one
> – it is a human-being, isn't it? Is the number important? (Mekhribon-14-26)

In most cases, students with physical disabilities who used the wheelchair to move around were considered as students with severe disabilities, or "severes" by teachers. The poor design of schools, inaccessible for students with physical disabilities

who use wheelchairs, made the authorities, responsible for the referral, to "make a promise" that "they will try not to send students who use wheelchairs to the regular schools", instead they would "refer them to special schools" (Nazokat-7-13). Thus, the students who used wheelchairs were referred to the special schools "to solve the situation" (Nazokat-7-21) of inability of the school physical environment to accommodate "severe" students' needs, the "situation" of inaccessibility of schools for these children. Therefore, teachers were ensured that students with mild disabilities only, as it was stressed by Makhbuba during the interview, would be referred to the regular schools.

A student with cerebral palsy in Makhbuba's class walked very late. She was 13 years old. The reason for sending her to school much later than her peers was due to the fact that she started walking late. This, in its turn, points to the situation that the doors of the regular school were closed for the students who could not walk. Nazokat admits that there are no adequate conditions at their school for including students who use wheelchairs.

> {...} they [children with physical disabilities] couldn't come [to school]. They would have hard time using stairs. [Thus] they used to be educated at home. (Zulfiya-7-6)

> I would take him out [of the class], make him stand up with the kids, well, our toilet is downstairs, have him urinate into a plastic bottle. My pot, kettle [to have him wash his hands] are over there. I would tell him to wash his hands and then he would wash them. He sits here *((points at a student's desk))*. (Noila-7-21)

The physical environmental barriers the students with disabilities faced at regular schools affected the teachers' workload and time, which will be discussed below.

3.1.4 Workload and lack of time

Elementary school teachers in Uzbekistan are required to run after-school programs for their class. As a rule, teachers guide students on their home assignments, work on revising a new material and other things. Guiding students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers altogether in after-school programs turned out to be an

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additional challenge for Mukhabbat. Her willingness to raise educational attainment of her students was strong. "It was hard a lot in the first grade. I used to stay until five pm. You have to help the students who are falling behind", shared Mukhabbat, a novice teacher, who had eight students with a variety of disabilities in her class. She further expressed,

> Before I manage to teach him [a student with disability] one letter, [his non-disabled peer] was learning from two to three new letters... {...} and during the class the knowledgeable student started to display indifference towards the lesson... Later, they [non-disabled students] were exempted from after-school programs. Then I started to give them [children with disabilities] second grade level tasks. Doing this, I wanted them [children with disabilities] not to differ much [from their non-disabled peers]. (Mukhabbat-7-12)

Mukhabbat was concerned about the students with disabilities who were falling behind their classmates without disabilities. She tried her best in order not to increase the in students' academic performances. She was driven by a belief that "it was not good to give up on them" just because of the fact they had certain conditions that makes them lag behind (Mukhabbat-8-8). Teacher shared that she used to "repeatedly call them to her desk [to check their progress], ask them to stay [for an after-school program]" (Mukhabbat-4-17), even if sometimes she had to listen to parents' complaints.

> [Sometimes it required explaining] to their parents that they [children with disabilities] have to stay [for an after-school program]. There used to be [situations of] a discontent among parents. (Mukhabbat-7-21)

Ensuring that the rights of the child with a disability were met was interpreted to mean giving additional time to the child and in some cases this led to feelings of guilt, blaming themselves when unable to spend adequate time with either the child with a disability or the other children in the class.

> {...} if [student] does not understand this it will be my fault. That's me who cannot make him understand [it]. (Mukhabbat-8-34).

3.1.5 Lack of resources

Once a regular teacher had included a child with a disability in their classroom, teachers indicated that limited or insufficient help was available to them. There was enough evidence in the data that all teachers felt ill-equipped to meet the wide range of needs of students with disabilities in their inclusive classrooms as a result of lack of resources. Zulfiya described her working style in inclusive classroom, which was very similar to the rest of the interviewed teachers' ways of managing the classroom.

> I give a reading assignment to students [without disabilities], quickly check them, [for example] ask to draw this thing and go and sit beside him [the student with disability], work with him to the extent I can. Well, you can't do everything within 45 minutes (Zulfiya-4-40)

Although the Uzbekistan law on education does not forbid children with disabilities to study at regular schools, it does not guarantee services or staff to support children with disabilities in the regular classroom. Interview data shows that teachers repeatedly mentioned that they were "alone" in inclusion process, having no other support staff to help them. Absence of assistant teacher in inclusive classroom led teachers to look for alternative solutions in order to conduct the lessons smoothly. All of the teachers interviewed have reported getting help of students without disabilities in managing the class. Also, it was found that at schools, piloting inclusion, the role of assistant teachers was usually carried out by parents of students with disabilities. Some teachers used the help of the students' mothers. So-called volunteers were assisting the educational process in inclusive classes.

> Mothers of these three inclusives sit along with them. (Zulfiya-3-6)

> During the class his mom writes for him with a pencil. [She is here] as a support staff. Well, I am all alone. These children [without disabilities] will fall behind if I sit with him. (Zulfiya-3-10)

The situation turned out to be more complex for teachers who had to cope with students with disabilities who did not have adequate self-care skills. Noila and Maftuna had "severe" students. Due to unavailability of teacher assistant they had to seek assistance from classmates of the student.

Even to the toilet - we would go together. {...} Poor [child], he could not even zip up his fly. I would take care of him for two months this way. Then I trained a couple of good students [without disabilities]. They would take him [to the toilet] and help him out. (Maftuna-5-8)

Moreover, non-disabled students were reported to be of a great help in overcoming the limitations of physical barriers of the school, when the toilet was outside of the building. Noila told about the situation when she and a couple of her students without disabilities would help included student with a cerebral palsy "go to pee".

He could not go to pee. Over there *((indicates in the direction of the classroom door))* with boys I would [help him] pull his pants down. A plastic bottle used to be [stored] there. The boys would hold him as he peed into the plastic bottle. Once finished, I would pull his pants up and bring him [back to the class]. Well, I do not have any assistant. (Noila-2-40)

Ekaterina expressed her thoughts on the situation of implementing inclusive education in developed countries.

What makes me wonder a lot {...} [is] when they tell about the way it [inclusive education] is being implemented in Europe. [We were told that] they have fifteen students in class as well as separate teachers assigned to these children [with disabilities]. And the way it is [being implemented] here... Our teachers work like horses. Not only do we have forty children in class, [we also have to pay] separate attention to these children [with disabilities] (Ekaterina-5-2)

3.1.6 Curriculum

There was evidence in the data that majority of teachers felt daunted by pressure of meeting curriculum and believed that the present curriculum presented a barrier to inclusion. While they considered that they would be expected to provide equally for the child with disability, they were concerned by a lack of clearly defined criteria as how to do this.

I have to conduct the lesson as usual. My other students should not fall behind just because my class is inclusive. There is a single educational program, it is common for everyone. I have to conduct the lesson in full. (Makhbuba-5-24)

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3.1.7 Continuity of inclusive education project

The interview data showed that the entire idea of inclusive education was well communicated to teachers which is in its turn can be regarded as a good premise for further successful implementation of inclusive practices in schools of Uzbekistan. Teachers acknowledged the fact that they were involved in never-ending project, that they hoped would be continued through the secondary school, high school and higher education institutions (Zulfiya-10-18).

> This project is not the one that is going to end. (Mekhribon-13-21)

Moreover, as Mukhabbat expressed it, teachers were eager to see the results of their work as inclusive classroom teachers when she stated,

> Anyway, this is not the work that will come to an end. We began so much work, which is not going to finish yet. That is, we taught these kids, and to see the effects of this [work] we need [to wait] at least nine years. (Mukhbbat-7-38)

3.2 Personal Issues

Personal issues refer to factors related to the teachers themselves such as acceptance, lack of engagement with persons with disabilities, lack of training and experience and expectations. These are now discussed separately.

3.2.1 Deciding to accept

A major area of concern that appears to underlie the whole process of inclusive education is teachers' actual acceptance or nonacceptance of policy of inclusion (Forlin, 1998). Mukhabbat believes that "every work has its own difficulties" (Mukhabbat-8-32). Nevertheless, there was a wide range of responses from teachers regarding acceptance of the policy to include children with a disability into regular classrooms. Teachers' comments spanned from the very negative such as:

> I do not get the purpose of including these children into regular classrooms. (Dilbar-10-17)

To highly supportive:

I hope inclusive education [project] will go on. (Zulfiya-10-19)

Teachers mentioned the reasons for acceptance or nonacceptance of children with disability by an individual classroom teacher. Dilbar, while recalling the moment when she accepted her student to work in her regular classroom, reflects on her previous experience of working with other children with disabilities individually, visiting them regularly at their homes. For Dilbar, it was more of an emotional state of being happy for little, even insufficient achievements of the child with disability when she stated,

{...} it's true that if [a child] learns something, even if it's something insufficient,
a person [teacher] will be happy [about it]. (Dilbar-9-18)

Just like all of the teachers interviewed, Noila did not have any teacher assistant in her class to support her with the inclusive class. However, "even if it was hard" (Noila-7-12) for her to include a student with physical disability, she had taken the responsibility over him.

I accepted him. Even if it is hard. (Noila-7-14)

For her, the reason for including the child was "parents, who wanted to educate" their child and "came here, having heard about her". Parents' hopes and expectations for their child, as well as the fact that this was just a child, who also has a right "to breathe clean air", "to join other children" played a role in Noila's accepting attitude towards the inclusion.

But thinking of his parents who wanted to educate him and came here, having
heard about me, I admitted him. Even if it is hard. They [school administration]
do not provide me with assistant, they do not do that. (Noila-7-13)

Dilbar had summarized these thoughts saying that,

Well, it's not the fault of the parents of the inclusive kid that their child was
born like this. (Dilbar-6-11)

As for Dilbar, she is convinced that teachers who are "sentimental" usually accept children with disabilities into their classes. Also, teachers who find it as duty of their profession tend to accept these students. Moreover, the truth that this student "is

also someone's child" makes them feel that they should work with him/her in their classroom.

> Some [teachers] [do it] because of sentimentality or stuff. They say, "I'm a teacher. Well, I will work with this student. He is also someone's child" or other things. (Dilbar-9-10)

Another reason for acceptance described by Mukhabbat was maternal instincts of the teacher to the child, viewing the student as their own child, which did not let teachers reject or refuse accepting students with disabilities in their classrooms, just like mothers who cannot not reject their own child (Mukhabbat-9-5).

