

TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study explored pre-service and in-service teachers' levels of awareness, knowledge and attitudes towards inclusive education in Uzbekistan. As inclusion aims to ensure equitable access to quality learning for all students, improving teacher capacity is critical. Uzbekistan is transitioning its education system to be more inclusive but faces gaps in teacher training. A survey among teachers was conducted to assess their familiarity with inclusion concepts and implementation challenges. Data was analyzed thematically to identify key findings. Results showed most teachers reported familiarity with inclusion, viewing it as important. However, limited formal training was received. Adapting lessons and providing accessible materials were common strategies, but 24% reported limited inclusion efforts. Training emerged as significantly impacting implementation quality. Areas prioritized for strengthening inclusion included curriculum revisions, expanded teacher education and individualized planning. Overall, targeted professional learning was consistently linked to stronger inclusive pedagogies. This research aims to suggest the development of an inclusive teaching module for Uzbekistan's teacher preparation programs. By enhancing teacher understanding and skills, the module will seek to facilitate more equitable, participation-based learning environments across the education system.

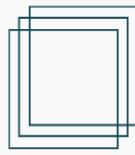
Keywords: Inclusive Education, Teacher perspectives, Teachers' awareness of inclusive education, Inclusive practices, Inclusive pedagogy.

Introduction

Inclusive education has become an indispensable part of quality education. Provision of inclusive education is the provision of basic human rights. Uzbekistan recognizes the importance of inclusivity in education system as stated in Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024) and Salamanca Statement (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2020). For this, teachers' awareness must be raised and their capacity to be built. Following the example of many other countries, Uzbekistan introduced Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for further improvement of the education system for children with special educational

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needs”, to enhance methodological support and create inclusive learning environments in all educational establishments, however, challenges still exist in implementation process. In addition to the required resources, high level of training, there is also a need for raising awareness of teachers on inclusive practices overall (UzReport, 2022; lex.uz, 2020).

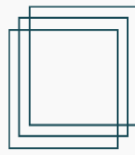
This study aimed to investigate the perceptions, attitudes and the level of knowledge of teachers on inclusive education with possible identification of the areas of improvement and training needs to support the implementation of inclusivity in Uzbekistan. We believe that high level of awareness of inclusive education among teachers will empower educators to use individual approach for each student. With teachers aware of the inclusivity, the perception that inclusivity means ‘disabled’ students will diminish.

The study focused on a sample of 521 teachers from various regions and different lengths of teaching experience. By analyzing the level of awareness of educators, the challenges they are currently facing, this research aimed to suggest professional development programs as well as recommendations for efficient implementation of inclusive education in Uzbekistan and enhancement of teacher’s capacity in this process.

Literature Review

Inclusive education has been established as a transformative approach aimed at providing equal opportunities regardless of students' backgrounds or abilities (Zhu, 2010; Kappen, 2010; Saharan, 2009). It emphasizes the right of every child to participate in learning and the school's duty to accommodate them (Kappen, 2010). Specifically, inclusive practices work to identify and minimize barriers to learning with focus on vulnerable groups (Saharan, 2009). The ultimate goal, according to Saharan (2009), is developing a society that accepts, respects, and celebrates diversity. More recent work discusses inclusive education as a system ensuring quality education without barriers for all students (Yadav, 2021; Ioannidi, 2022; Hoque, 2023). It aims to eliminate exclusion while promoting equity, collaboration, and development (Yadav, 2021; Ioannidi, 2022; Hoque, 2023). Particularly, inclusive pedagogy is seen as critical because it considers classroom diversity and engages all students through meaningful learning (Ioannidi, 2022). However, challenges remain around teacher training and policy implementation (Hoque, 2023). Despite these challenges, inclusive education is viewed as a beneficial philosophical approach (Hoque, 2023).

Teachers play a vital role in inclusive education, but their awareness and support for inclusion is complex with understanding and values needing translation into action. Väyrynen (2020) highlights the importance of teacher understanding and support for inclusive values, with the latter emphasizing the translation of these values into pedagogical actions. Fernandez (2023) further explored the attitudes of future and current teachers, with the former indicating a need for greater exposure to diversity and the latter suggesting potential gender and locality-based differences in attitudes. These



studies collectively underscore the need for ongoing professional development and support to enhance teachers' awareness and implementation of inclusive education. Research has highlighted several critical factors for effectively implementing inclusive education. Teacher collaboration, participation, and ongoing professional development have been shown to be important for building awareness and capacity for inclusion among educators (Makoelle, 2014; Väyrynen, 2020; Fernandez, 2023). Schoolwide reforms emphasizing strategies like multi-tiered support systems and universal design for learning also show promise for advancing inclusive practices (Sailor, 2015). Additionally, supportive government policies and initiatives have been found to promote inclusive education (Ahsan, 2013). Reforming teacher education to better prepare future educators for diverse classrooms is also a key recommendation (Florian, 2010).

While barriers remain in fully realizing inclusive education, the approach shows potential to transform education systems when appropriate support structures are utilized to help all learners succeed (Hoque, 2023). By addressing implementation challenges through measures targeting teachers, schools, policy, and preparation of educators, inclusive education offers a philosophical framework that can deliver equitable and high-quality opportunities to every student. With ongoing progress in these areas, inclusive practices can create learning environments where all students are respected and able to reach their fullest potential.

Methods

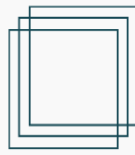
The present study aimed to investigate teachers' level of awareness about inclusive education in Uzbekistan through a quantitative approach.

Overall, 521 teachers from different schools across Uzbekistan participated in the study. In order to guarantee representation from various schools and regions, years of teaching experience, a purposeful sampling was applied. The data was collected through a questionnaire, containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions, that aimed to assess teachers' knowledge, experience and attitudes towards inclusive education. The participants were informed of the confidentiality of the survey, necessary permissions were obtained from the review board.

A small sample and geographical scope could be considered as limitations, expanding the sample size should be considered for future research.

Results

A total of 521 teachers participated in the survey. Most were female (74.1%) and had 6-10 years