It is worth mentioning that teachers, interviewed for this study, as they clarified, had included students with disabilities into their regular classes despite they "had a right to refuse" to admit them (Makhbuba-8-32). One of the reasons for not accepting would be that the teacher' "nerves won't stand it", particularly among teachers of older ages. Another reason for not accepting a child with disability into the class would be that the class of the teacher was already overcrowded, and this teacher would prefer handing the student with a disability over to another teacher (Dilbar-9-3).

The rights of child with disability to receive education at a regular classroom as well as the rights of teachers to have a choice and their needs considered were of equal importance to teachers. Inclusion was not perceived as a viable option for every teacher. As Makhbuba summed up the fact of availability of choice, for her, it was teacher's decision to accept or not to accept a student with disability into their classroom. She makes this point directly, when she says that "It is optional" to accept a student with a disability. Makhbuba continues this notion when she states,

> {...} I have a right to refuse. If I tell the principal, that I cannot work [in an inclusive class], due to my health condition or family situation that does not allow me to... If I say, "No, I do not want to", no one can force me. This is at [teacher's] will. (Makhbuba-8-34)

Most importantly, teachers' agency could be identified in teachers' decision to include a student with disability. It was almost the end of the interview, when Dilbar after a few seconds of silence said the following.

> I guess the teacher includes [a student with disability] into their class, when
> they feel they are ready for it. Otherwise, "I cannot not take him" they say.
> (Dilbar-13-15)

Mukhabbat says that she never regretted her choice to include the students with disability into her regular class. For her, the difficulties in including children with disabilities are similar to difficulties of any other work.

> Every work has its own difficulties. I have never regretted it. I always [thought]
> I would teach [them] anyway. There are lots of kids like them. (Mukhabbat-8-
> 32).

3.2.2 Lack of engagement with persons with disabilities

Due to the range of barriers (socio-cultural, physical environmental and other barriers), people with disabilities, as a rule, tend to be away from the sight, invisible in the Uzbekistan society. Maftuna made a reference to the fact that the absence of experience of engaging with people with disabilities previously. This made her experience of including a student with disability to be difficult.

> I have neither such neighbors nor relatives [who happen to have a disability],
> I was not familiar [with any]. Nowhere near. {...} That's why, for me, it was
> very-very hard {...}. (Maftuna-4-39)

Despite the fact that classroom teachers had accepted the student with disability in their class, there were a few cases when they had to deal with the non-acceptance issues of subject teachers and had to find ways to negotiate with them. Noila, who had a student with cerebral palsy, recalled the times when the subject teachers of her school were reluctant to conduct the lesson in her inclusive classroom due to the reason there was a student with a cerebral palsy who uses the wheelchair. Noila remembers the times when subject teachers were concerned about conducting the lesson in a class where there is "a sick child".

> In the beginning, other teachers [subject teachers] did not want to come [to
> teach] this class, saying "You have that child [with cerebral palsy], how are we
> going to teach?'. Later, when [subject teachers saw that] they [all children in
> class including a student with cerebral palsy] all stood up, [subject teacher]
> conducted [a lesson]. "What will we do [in case] if he wet himself?" they

[subject teachers] would ask. I tried [my best] so that he doesn't wet himself [during the lesson]. (Noila-7-16)

There was a common tendency among teachers to describe physical appearance of children with disabilities when telling about their memories of their first impressions of the child. The interviewed classroom teachers described about the common attributes, or characteristics the "sick child" was supposed to have but happened not to have them in reality. The following response by Zulfiya presented a representative summary of the common views of many teachers about the persons with disability. Teacher remember the first time she took a look at the photo of the student to be included in her class. She was surprised to see a "neat" and "good-looking" child. She admits that it stood against her prejudices about the persons with disabilities, about "sick children" when she states,

{...} anyway, actually, the "inclusives" suffer from different diseases, as you know, there are lots of varieties of them. If you take a look at the photo, their face will tell you [that]. (Zulfiya-2-11)

Teachers had preconceptions about the people with disabilities. Whereas teachers were expecting a "sick child", in reality it was "a good looking" child with "hands and legs" (Dilbar, Maftuna).

But his parents are doing a great job when it comes to this. They take [a good] care of him. This is nice and clean, well-fed, ironed, vaunted child. {...} A well-groomed child. You know, some people [say], "Ah, disabled, disabled." But somehow it's not. (Maftuna-5-24)

3.2.3 Lack of training

Review of educational plan for preparing bachelor degree students to become elementary education teachers showed that there was no class related to special education. However, teacher education is considered to be a very important constituent in the success of implementing inclusive education. This research has found that there was a considerable discrepancy in how the interviewed teachers perceived their preparedness for inclusive practices. One part of teachers rated their preparedness as good, whereas the other part was quite concerned about the level of their preparedness.

Makhbuba starts her discussion of experience in implementing inclusive practices in her class by stressing that teachers were actually "not ready for the inclusive education" (Makhbuba-1-14) and stated that the process was quick. She followed by stating that teachers were not trained beforehand. Makhbuba added that at the beginning of inclusive practices, getting trained and educated about including students into general classrooms and putting the knowledge into practice was carried out simultaneously.

> Originally, we are not prepared for inclusive education. There was no special training on including students with disabilities [that was] offered in advance. We started both getting educated about inclusive education and working in inclusive classroom at the same time. (Makhbuba-1-14)

As a result, this has placed the teacher in a difficult position, where she found herself exhibiting difficulties in the process of implementing inclusion.

> [Inclusion] was difficult [to do]. Tried the best I could. (Makhbuba-1-22)

Similarly, Maftuna describes her first two months of including a student with disability as a "hell". During those times, she reported that she used to cope with her anxiety with the help of anti-anxiety medications.

> For me, to be honest, 2 months were like a hell. {...} Well, I was entirely on nerves, on anti-anxiety medications. (Maftuna-6-21)

Nevertheless, the teachers who got higher education during USSR period, reportedly, had a curriculum different from the current one, which made things easier for them.

> [At universities, at times of USSR} they taught us basics of olygophrenpedagogy, tiflopedagogy (education for the blind), surdopedagogy (deaf education). Practical classes were conducted by defectologists. (Mekhribon-2-7)

Thus, teachers were found to rely on their knowledge of children's psychology, which they studied as a course when pursuing their undergraduate degrees at universities. Doing so, they would battle the issue of lack of knowledge on methodology and skills required in dealing with children with disabilities. Makhbuba continues her discussion by elaborating on skills, that teachers rely on when implementing inclusive teaching.

> Well, first of all, we set from children's psychology. There is no template that tell us "you guide the inclusive child like this this and this". We bear in mind the child's needs, the child's disorder. (Makhbuba-4-9)

It is worth mentioning that not being aware of the student's diagnosis was generally observed among teachers. Zulfiya admitted she had not looked through the papers that were attached to application form of the student with disability to be included that carefully, when the student was being placed in her class. Yet this can be associated with a lack of knowledge in the field of special education, which is generally considered to be necessary in practicing inclusive education. When asked about the diagnosis of the child included into her classroom, Maftuna had a hard time to answer.

> Oh, you know, he has, oh, what was that with him. To be honest, I do not know what that exactly is. Well, his legs are shorter, he is left-handed, his right hand does not function at all; hands, legs are shorter. And he has a trouble with his head. Not everything is okay with him, birth trauma. Sometimes he has those flashes; well, [it's when] the aggression happens. Well, honestly, I cannot recall what the diagnosis was. (Maftuna-2-17)

The similar situation was observed with Makhbuba when she stated,

> Well, there are a lot of disorders in her forebrain, which results in severe speech delay, thinking, developing [has been delayed], the brain development has been delayed. (Makhbuba-2-13)

Finding shows that teachers tend to consider that the diagnosis-related knowledge is not associated with them as teachers. Dilbar summarizes her thought that this kind of information should be known by doctors, psychologist, as well as defectologists when she states,

> I do not know of which degree [of disability] this is. I am neither a doctor nor psychologist. [I am] not a defectologist as well. I do not know which degree [of disability] this is. Well, he has a mental delay {...}. (Dilbar-2-16)

3.2.4 Expectations

A further area of concern is related directly to what teachers perceive they are expected to do when including children with disabilities in their regular classrooms. This data could be derived from teachers' discussions about their students' performance at school, academic and social. One part of teachers was making their best efforts in

order to have students with disabilities be literate, while the other part was more focused on developing their social skills. By school program, first-grade students have to learn one letter a day. Mukhabat was putting all her efforts into teaching the letters to her students and sounded to feel accomplished about the results of her work.

In case of Dilbar, her student was included in the 3rd term of Grade 3. Prior to being referred to general school by medical-pedagogical commission, the student was taught at home. Dilbar recalled that this student did not even know how to hold a pen when he joined her class. The teacher shared her own trepidations about the purpose of the inclusive education, while blaming herself for "not managing to teach him[the student with disability] neither letters, nor numbers" (Dilbar-2-38), when "the fourth-grade student should at least be able to read and write" (Dilbar-5-4). It can be seen from this quote that teacher Dilbar is expecting literacy from the students with disabilities. The ability to write and read, and to count was a decisive factor for her, that would show that the student was learning something at school and that the teacher is doing her job. However, Makhbuba and Mekhribon had opposing views on the issue of achieving literacy by children with disabilities included.

> I never humiliate him just because he cannot write this or that. (Makhbuba-10-37)

The potential alternatives that are available in the era of technology were proposed by some teachers as a solution for the students with disability included in their classes. Makhbuba stated that the student "can use the keyboard in the future if they want to write something", whereas Mekhribon while talking about her student who cannot count well, stated that "she can use the calculator in the future to count". Stressing the social outcomes of inclusion over the academic, Makhbuba makes this point directly when she states that the included student "is not going to become a genius" (Makhbuba-10-21), and in her teaching, she never concentrated her attention on writing skills of the student. For Makhbuba, it was not a big deal if the student's writing skills were not as good as required by the standards.

While Mekhribon was convinced that the counting skills of the student with disability in her class could be compensated by the use of calculator in the future, she did acknowledge that the student "had to know how to read and how to write"

(Mekhribon-18-12) and mentioned that her student had already developed these skills at school.

Teachers reported that the benefits were also exhibited by parents of children with disabilities. Mekhribon mentioned that parents see the progress that occurs with their children and they are willing to bring them to general school.

> His mother tells [that] he has some changes. As soon as he goes home he recites everything I taught him during the class. The child is happy because of coming to school, the child is happy about joining [to other kids]. Mother is also happy that her child joins the society (коллектив). (Dilbar-7-1)

> {...} the parents who see the kid [their child with disability] studying, definitely want to bring him [to school]. (Mekhribon-13-40)

3.3 Socio-cultural Issues

Socio-cultural issues refer to issues in the broader social context. This includes concerns of teachers in terms of social view of disability, their concerns regarding the attitudes of parents of children with and without disabilities toward inclusive education, as well as teachers' thoughts related to religion and disability. Following is a detailed description of these concerns.

3.3.1 Social view of disability

As teachers reported, due to the possibility of being not admitted to the school, parents tend to hide their children's disability from teachers. Mekhribon told that in the past parents had to hide the diagnosis of their children or conceal the fact that they were attending a hospital regularly and get monitored by a physician. But now parents were demanding the schools to admit their children. As Mekhribon states, "Parents are customers, they can demand what they want".

Furthermore, Noila had reported about the cases of "awakening" of parents of adult children with disabilities who were reaching out to school to give their adult children education. "I am not a defectologist[8]", Noila highlighted. Then she continued,

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[8] *Defectologist* – (the term from the former Soviet Union) a teacher for students with disabilities

"I never said I am. But people are coming. I try my best to work the way they [defectologists] do."

Noila further made a reference to the case, where a woman brought her 21-year-old-son kindly asking the teacher to teach him (Noila-8-18). Noila explained to the woman that the Project encompasses only children from five to nine years old, and that she could not teach her son, because he was already an adult. However, the woman was so desperate to send her adult son to school that she offered to give teacher "as much [money] as she would ask for" (Noila-8-18). Noila refused to take her money, telling that she could not educate him. Everything she could do was "to give her a piece of advice" (Noila-9-26).

> [a] woman comes to me and says that she will bring her 21-year old son to me to teach. I answer her: "Our project covers children from five to nine years old, I cannot teach your child. He is already an adult." {...} 21 years old! Just think, how [am I supposed to] bring 21-year-old here [to the classroom] and teach him at the first grade? "Teacher, I will give as much money as you ask for", she [mother] said offering me [money]. (Noila-8-18)

She also told about another similar case when parents of adult with disability desperately reached out to school. Noila shared,

> And there was a woman who was in her thirties. She, actually, was in need for a deaf education specialist. Her [parents] said that they wanted to give her education. How do I teach [the woman] who is in her thirties? "Why you didn't do it until this day?", I asked them. They said: "Teacher, [but] this [inclusive education] has just been opened, [it has been] just appeared at school *(mentions the number of the school she works at)*, we have not heard about it [inclusion of children with disabilities] before." People are awakening now in our country, can you see? They even bring older generations now. I did not know that [there are so many young people with disabilities out there who did not get any kind of education]. They [their parents] were hiding them. (Noila-9-30)

> They did not give her any education, [they] did not seek for any deaf education specialist help. They kept her at home. The just hid her. (Noila-11-7)

Noila made an important point here saying that parents who were hiding their children with disabilities were "awakening" and reaching out to schools to give their

children quality education. However, they came across the issue that there the inclusion school program in Uzbekistan did not embrace young people with disabilities, leaving them without opportunity to study.

Mekhribon told that parents from long before did not want to admit that their child had a disability and refused to send him/her to special schools. Even if the students in her class are registered as "inclusive" students at the moment, they were present at her class from before but they have just received the diagnosis from the psychological-medical-pedagogical commission.

> Well, parents do not always admit that their child is sick. They want their child to be healthy like any other kid. They think that their child should be educated in ordinary school, good school like this one. (Mekhribon-2-11)

> Parents mostly hide them [their children with disabilities]. Even if they are told to send their children to special schools, they refuse to and bring [them to the regular school]. (Mekhribon-2-16)

Teachers mentioned about the attitudes to inclusion of parents of children without disabilities. There was a reason behind the fact that parents "kept quiet" and "accepted to a certain degree" inclusive practices. Dilbar believes that this is owing to the expected policy of student-weighed allocation in inclusive classes, by which their children without disabilities will get a chance to get more of teacher's attention compared to studying in overcrowded classes. The smaller class and grade sizes would mean more individual attention.

> {...} they say that classes will not exceed 25 students. For example, in classes instructed in Russian there are 40 students. That is why if there are 25 students and 3 inclusive children, parents [of children without disabilities] [think that] there are fewer number of students in the class and teacher will pay more attention to their children. (Dilbar-5-38)

3.3.2 Disability and religion

As Nam (2019) points out, in general, Uzbeks appear to be compassionate towards people with disabilities, arguably due to Islamic beliefs and principles that are prevalent in the society and believe that members of the community have to take care of vulnerable people. Similar to this notion, Mekhribon mentioned about the premise

for success of inclusion policy in Uzbekistan. This was the mentality of Uzbek people and the values cherished by them. Teacher told about the peculiar characteristics of Uzbek people, which could be considered as the premise for successful inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms.

> {...} our people *((pauses for a couple of seconds))* are not stone-hearted. Even if they do not know those scientific terms, our people, customs, traditions... anyway, we cannot live being indifferent to people surrounding us, if one has hard time or has a disability, we visit them as much as we can. People do not get isolated here. I believe, it is the similar situation at other places as well. Everywhere.. That is a person.. The person has to live with dignity and value. (Mekhribon-13-4)

However, it is worth mentioning that the pitying attitude towards the disability was obvious from the teachers' comments. Maftuna used an adjective "poor" to refer to the student with disability in her class. Moreover, the teacher was found to link disability with religion. For Maftuna, it is God who "have offended" the child granting him with disability.

> {...} the most, most severe child — [he] is in my class. {...} Oh, God offended [this] poor child. (Maftuna-2-14)

Moreover, Maftuna, Zulfiya and Nilufar were found to be thankful for not having a disability, not having a child with disability as well as not having anyone in their surroundings who happen to have a disability.

4. Teachers' Expectations about Further Changes

In interviews with the teaching staff, two main things were repeatedly observed - valuing beneficial aspect of inclusion as well as commitment to a change. Teachers discussed factors that could support the movement towards inclusive practices. Two key factors, representing three main categories, emerged through the data that could contribute to change. These factors are societal awareness towards inclusion and organizational and structural changes. It is worth mentioning that this theme is highly correlated with barriers theme. They are presented each separately for the purpose of achieving greater clarity. Also, there are some points in the change theme that need to

be highlighted. Considerable evidence in the data indicated that teachers tried their best in the way to overcoming these barriers.

4.1 Societal Awareness Towards Inclusion

United Nations Country Team noted that in spite of a strong legislative framework to ensure the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, social discrimination remained a significant obstacle in Uzbekistan with national and local authorities still demonstrating limited capacity to enforce and institutionalize inclusion. The majority of the interview participants believed that the social view towards people with disabilities should be changed. Furthermore, teachers were found to be concerned about children with disabilities who were hidden, and they believed that the awareness-raising campaigns were necessary in Uzbekistan.

4.1.2 Raising awareness about inclusion

As Mekhribon mentioned, informing works about inclusive education on a larger scale throughout the country have to be conducted.

> Wide informing works have to be carried out. Mutual methodical assistance among the schools has to be strengthened. Institutes have begun this, because they said that they started to consult in teacher training institutions. Every three years we get a training. We get to know the things we do not know this year three years later. What is it? It has to be improved. They recommend methodic manuals every year, these need to be distributed to every school. (Mekhribon-15-13)

In another opinion about the changes that have to be made for a more inclusive school and society, the importance of acceptance of inclusion by parents of students without disabilities was underlined. "Parents have to understand that diversity is a norm" (Mekhribon-12-24), argues Mekhribon.

> I believe, this mainly depends on school, mahalla (district) committee, pedagogical team's informing works. Ah, and also it depends on parents' level of erudition. For example, if parents come to an understanding that diversity is a norm - they will never be against it [inclusion]. (Mekhribon-12-22)

4.2 Structural and Organizational Changes

Promoting inclusion means stimulating discussion, encouraging positive attitudes and improving educational and social frameworks to cope with new demands in education structures and governance (Loreman et al., 2010). It involves improving inputs, processes and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner in their learning environment and at the system level to support the entire learning experience (Loreman et al., 2010). The achievement of inclusion rests on governments' willingness and capacities to adopt policies, addressing issues of equity in public expenditures on education, developing intersectoral linkages and approaching inclusive education as a constituent element of lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2009). In order inclusive practices to be successful the recommendations or wishes of the teachers implementing inclusion at sites need to be taken into account and addressed in a timely manner (Forlin, 1998). As stated above, in concerns theme, there were many organizational and structural concerns that have to be addressed in order to implement inclusive education. Despite the similarity in the names of codes and categories, what are presented here are mainly teachers' suggestions about changing these issues. Following is a detailed description of suggestions as school and classroom physical structure, class size, degree of disability, curriculum, support and teacher education.

4.2.1 School and classroom physical structure

The majority of teachers believed that changing the physical structure of the schools and the classrooms was necessary in order to be able to accommodate children with disabilities, specifically children with physical disabilities. It is worth mentioning, that teachers were aware of the main ideas of inclusive education that make it different from mere integration. They understood well the need for adjusting the school, the class, educational plan and other things to student with a disability but not vice versa. Currently, there were too many places, for example, toilets and other places that were not accessible for students with physical disabilities. Some teachers admitted that it would be too difficult to change the school structure completely. As an alternative way,

they asked for adapting the current structure of the school to meet the needs of those students.

> {...} the conditions have to be created [to meet the needs of students with disabilities], because in inclusive education that is the school that has to adjust to the child. Not the child to the school, but the school to the child has to be adjusted. (Mekhribon-14-17)

In addition, a considerable part of concerns about implementing inclusive education in Uzbekistan were related to the inability of the piloting schools to accommodate all the students with disabilities to be admitted to these schools. The project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs" had encompassed only five regions of Uzbekistan out of total 13. Schools that adapted inclusion policy were located in one city per region. At the time of the study the number of schools per each city was limited to three to four schools. This was true even in a densely populated capital city, Tashkent, with the population of more than two million people. As a result, this situation has led to a range of inconveniences and difficulties for all those involved in the process. Only three to four schools were accommodated to welcome students with disabilities in the cities with the population that ranges from 140,000 to 2,5 million people. This created issues for the teachers and parents of the students with disabilities. Nevertheless, teachers were assured by authorities that the number of schools which adopted inclusive practices would soon be increased.

> {...} anyway, all schools are said to be attracted to [inclusive education] (Mekhribon-11-22)

4.2.2 Class size

A number of participants commented on the need for smaller classes in order to successfully teach students with disabilities, as well as some of the teachers put it as a condition for successful inclusion. Teachers were informed that the new policy of student-weighted allocation would soon start to be practiced. Normative documents on teacher-student ratio in Uzbekistan schools say that there should be no more than thirty-five students in class per teacher. The class size of three interviewed teachers was larger than this indicator. Even if this issue did not cause huge problems for the teachers

in the past, at times when children with disabilities were mostly excluded from general education, during interviews it was reported by teachers that they were experiencing a lot of difficulties due to the large class sizes. The issue was not solved yet, though educational authorities claimed that soon class sizes would be reduced. This had not been put into practice yet. Nevertheless, teachers seemed to be excited about new upcoming policy. They mentioned that in inclusive classroom one student with disability was expected to carry a weighting of two. If the class consisted of twenty-five students and included three students with disabilities, then the class size would be counted as thirty-one students. In this case, the teacher would be able to receive classroom teaching allowance in full.

> {...} director of the regional department of public education said there are 39-42 students per class now. Their support [to us as they told] would be not to exceed the number of students 30 students per class. Or [in case] if there are 3 children with disabilities, the class would not include more than 25 students. Because if there are 3 children with disabilities in 25 students' class, this class is considered to be full. Currently, if there are 25 students in the class, the percent [the amount of money for classroom teaching that] we receive is lower. If I have 30 students in my class, I will receive 80%, but if I have a child with disability, I can receive full amount {...} (Mekhribon-16-29)

The new policy of student-weighted allocation was going to be directly linked to the salary teachers would receive. Similarly, teachers numerously mentioned about the pay they would get in case if their class included certain number of students with a disability, or "inclusive kids", and in case not.

> If the number of students [in class] exceeds 30, 100% of payment for classroom teaching will be payed, [while] for 25 students 80% will be payed. For example, if it is 100.000 [Uzbek sums] for classroom teaching, [in case] if there are 25 students [in your class] you get 80.000 [Uzbek sums]. That's why teachers say that it doesn't matter they teach 30 students or 31. (Dilbar-8-18)

Nevertheless, Zulfiya sounded very sceptic about these changes. She did not think that this was possible in Uzbekistan to have 25 students per class due to the fact that for this the school had to be very huge.

In case of Mukhabbat, teacher had some insights on additional incentives from the government for including children with disabilities into regular classrooms that were different from other teacher views. She believed that expecting for additional

incentives from the government for including children with disabilities would mean that she stated she had worked more than her colleagues at school who did not have children with disabilities in their classes. She associated the fact of expecting for additional incentives from the government with "minnat", which is an Uzbek word with a negative connotation, meaning "a reminder about all the good deeds one did". She said,

> If I demand incentives, this will mean that I state that I work more than other teachers, so this will be my minnat. (Mukhabbat-2-23)

> {...} we do not wait for it. If they do, let them do it. Well, I do not need that. Because... I do not know... It seems like a minnat for a work you have done. And I do not need that. Because the government pays a pension for that child [with disability]... The government has already done what it can... It has brought the child [into the regular school]; it is paying a salary to us... we cannot ask for additional [remunerations]... (Mukhabbat-9-27)

Mukhabbat had never "waited for" additional payment, or even "thought about it" (Mukhabbat-9-38). Teacher found to be more concerned about the government's "readiness" to pay. As the interview went on, she added that she would not mind getting additional incentives in case, if the government, its "condition" was ready to pay more for including students with disabilities.

> If it [the government] is ready, if it gives [additional payment] we will not say "no". However, we will not ask for it. We will take the conditions into consideration. (Mukhabbat-2-25)

Moreover, Mukhabbat stated that she was being paid exactly the same amount of salary as her colleagues.

> For instance, when you get the salary, you also may know about it, they [teachers] tell about how much they got on their plastic [cards]. There is no difference [in our salaries] (Mukhabbat-9-40)

Mukhabbat sounded like she was speaking on behalf of all the teachers who were involved in school inclusion of students with disabilities. Nevertheless, the fact of not expecting for additional incentives proved not to be true in case of the rest of the teachers. Nazokat considered the additional remuneration to her salary to be a motivation, or stimulus to work with children with disabilities in her class.

It [remuneration] would be [like] a reward for a teacher. It would be [like] the reward for a teacher for working with these kinds of children. (Nazokat-11-33)

4.2.3 Degree of disability

Notably, some of the teachers suggested that students with a certain degree of disability should be included. As Makhbuba stressed, teachers were given a promise that children with mild disabilities only would be sent to the regular schools.

They promised [that they will send students with] MILD [disabilities only]. [The ones with] mild intellectual disabilities. But [the ones] we have are with severe [intellectual disabilities]. (Makhbuba-4-25)

Later in the interview, Makhbuba gave reasons for her concern, the reasons preference for children with the certain degree of disability as it is described in the following excerpt.

It's hard to word with [children with] severe [disabilities]. If they were of mild degree [of disability] it would not cause so much difficulties. It [also] would not have negative influence on children [without disabilities]. [Moreover], there would not be any complaints from parents [of children without disabilities]. The presence of [children with] severe [difficulties] becomes a reason for conflict situations a bit. (Makhbuba-7-18)

4.2.4 Curriculum

The research has found that some of the in interviewed teachers were concerned about the requirement for reliance on standard curriculum as well as about the standard duration of the lesson at school. Noila, who had a student with cerebral palsy worried that 45 minute's periods were too much to handle for the student in terms of physical ability. As for Noila, in inclusive classrooms the class should last for 35 minutes. Teachers also believed that educational departments should relieve them from the stress of maintaining a fixed minimum standard of achievement for all students. In addition, they thought that monitoring had to be carried out in a different form, in which the student with a disability included would not be counted (Dilbar). Although teachers' responses varied about the suitability of the content of the curricula to the abilities of children with disabilities, some of them had a strong belief that it is matter

of teaching styles and strategies. They believed that it was the teacher's responsibility to change, adapt and vary in their teaching methods in order to be able to accommodate children with disabilities.

> Every work has its own difficulties. {...} if the student does not understand [the lesson] it will be my fault. That's me who cannot make them understand [it]. (Mukhabbat-8-32)

The passion of this statement illustrates the level of commitment to not only the teaching profession but to the intent of inclusive education overall. The teachers were found to be aware of the main ideas of inclusive education that made it different from integration. They understood well the need for adjusting educational plan and other things to student with a disability.

4.2.5 Support

All the teachers interviewed hold a strong belief that inclusion will not work without support. A support from teacher assistant, as well as support between teachers was mentioned. Utilization of paraprofessionals is a common approach to support students with disabilities within general education settings (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001). The repeated cry of teachers involved in this research was that they desperately need a teacher assistant to support. Further in the interview, teachers expressed that the situation of absence of support was promised to be changed.

> {...} they say {...} they will provide us with teacher assistants. I wish. Let's see. (Zulfiya-15-20)

Nevertheless, Makhbuba and Ekaterina and were found to be concerned and felt skeptical about the reality of provision of teacher assistants in regular schools because of the funding issues.

> I do not know. They just save on all of this. They [in Europe] are separately paid for it, but here, no one will pay for it separately. (Ekaterina-5-15)

The need for collaboration among the schools was recognized in implementing of inclusive education by the educational authorities and an effort to establish

collaboration among the schools that had adopted inclusive practices and those which did not was told to be established.

> {...} to schools all over the region it has been said that if any methodical assist is needed they can contact schools [that are implementing inclusive practices] get consultation, and also make their [lesson] plans. (Mekhribon-10-22)

4.2.6 Teacher education

Teachers believed that the changes that have to be made to the system of teacher education to meet the needs the of all the students were important. They acknowledged the fact that courses on inclusive education have to be introduced in the undergraduate programs.

> They have to include it [course on inclusive education] into the [university] program. This has to be present in programs of universities, [as well as teacher] qualification development institutions. (Mukhabbat-15-40)

> I believe that Defectology has to be taught. Defectology has to be taught wherever the pedagogy is taught. Then, now and in future students will be of two types, [those who are] normal and [those] with disabilities. I would recommend to [Ministry of] Higher Education that Defectology [subject] has to be introduced in each faculty. (Mukhabbat-2-13)

As Ekaterina reported "there were no courses [related to inclusive education] in professional development institutes" (Ekaterina-3-12). She also shared the perspective that she thought it was good initiative that they started to conduct the trainings for schoolteachers on inclusive education. (Ekaterina-7-3). The similar perspective was shared by Mekhribon as well.

> They [methodic manuals] need to be distributed. And it would be good if they included lectures on inclusive education to teacher professional development courses. They [teachers] would know about it [inclusive education] faster. Teachers tell the new things [in education field to their colleagues] when they go back to school. (Mekhribon-15-17)

Zulfiya also elaborated upon the fact that while the implementation of inclusive education initiative was challenging, all of the school staff had benefited from it in terms of the trainings. Nevertheless, she admitted the fact that the limited number of trainings was not enough when she pointed,

It is difficult for us, actually. Neither speech and language therapist in our school, nor us, teachers, never got educated about the inclusive education in the university, [am I] right? Two- to three-day seminars on inclusion were useful. However, that is much less than we [really] need. (Zulfiya-9-25)

V. Conclusion

There are two sections in this chapter: summary and discussion. The chapter starts with the summary of the research. The following section consolidates the research findings through a discussion of the results with reference to previous literature based on four main research questions: (1) what are elementary school teachers' perceptions of inclusion? (2) what are elementary school teachers' perspectives on the benefits of inclusion? (3) what are teachers' concerns about including children with disabilities? (4) what are teachers' expectations regarding further changes for inclusive education for children with disabilities in Uzbekistan? This is followed by discussion of the limitations of the research and by suggestions offered for future studies. The chapter concludes with a presentation of implications for policy and practice.

1. Summary

This research is based on the premise that Uzbekistani teachers' understanding of and attitudes toward inclusive education are set within a cultural context that is different from that of many other contexts, especially from that of western countries. The research conducted through the journey of this dissertation is an attempt to investigate this issue and to thereby contribute to scholarship on one of the under-researched themes in Central Asia (Rouse & Lapham, 2013b). Rouse and Lapham have stated that if education for all is to become a reality, then inclusion is a necessary precondition (Rouse & Lapham, 2013a); this is true for the countries of Central Asia as it is elsewhere. Children with disabilities should be educated alongside their peers without disabilities in regular education settings to the greatest extent possible.

Extending access to education is part of a worldwide agenda (Rouse, 2008). The path to inclusion for children with disabilities and other special-education needs is long and complex (Rouse & Lapham, 2013c). Furthermore, inclusion is a long process, a road to travel rather than a destination, but much can be done at every level to work to develop more inclusive practice at every level (Mittler, 2005). As Mittler (2005) stresses, "The classroom of the ordinary school is the starting point and end point for such a

journey". Nevertheless, it is important to clearly recognize that the final goal of inclusion is not only to get children in school, but to ensure schooling results in good learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2005).

With the adoption of an inclusive approach to education over the last few decades, the teacher's role in ensuring the educational success of every pupil has come to be considered vital for the success of inclusion. Literature on this issue highlights the view that, because teachers' acceptance is likely to affect their commitment to policy implementation, successful implementation is largely dependent on teachers' positive attitude toward the policy. It is important to note that if a policy of inclusive education is to be effective, it is essential that notice is taken of teachers' concerns and that those concerns are addressed in the immediate future (Forlin, 1998).

Until now, inclusive education in Uzbekistan has been implemented primarily as an internationally sponsored project, but not beyond. To investigate the experiences of elementary teachers in including students with disabilities in regular classes, we recruited nine practicing teachers with at least one year of experience teaching in an inclusive classroom. To ensure that the teachers understood the study and were able to participate in a meaningful way, only teachers who had received training in inclusive education were invited. A phenomenological qualitative research methodology featuring in-depth interviews was applied. This study focused on conducting interviews with teachers who were involved in the UN-sponsored project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan."

Data collection and analysis were carried out with the utmost care for the ethical issues. The data analysis applied thematic analysis method. The analysis yielded four topics under which all interview data could be grouped. These data were assigned the identity of main themes under which a total of ten sub-themes and thirty-one major codes were grouped. The main findings revolve around four topics: teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with disabilities; teachers' perspectives on the benefits of inclusion; teachers' concerns about including children with disabilities; and teachers' expectations regarding further changes. After an in-depth discussion of critical methodological issues germane to the research findings, the study identifies limitations of the research and provides implications for policy and practice

as well as directions for future research. The perspective was strictly the ones of teachers themselves. Thus, throughout this research, teachers' perspectives were central. The qualitative analysis revealed that teachers hold heterogeneous perceptions about inclusion. They cover a wide and a broad selection of topics and aspects. Some of the perceptions reflect progressive thoughts about inclusion (for example, participation, equal opportunities), while others reflect the traditional approaches of integration.

This research was not meant to contribute to new ideas about inclusive classroom practice or methodological scholarship on inclusion. Instead, it hoped to bring out teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education for students with disabilities in Uzbekistan and to make a contribution to scholarship on a series of under-researched themes in Central Asia. The recommendations for policy and practice are based on the interview data conducted with elementary school teachers at schools in Uzbekistan.

2. Discussion

This section attempts to capture the essence of teachers' experiences in the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities through a discussion of the main findings. From the analysis, it was possible to identify four major themes that were raised by teachers who work on sites where children with disabilities are included. These main themes relate to elementary school teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with disabilities; teachers' perspectives on the benefits of inclusion; teachers' concerns about including children with a disability; and teachers' expectations regarding further changes for inclusive education for children with disabilities. In this section of the dissertation, the major findings of this research will be discussed.

Elementary school teachers' perceptions of inclusive education

Teachers were found to have opposing viewpoints when it comes to the essence of inclusive teaching practices in their classrooms. A part of interview participants illustrated inclusive education practices as same as old practice, while another part acknowledged the fact that these are new practices. But mostly teachers were assured

that these are the practices same to the practices that existed before, but at the same time there have multiple distinguishable features. The perspective that the current practices were same as old practices was communicated by teachers, who did not receive any new students with disabilities, but had newly identified ones within their regular classes. It is worth noting that the educational authorities' official recognition of the fact that children with disabilities should be taught in general education schools was reported to be something new for teachers.

Findings of this research showed that some teachers considered the inclusion to be a mere physical placement of a student with a disability at regular school. This goes in line with the findings of research on inclusive education in Brazil and Portugal (Manrique, Dirani, Frere, Moreira, & Arezes, 2019), in which authors conclude that inclusion of the student with special educational needs in schools should not take place only with their physical integration, but must also consider their integration at social, emotional and educational levels.

Moreover, similar to earlier findings on teachers' attitudes towards including children with disabilities in regular classrooms, teachers in Uzbekistan schools were found to be not very accepting of including difficult-to-teach students and "severe" students, or children with an intellectual or physical disability into regular classrooms. Teachers were most concerned about ensuring that not only the rights of the student with disability are being addressed, but that the rights of the regular children, and their own rights as teachers, are additionally being considered during inclusive practices. It was proposed by these teachers that the rights of all children are best served by including students with only mild disabilities. Teachers in Uzbekistan also appeared concerned by their own expectations regarding their role during inclusive practices. Teachers' need to be responsible and accountable for additional children with intellectual or physical disabilities as well as their regular class children concerned them greatly.

It is worth noting that teachers in this research majorly tended to give only a descriptive characteristic of the student's disability. In most of the cases, when asked about the diagnosis of the child included into their classroom participants had a hard time to recall the disability type, which they were once informed about. Thus, not being

aware of the diagnosis was generally observed among teachers. In addition, findings of this research show that teachers consider the need for this knowledge not associated with them as general schoolteachers, suggesting that this kind of information should be known by doctors, psychologist, and defectologists. As a result, teachers generally were seemed not to care much about the exact disability type of their students. This phenomenon can be explained by teachers' insufficient knowledge in the area of special education and inclusive teaching. This finding could be linked to a lack of knowledge in the field of special education which is duly considered to be necessary in practicing inclusion. These findings are consistent with those from another research, where Page and her colleagues (Page, Boyle, McKay, & Mavropoulou, 2019) have found that there was a lack of formal diagnosis around children's disability in conversations with teachers. The researchers conclude that this may be caused by the situation that specialists are not always available in the Cook Islands and accurate formal diagnoses of disability are not always possible. On the other hand, as Reid (2005) argued in his book on dyslexia in inclusion, the label can sometimes lead to unfavorable consequences. According to Reid (2005), although a label generally brings a set of expectations related to a more informed selection of resources and while it "can be helpful, it can also be disadvantageous and may lead to a resignation that dyslexia can only be dealt with by "experts". This is a misguided assumption, and may lead the teacher to feel she or he possesses neither the skills, nor the training, to deal with dyslexia in the classroom" (Reid, 2005).

Inclusion is considered to be a process (Ainscow, 2005a), not an outcome. Nevertheless, the findings of this study suggest that achieving literacy was considered very important by some of the teachers, while most of the students with disabilities included, had problems with written work, reading and counting. Each of the teachers were concerned about achieving literacy in their students to some extent. At the same time, international experience in inclusive education shows that adaptations of educational tools and assignments allowed many students to work successfully on school activities. For example, the use of assistive device enabled some students to maintain an adequate posture to promote optimal performance, concentration, and endurance within the classroom. Moreover, the regular teachers were found to make

few, if any adaptations in instruction usually as the result of being restricted by the requirement to meet standard curriculum. The literature on the related issue showed that this may be because of the judgement among regular educators that the instructional and curricular adaptations required of children with disabilities are simply unfeasible in the regular classroom (Minke, Bear, Deemer, & Griffin, 1996).

Although it is argued that regular classrooms teachers are responsible for teaching a diversity of students with a wide range of achievement levels (Minke et al., 1996), the findings from this study indicate that the interview participants felt that only children with mild disabilities should be included in the regular education classroom. This is consistent with the prevailing concern that schools have about including children with severe disabilities in regular education (Loreman et al., 2007; Wilde & Avramidis, 2011). Thus, teachers in this study were found to be more willing to include a student with mild disabilities rather than with severe ones.

As Carter and Kennedy (2006) noted, peer support has consistently and successfully been used as a practical approach for engaging students with disabilities in inclusive schools. Moreover, the research in this field has consistently demonstrated that peer support has academic, as well as interpersonal and social, benefits for a range of students, including those with disabilities (Maheady, Harper & Mallette, 2001). The positive side of this practice is that it reduces teacher-student ratios as students are in role the tutors for one another. As with the other collaborative arrangements, there is a substantial evidence to support the use of peer support in facilitating the inclusion of student with disability, with benefits including enhancing academic performance, improving interpersonal relationships, and much greater acceptance of individual differences, whereas like all collaborative arrangements, successful peer support arrangements require teachers to engage in careful planning and explicit teaching (Loreman et al., 2010).

It is worthwhile noting that in interview with Mekhribon, the teacher stated that "Diversity is a norm" (Mekhribon-13-8). The researcher did not hesitate to ask whether this statement was mentioned during the trainings on inclusive education conducted in the framework of the Project. Teacher answered affirmatively. Acknowledging this fact by teachers of general education schools is believed to bring about only positive results in the road of implementing inclusive education practices.

Perspectives of teachers regarding benefits of inclusive education

Generally, persons with disabilities in Uzbekistan are categorized as a part of vulnerable population by state and general public, and therefore most of the assistances and support measures of government and public organizations tend to have a charity and medical rehabilitation nature (Turdiev, 2015). Nevertheless, as Cologon (2014) argues, misunderstanding of inclusive education occurs when it is viewed as a "special effort" or "added (optional) extra" born out of "charity", or "kindness". The previous studies found that beliefs formed by religion have a direct influence on how students with disabilities are perceived by teachers. This research showed that teachers were strongly influenced by their cultural and religious background, when it comes to inclusive education. Teachers majorly believed that the values of inclusive education were in accordance with their faith. Findings of this study show that teachers tended to associate the practice of including and teaching students with disabilities with "savob". Like it was mentioned in the previous chapter, "savob" is a term used in a religious context. Teachers were found to regard including and teaching students with disabilities as doing "savob", or "a good deed and action". Teaching students with disabilities was "savob" for some of the teachers, which meant they were including a student or decided to do so with a hope that it would be counted as "savob" by Allah. This finding goes in line with a research results conducted in Egypt by Hassanein (2015). Viewing inclusion of students with disabilities as doing "savob", or doing a good deed, is considered to eliminate to a certain degree the fact that these children are entitled for education in regular education schools legally, as it is their human right. The similar attitude of treating people with disabilities patronizingly, tolerating them but not considering as equals has been described by Noman Kunc (2000) as benevolence, the third stage of four key responses to people considered different. As Adam (1978, in Peterson & Hittie, 2010) highlighted, benevolence can become another method of exclusion, a way of preventing human interactions.

Furthermore, as Giangreco and Broer (2005) noted, cultural and attitudinal barriers may bring about a lack of understanding by teachers and support staff and result in assigning assistance to students instead of adjusting curriculum or settings. Even if all of the teachers got a training about including students with disabilities into

their regular classrooms, still a few of them remained to be influenced by their cultural and religious beliefs about the disability and people with disabilities. It is worth mentioning that teachers hoped that their students without disabilities were learning about doing "savob" as well. With this perspective of inclusion, successful inclusion of the students with disabilities can be considered to be under the threat to a certain degree. Unless the teachers change their perspective and admit the fact that being educated, being included is nothing but a human right, responsible inclusion is assumed to be hard to achieve.

Teachers' concerns about including children with disabilities

The notion of teachers' concerns about including children with disabilities can be used to direct attention at what needs to be done to improve the education for any children. As it is argued in previous studies, teachers encounter difficulties when they experience barriers to implementation of inclusion at schools. A research by Egilson & Traustadottir (2009) on participation of students with physical disabilities in school environment showed that the teacher played a key role in whether a child was an active participant in class. Moreover, barriers to learning and participation can prevent access to a school or limit participation within it (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

The push for the inclusion of diverse learners into the general classroom setting has not always been echoed by increased knowledge, collaboration, and preservice experiences in inclusive teaching practice for future teachers (Fuchs, 2010). Ball and Tyson (2011) stress that promoting inclusivity through and within teacher education programmes remains a persistent challenge and a necessary imperative for the 21st century. As previous studies showed, the lack of specific knowledge and related training on inclusive methodologies discouraged general education teachers from supporting children with special educational needs in their classroom (Hettiarachchi & Das, 2014). Teachers in the present study had limited opportunities to be trained for inclusive settings before the actual practice of inclusion started. In addition, their pre-service training did not contain any course related to teaching in inclusive setting. Similar to this finding, pre-service teachers in both special and general education programs in the study of Stites and her colleagues (2019) reported that they needed more experiences in inclusive settings due to the fact they did not feel prepared to teach in inclusive settings.

Other researchers (You, Kim, & Shin, 2019) found that the direct interaction with students with disabilities and the hands-on experience of teaching those students are needed to believe in the positive impacts of inclusive education on cognitive development of the student with disability. This in its turn shows that it is urgent to rearrange teacher preparation courses at the undergraduate level to include more experience related to teaching students with and without disabilities in the regular class.

Despite many benefits of inclusive education reported by teachers, the study found that there were still many obstacles to its implementation. Physical barriers, as disabling design of school, were found to be the next major barriers to being included and to include. Lapham and Rousse (2013a) in their case study research across the Central Asian countries concluded that existing policies on assessment, pedagogy, and curriculum are inflexible, and school buildings across the region are inaccessible to children and adults with impaired mobility and other disabilities. Although inclusion of students has been advocated for years, the construction and architectural design of most school buildings is still aimed to fit the population of students without disabilities (Egilson & Traustadottir, 2009). In case of international inclusive practices, with present-day legislation and the disability policy as a basis, participation in school activities is a right for students with disability (Eriksson & Granlund, 2004). Although the implementation of inclusive education also entails looking for the ways of designing and managing school buildings to improve architectural accessibility for students with disabilities, several studies have revealed that students with physical disabilities often have difficulties with participation in school activities (Eriksson & Granlund, 2004; Hemmingson & Borell, 2002; Hemmingsson & Borell, 2000).

Similarly, the findings of this study indicated that the physical environmental barriers of school restricted children with physical disabilities from being able to attend the schools. Furthermore, environmental barriers to access the regular school presented difficulties to parents of children with physical disabilities. If their child could not walk, parents, mentioned by participants, had to wait until they could in order to be able to send to the regular school. Sending a student who is a wheelchair user to a regular school would mean that parents had to take a responsibility of a delivery of their child to the classroom on their back in some of the cases. The distance from home to the nearest school as well as very limited number of schools adopted inclusive policy were

decisive factors for parents to bring the student to school or not. Similarly, some researchers indicated that in developing countries schools and classroom are often not accessible due to physical environmental barriers like stairs, toilet, chairs, classroom designs, tables, and playground. Interview data showed that there was a necessity to design school buildings in a way that also consider children with disabilities. A conducive physical environment would give children with disabilities an opportunity to exercise their right for education to the fullest.

Interview data suggests that environmental barrier presents one of the greatest obstacles that hinders successful implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan. In order to minimize the burden on teachers and, most importantly, avoiding the need for implementation of environmental modifications in schools in order to accommodate student's needs, the medical-pedagogical commissions went for choosing an alternative way "to solve the situation". A strategy for "solving a situation", as it was reported, was referring "severe" children, specifically children with physical disabilities who use the wheelchair by virtue of disability, to special schools due to the inadequate physical environment of the regular school. However, this hardly represents inclusive attitudes. Doing so, this special commission, responsible for the referral of children, was depriving a student's right to get quality education in the regular school along with his peers.

The literature has pointed out that inadequate provision of trained staff and lack of funds are the commonly reported barriers to inclusion (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleeuwen, 1998; Downing, Eichinger, & Williams, 1997; York, 1995). Similarly, the present study found financial barrier to be one of major concerns of school educators.

Teachers in this study also felt daunted by large class sizes and the pressure of meeting standard curriculum. Findings of this study indicated that time constraints because of the large class sizes, not being able to devote much time, not being able to teach "to write, to read and count" to students with disabilities included was found to lead to feeling conscience, feeling guilt. This finding is in accordance with Forlin's (1998) findings on personal concerns of teachers about including children with disabilities in regular classroom, in which including students with disabilities was interpreted to mean devoting extra time to the student and this led to feeling of guilt when a teacher was unable to spend adequate time with neither students with disabilities nor students

without. As Forlin (1998) stated, this emotional state of teachers was found to act as a potential stressor that may contribute to willingness to include students with disability in future.

Teachers in this study hardly mentioned about the case of making modifications to the curriculum so that the student with disability could be involved in the learning process meaningfully. As Singh (2009) stated, inclusion is primarily about belonging, membership and acceptance. However, interviews showed that students in inclusive classes were barely given real opportunities to participate. In most cases teachers appeared to misunderstand the notion of inclusion, incorrectly considering the definitions of integration as inclusion, when mere placement of students with disabilities into general education schools was understood by teachers as inclusion. This misunderstanding paired with the pressure of meeting existing curriculum without any modifications has resulted in practicing by teachers so-called micro-exclusion (D'Allessio, 2011) of children with disabilities in their classes. D'Allessio (2011) notes that micro-exclusion occurs when adaptations or accommodations to the environment, curriculum or pedagogy that are required to include a child are not made (Cologon, 2014). This indicates to the fact that segregation can occur socially within so-called "inclusive" setting when children are not given opportunity to participate, learn, and grow together (Cologon, 2014).

Teachers in this research tended to stress the social benefits of inclusion for children with disabilities. Indeed, students with disabilities benefit from the enhanced development of communication, social skills and other forms of adaptive behavior (Fisher et al., 2002; McDonnel, Thorson, Disher, Mathot-Buckner, Mendel & Ray, 2003). In the same way, friendships in and outside school are considered to be important for everyone and are one of the desired benefits of inclusion programs for all student (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2013; Carter et al., 2014). In addition to promoting students' self-esteem and self-determination, friendships also can foster students' learning, language development, and acceptance of individual differences (Field & Hoffman, 2012). However, as the interview data showed the students with disabilities were usually missing their opportunities to learn together during the lessons as it was found that in a few cases the lesson was organized in a way that excluded student with disability from

activities of the rest of the class in which students with disability was merely placed in the classroom, but not included. This was evident from teachers' comments describing the activities the student with disability was engaged in class. Teachers, as a rule, would give "individual tasks" to students with disabilities to complete and kept working with the rest of the class.

Teachers expectations regarding further changes

The smooth-running classroom is considered to be both the means and the ends for teachers. A major concern of teachers related to this was non-availability of resources, particularly with regard to support staff. As a result, teachers who participated in this research had to rely on the help of parents of children with disabilities as well as the classmates without disabilities for support with the student with a disability. Teachers were excited about the changes that were promised to occur in inclusive classes in terms of assistant teacher allocation. Nevertheless, it was noticed that a part of teachers was perceiving the role of the teacher assistant in the classroom in terms of potential opportunity to focus on working with students without disabilities primarily. Giangreco and his colleagues (Giangreco, Smith, & Pinckney, 2006), addressed the similar issue in regard to paraprofessional dilemma in inclusive school when they stated, "Although adding sufficiently trained and supervised paraprofessionals to classrooms may be appropriate under certain circumstances, this seemingly logical, relatively low cost, easy-to-implement, solution creates a dilemma. {...} we are suggesting that schools' potentially inappropriate utilization of paraprofessionals, or overreliance on them, is often an indicator of dysfunction in the ways that regular and special education systems operate."

As Rouse and Lapham (2013a) highlightes, in Central Asia, for many families, the first challenge is overcoming the widespread cultural stigma associated with disability as a divine punishment or sign of family dishonor. Issues of shame and stigma related to having child with disabilities are, of course, not unique to Uzbekistan. Indeed, similar factors are found to inhibit education for all in diverse societies across the greater Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia (Brown, 2005; Mitchell and Desai, 2005). However, while family stigma surrounding disability exists in other countries, it is

particularly severe in Central Asia (Rouse & Lapham, 2013a). Due to the religious views disability tend to be conceived by some people as a sort of punishment (Hassanein, 2015). For this reason, some parents believe that if they have got a child with disability that Allah is punishing them for something wrong which they have done in their life and as the result they feel ashamed and stigmatized. Consequently those parents hide their children and these children do not get the opportunity for getting a quality education (Hassanein, 2015). As Rouse and Lapham (2013a) stressed, many families need support to bring their children with disabilities into the community rather than hiding them at home.

Limitations of the Research

It is important to state the limitations of this research in order to view the overall impact of this dissertation and to identify areas of improvement for the future research projects. Moreover, the reader should note certain limitations of this research when reviewing the findings of this research. First, we would caution the reader to closely examine the comparability of their setting to the settings in which this research took place before drawing conclusions concerning the transferability of these findings. Teachers' experiences in the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities discussed in this dissertation are specific to the situation of including children with a disability in regular classrooms in Uzbekistan and are not necessarily generalizable to any other situation.

Secondly, it should be noted that this research addressed the perceptions and experiences of teachers regarding changes that occurred in their schools and classes when implementing inclusive teaching practice. Moreover, the participants, recruited for this study, were limited to only the ones who were involved in the UN-funded project of "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs". The data generated insights into the perspectives of teachers with experience of not less than one-year in teaching in inclusive classes. Teachers who did not have a history of receiving training in inclusion were not included into the study. That is, due to the assumption that teachers with and without experience and training with students with various levels and types of educational needs might have different views and perspectives (Topping & Maloney,

2005). Furthermore, this research did not involve subject teachers, head teachers and other school staff.

The conclusions to the research were based on self-reported experiences rather than actual observations of classroom events. No attempt was made to systematically observe in classrooms to confirm these findings. Only one interview was conducted with each teacher, with the exception of the telephone call follow-up to three of them. Thus, not every teacher was asked to address every issue, which arose, and it is not possible to determine the exact number of teachers who supported or did not support the various themes that are described in this dissertation.

In addition, this research did not address student outcomes that resulted from the development of the inclusive school program. While we have collected and disseminated some information addressing student outcomes, the intent of this research was not to address this issue.

Finally, interview participants' gender was limited to only females. There was no male teacher as an interview participant. Due to this limitation, gender differences in experiences in the implementation of inclusive education were not explored.

Future Directions for Research

This study showed that there are several avenues for future research. First, an investigation of pre-service teachers' perception of preparedness to teach in inclusive settings is essential to ensure that teachers are confident in their abilities to meet the academic and social needs of student with disabilities. This type of research could also reveal the gap in student teachers' training and education. An examination of courses offered to pre-service teachers in terms of special and inclusive education could also be an avenue of research as this would inform university educators where gaps and interests lie.

Furthermore, it is of interest to conduct large-scale studies in order to determine the relationships between teachers' years of teaching experience, teacher's experiences including students with disabilities, and perceptions of including students with disabilities among regular education classroom teachers (and/or subject teachers, head teachers, school staff). This may guarantee a more in-depth analysis of teachers'

perceptions as related to specific factors. In addition, conducting classroom observations may elicit additional information regarding the teaching strategies that occur in inclusive classrooms.

Finally, to address some of the limitations of this study, it is worthwhile to investigate the differences in perceptions of including students with disabilities among regular education classroom teachers (and/or subject teachers, head teachers, school staff) who do not have any training experience in inclusion and those who do. This research would help to identify challenges the teachers face who have no record of training in the area of inclusive education and would show the urgent need to organize in-service training opportunities. Exploring the perceptions and experiences in inclusive education of the male teachers is required as well.

Implications

Inclusion involves change (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). It involves changing the culture and organization of the school to ensure access and participation for all pupils currently in the school and also for others who are now in segregated provision but who may be joining the school at some time in the future (Mittler, 2000). There are several important implications of the issues raised in this research for the design of inclusive education policies in the country. If all stakeholders were to engage in the efforts outlined in recommendations of this dissertation, regular classroom teachers would find themselves well prepared and supported to bring quality education to all learners in inclusive settings.

Implications for Policy

A major barrier that prevents inclusive education to happen or be effective is absence of cohesive, clear-cut policy on including children with disabilities into regular classrooms (Alur & Timmons, 2009). Developing the policy of inclusive education should be on an urgent agenda. This study provides the following important insights in the policies that can support and strengthen implementation of inclusive practices in Uzbekistan.

The ways of designing and managing school buildings to improve accessibility for students with disabilities should be considered in the policy. Schools should

encourage teachers to collaborate across grade levels and subject areas, to improve the quality of inclusive teaching and learning. In addition, municipal and regional departments of public education must support the formation of strong networks of schools that enable teachers to share their knowledge and expertise in inclusive practices with other teachers across the network.

The findings of this research indicate that professional development for teachers, together with support and information for parents, is required. At a time when the classes in Uzbekistan get diverse, the professional development opportunities should be strengthened providing rich and engaging learning opportunities that challenge teachers to think critically, to question their approaches, and to reevaluate their inclusive practices. Lack of professional development opportunities for those who trained in the past and who still cling to traditional ways of working can make the road to inclusion rocky (Rouse & Lapham, 2013a). Thus, the importance of high-quality, sustained professional development for all those who work with children and new approaches to teacher training is vital. Coherent national policies on professional development for inclusion and the reform of initial teacher education in the state pedagogical universities are essential if teachers are to be better prepared to work in inclusive ways in the medium and long term (Rouse, 2010; Florian, 2011).

Working with special education children within the regular classroom settings must become an integrated part of course work at universities. This requires that university-based teacher education programmes should develop curricula that prepare teacher candidates for diversity and inclusion in regular classrooms. Most importantly, adequate pre-service teacher training is necessary in order to achieve successful implementation of inclusive practices in Uzbekistan. The review of current curricula of undergraduate degree Department of Pedagogy, Fergana State University indicated that there is no course related neither to special nor inclusive education. Course on Special Education and/or Inclusive Education has to be embedded into future teachers' curricula. It is important that the opportunities of field teaching experiences have to be provided to student teachers. Universities should insist that all teacher candidates must meet basic competency standards on inclusive practices in order to graduate.

The curricula of professional development institutions have to contain a part related to inclusive education. From this study, it was found that trainings did a lot for

teachers in their journey of understanding the overall idea of inclusive education, its purpose, "opened their eyes" regarding to teaching students with special needs. Teachers need systematic, intensive trainings, either as part of their qualification programs, as intensive and well-planned in-services, or as an ongoing process with related consultants. In order to support teachers, a legislative framework for education with a focus on the inclusion of learners with diverse abilities in regular schools and classrooms needs to be developed.

Also, government should allocate adequate funding to make inclusion successful for all of the stakeholders: teachers, students and parents. Renovating school buildings, solving the issue of inability of the school physical environment to accommodate students' needs is found to be urgent. Thus, the funding for careful, responsible reconstructions of schools has to be allocated. While the physical infrastructure of buildings can be adapted at a relatively low cost and the school day can be reorganized, implementing these or other solutions requires that education ministries and local education departments empower school administrators with sufficient flexibility to define their schools' needs (Rouse & Lapham, 2013a). Also, funding for researchers to conduct research on inclusive school and classroom practices is urgent to be allocated.

Supporting a human rights approach to education should be put on an agenda to develop inclusive practices in Uzbekistan further, which means that paternalistic and charity attitudes have to be substituted by "rights" attitudes to people with disabilities. For this, the government has to increase awareness about disability and diversity. The announcer of the TV programme watched by a researcher, without much hesitation, used the word "savob" to refer to the practice of including children with special needs into regular schools. Being included to regular schools should be regarded as the right of every children including children with disabilities.

Moreover, this study indicated the need for creating opportunities of school education for adults with disabilities, developing programs, through which adults with disabilities, who did not have any chance to get education, can study. Section 9, Level 1 of Primary Education International Standards Classification of Education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012) points out that "Formal and non-formal literacy programmes that are similar in complexity of content to programmes already classified

as primary education, aimed at adults and youth older than typical ISCED level 1 students, are also included at this level".

Uzbekistan with its population over than thirty-two million people is reported to have just two percent of people with disabilities. This indicator shows how far it is from international disability indicators (Turdiev, 2015) and indicates to the fact that the proper monitoring of people with disabilities needs to be carried out. A general lack of disaggregated data compound not only the problem of identifying accurate numbers of children affected by respective rights violations but, above all, the problem of pinpointing obstacles to services, rights violations and their severity for specific groups (UNICEF, 2016).

Implications for Field of Education

For inclusive practices to be successful the recommendations and wishes of the teachers implementing inclusion at sites need to be taken into account. The primary implications for practice from this research derive from the consistent finding that teachers need support in teaching classes that include students with disabilities. These needs relate to time, class size, training, additional personnel assistance and consideration of severity of disability. The ultimate success of inclusion efforts, then, depends on the extent to which such supports are made available.

Teachers in this study expressed that they were more willing to include students with mild disabilities than students with more severe disabilities, apparently because of teachers' perceived ability to carry on their teaching mission for the entire classroom. By implication, the more severe the disabilities represented in the inclusive setting, the more the previously mentioned sources of support would be needed. In addition, teachers agree that their class size should be reduced, to fewer than twenty-five students, in case if students with disabilities are included.

Teachers reported a need for additional personnel assistance in inclusive classrooms. This could include a teacher assistant aide and daily contact with special education teachers. The concern for the need of additional personnel assistance calls for the urgent attention of policy makers and education administrators if the inclusive education is to be successfully implemented.

Furthermore, teachers concur that the monitoring of class, which includes a student with disability should be carried out in a different way compared to a class that does not include any student with disability. As Rouse and Lapham (2013a) stressed, the flexibility of education standards is important in the way to inclusive education due to the fact that monitoring inclusive class the same way, a pressure to improve the mean achievement of the class, results in declining the classroom teacher performance and affects teachers' decision to include a student with disability into their class.

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Appendices

Содержание научного исследования и согласие
на участие в интервью

Наименование научного исследования: Мнения и взгляды учителей общеобразовательных школ Узбекистана по отношению к инклюзивному образованию

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Приглашение для участия в исследовании

Исследователь просит Вас принять участие в научном исследовании по изучению мнений и взглядов учителей Узбекистана по отношению к инклюзивному образованию для учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии на основе проведения интервью с учителями общеобразовательных школ Узбекистана. Данная повестка поможет Вам принять решение участвовать или не участвовать в исследовании, разъясняя Вам содержание и цели исследования, способы хранения предоставленной вами информации и другие. Если у Вас возникнут вопросы, вы можете тотчас задать их мне.

Содержание и цели исследования

По данным 2012 года, число людей с ограниченными возможностями в Узбекистане составило 607.900 человек, 87.900 из которых дети, не достигшие 17 лет. Целью данной работы является комплексное изучение мнений и взглядов учителей

общеобразовательных школ Узбекистана по отношению к инклюзивному образованию для учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии. Исследователь ставит перед собой задачу последующей разработки практических рекомендаций в сфере инклюзивного образования для учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии на основе анализа результатов данного исследования и изучения лучшего мирового опыта в этой области, осуществление которых будет содействовать дальнейшей успешной реализации проектов по внедрению и совершенствованию практики инклюзии учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии в общеобразовательные школы в Республике Узбекистан. Актуальность и значимость исследования обосновывается, прежде всего, положением "О порядке перевода учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии из одного специализированного образовательного учреждения в другое, или в общеобразовательное учреждение для обучения в условиях инклюзивного образования", утвержденный приказом министра народного образования Республики Узбекистан (зарегистрирован Министерством юстиции 17.06.2015 г., №2685).

Неудобства, возможная опасность, компенсация: обеспечение безопасности собранного материала

Исследователь гарантирует, что материалы данного интервью будут использованы исключительно в целях диссертационного исследования и обещает обеспечение их полной безопасности.

Добровольное участие и право на прекращение участия в исследовании

Участие в данном научном исследовании является добровольным. Если Вы примете решение прекратить участие в исследовании, то Вы можете это сделать в любой момент без никаких негативных последствий.

Хранение личной информации, конфиденциальность

Материалы данного интервью будут использованы исключительно в целях диссертационного исследования. Исследователь берет на себя ответственность по обеспечению анонимности участников исследования. Вместо настоящих имен участников, в исследовании будут использованы псевдонимы. Материалы интервью будут храниться в течение 5 лет в доступном лишь исследователю месте.

Вопросы по исследованию

Если у Вас возникнут вопросы по исследованию, обращайтесь к исследователю Нигорахон Якубовой по номерам телефонов +998 91 668 06 27 (Узбекистан), 010 5690 1905 (Корея), или по электронной почте nigoraxon.yakubova@gmail.com. Если возникнут вопросы по правам участника исследования, обращайтесь в офис по вопросам этики научного исследования университета Инха по телефону (082) 032-860-7154.

Если Вы согласны принять участие в данном исследовании, пожалуйста, подпишитесь ниже.
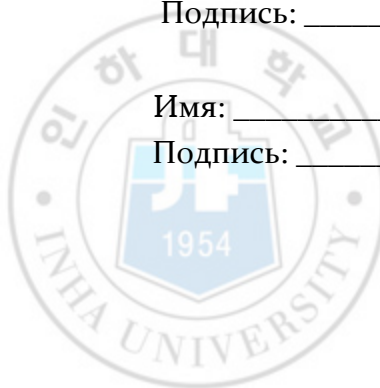
Участник исследования   Имя: _____

                                        Подпись: _____

Исследователь   Имя: _____

                                         Подпись: _____

Interview Guideline

Opening prompts

I would like to thank you for participation in this research.

1. How long have you been teaching in inclusive class?

2. What do you see as your responsibilities as an inclusive teacher?

3. What is your definition of inclusion?

4. What pre-service training did you receive regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in general education program?

5. What in-service training did you receive regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in general education program?

6. What on-going training did you receive regarding inclusion of students with disabilities in general education program?

Thank you. Now I would like to ask you some questions regarding the practice of including students with disabilities in your general classroom. For this, I will ask you the following:

1. Please describe your most recent experience teaching in an inclusive classroom.

2. In what ways would you describe your experience as positive?

3. In what ways would you describe your experience as negative?

4. What could be done to improve the inclusive practices in your school?

5. What kinds of supports do you think you might need to succeed teaching in inclusive class?

Министру народного образования Республики Узбекистан Иноятову У.И. от докторанта по специальности "Мультикультурное образование" университета Инха в Республике Корея Якубовой Н.И.

Уважаемый Улуғбек Ильясович!

Я, Якубова Нигорахон Илхомжон кизи, докторант университета Инха в Республике Корея, прошу Вас разрешить мне изучить мнения и взгляды учителей Узбекистана по отношению к инклюзивному образованию для учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии на основе проведения опроса среди учителей общеобразовательных школ Узбекистана, имеющих опыт преподавания не менее одного года в инклюзивных классах, по теме диссертационного исследования. Темой данного диссертационного исследования является "Мнения и взгляды учителей общеобразовательных школ Узбекистана по отношению к инклюзивному образованию". Целью данной работы является комплексное изучение мнений и взглядов учителей общеобразовательных школ Узбекистана по отношению к инклюзивному образованию для учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии. Исследователь ставит перед собой задачу последующей разработки практических рекомендаций в сфере инклюзивного образования для учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии на основе анализа результатов данного исследования и изучения лучшего мирового опыта в этой области, осуществление которых будет содействовать дальнейшей успешной реализации проектов по внедрению и совершенствованию практики инклюзии(включения) учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии в общеобразовательные школы Республики Узбекистан. Актуальность и значимость исследования обосновывается, прежде всего, Положением о порядке перевода учащихся с отклонениями в физическом или психическом развитии из одного специализированного образовательного учреждения в другое, или в общеобразовательное учреждение для обучения в условиях инклюзивного образования, утвержденный приказом министра народного образования Республики Узбекистан (зарегистрирован Министерством юстиции 17.06.2015 г. №2685). Результаты данного опроса будут использованы исключительно в целях диссертационного исследования.

С уважением   Якубова Н.И.

«12» июля 2016 года

[The letter of request to the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan from July 12, 2016]

To Minister of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan Inoyatov U.I. from Yakubova Nigorakhon, Ph.D. Candidate majoring in Multicultural Education, Inha Universtiy, Korea

Dear Ulugbek Ilyasovich!

I, Yakubova Nigorakhon Ilkhomjon kizi, Ph.D. Candidate majoring in Multicultural Education at Inha University in Korea, ask you to give me a permission to study perceptions and experiences of teachers of Uzbekistan towards inclusive education for students with disabilities on the basis of interviewing general education teachers who have an experience of teaching in inclusive classes. The purpose of this study is to explore perceptions and experiences of teachers of Uzbekistan toward inclusive education for students with disabilities. The researcher is intending to work out practical recommendations in the sphere of inclusive education for children with disabilities which will assist in further successful implementation of projects on inclusion of students with disabilities into general education schools of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Actuality and significance of the research is based on Regulation on the procedure for transferring students with disabilities from one specialized educational institution into another, or into general education institution for learning in inclusive education settings. This regulation was approved by the minister of public education of Republic of Uzbekistan (registered by the Ministry of Justice June 17, 2015, #2685).

**O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI
XALQ TA'LIMI VAZIRLIGI**

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION
OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**

O'zbekiston, Toshkent shahar, 100159, Mustaqillik maydoni, 5
Tel.: (99871) 239−13−10, faks: 239−40−77, web-site: www.uzedu.uz, e-mail: info@xtv.uz

«18» июнь 2016 y.   03-03/1-7- _____ sonli

Фарғона вилояти, Фарғона шаҳар, Истироҳат кўчаси, 3-уйда истиқомат қилувчи фуқаро

Н.Якубовага

Нусхаси: Тошкент шаҳар халқ таълими бош бошқармаси бошлиғи

И.Акбаровга

Халқ таълими вазирлиги Сизнинг Ягона интерактив давлат хизматлари портали орқали вазирликка қилган мурожаатингизга жавобан қуйидагиларни маълум қилади.

Бугунги кунда, Республикамизда Европа Кенгаши ҳамда Республика болалар ижтимоий мослашуви маркази билан ҳамкорликда "Ўзбекистонда алоҳида эҳтиёжларга эга болалар учун инклюзив таълим" лойиҳаси амалга оширилмоқда.

Мазкур лойиҳа доирасида Республикамизнинг 5 та ҳудудида Самарқанд, Сурхондарё, Наманган, Хоразм вилоятлари ҳамда Тошкент шаҳрида тажриба синов майдончалари ташкил этилган.

Тошкент шаҳрида 34-, 85-, 324-сонли умумтаълим мактаблари ҳамда 185-, 226-, 607-сонли мактабгача таълим муассасалари тажриба синов майдончалари этиб белгиланган.

Шу муносабат билан, вазирлик Сизга ушбу таълим муассасаларида педагог ходимлар билан учрашиб инклюзив таълим соҳасида маълумот олишингизда эътироз билдирмаган ҳолда тадқиқот натижаси юзасидан тўпланган якуний маълумотларни Халқ таълими вазирлигига тақдим этишингиз лозимлигини маълум қилади.

Илова: _____ варақда.

Вазир ўринбосари   Д.Кенжаев

Ижрочи: С Ражабова
тел: 239-43-11

[Translation of Appendix D *(from Uzbek)*]

[The letter of permission that was received from the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan from July 18, 2016]

The Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan is replying back to your request via the Single Portal of State Services as follows.

At present, in our Republic, there is a project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" that is being implemented by the European Union and National Center for Social Adaptation of Children.

In the framework of this project, the experimental trial fields in five regions of the Republic - Samarkand, Surkhondaryo, Namangan, Khorazm regions and Tashkent city – are functioning.

In Tashkent, general education schools #34, #85, #324 and preschool education institutions #185, #226, #607 are designated as experimental trial spots.

In this regard, the ministry while does not mind you meeting the teachers of these educational institutions and collect the data, requests you to present the final results of the research to the Ministry of Public Education.

Vice-minister Kenjayev D. (signature)

TOSHKENT SHAHAR XALQ
TA'LIMI BOSH BOSHQARMASI

THE MAIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC EDUCATION OF TASHKENT

Toshkent shahar, 100000, Mustaqillik ko'chasi-69, TEL: (99871) 237–08–01,
faks: (99871) 237–08–93, web-site: toshkentshxtbb.uz, E-mail: toshkent_shxtbb@xtv.uz

«_17_» _08_ 2016 yil

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Шайхонтохур туман халқ таълими
муассасалари фаолиятини методик
таъминлаш ва ташкил этиш бўлими
мудирларига

Нусхаси: 34, 85, 324-сонли мактаблар, 185, 226,
607-сонли мактабгача таълим
муассасаларига

Тошкент шаҳар Халқ таълими бош бошқармаси Сизга Халқ таълими
вазирлигининг 2016 йил 18 июлдаги 03-03/1-7-2024-сонли хатига асосан,
Республикамизда Европа Кенгаши ҳамда Республика болалар ижтимоий
мослашуви маркази билан ҳамкорликда "Ўзбекистонда алоҳида эхтиёжларга
эга болалар учун инклюзив таълим" лойихаси амалга оширилаётганлигини
маълум қиламиз.

Мазкур лойиҳа доирасида Республикамизнинг 5 та ҳудудида Самарканд,
Сурхондарё, Наманган, Хоразм вилоятлари ҳамда Тошкент шаҳрида тажриба
синов майдончалари ташкил этилган.

Шу муносабат билан, Бош бошқарма Сизга фуқаро Н.Якубовага ушбу
таълим муассасаларида педагог ходимлар билан учрашиб инклюзив таълим
соҳасида маълумот олишида амалий ёрдам беришингизни сўраймиз.

Бош бошқарма бошлиғи   И.Акбаров

Ижрочи: Э.Мусахонов

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[Translation of Appendix E *(from Uzbek)*]

[The letter of permission that was received from the Main Department of Public Education of Tashkent from August 17, 2016]

The Main Department of Public Education of Tashkent, based on the letter from July 18, 2016 No. 03-03/1-7-2024, informs you that in our Republic there is a project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" that is being implemented by the European Union and National Center for Social Adaptation of Children.

In the framework of this project, the experimental trial fields in five regions of the Republic - Samarkand, Surkhondaryo, Namangan, Khorazm regions and Tashkent city – are functioning.

In this regard, the Main Department requests you to practically assist Yakubova Nigorakhon to meet with teacher staff and collect the data regarding to inclusive education.

Head of the Main Department Akbarov I. (signature)
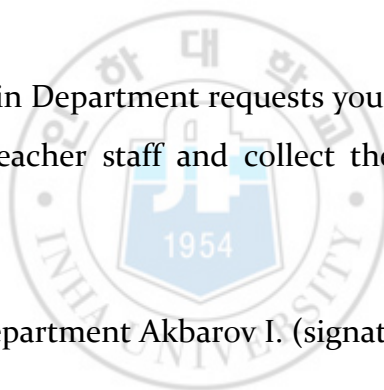
[The letter of permission received from the Special Education Expert of the EU-financed Project "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Uzbekistan" from July 23, 2016]

Stefanija Ališauskienė <s.alisauskiene@cr.su.lt>   Jul 23, 2016, 12:40 AM
to me

Dear Nigorakhon,

I am pleased to hear that you are interested in the research in the field of inclusive education.

However, I have no any power to allow or not to allow you to perform your research. As I understood from the papers attached, you already have a permission of the Vice Minister. So, I think this is enough to go and do it.

Thank you for contacting me and good luck in your great job!

Stefanija Alisauskiene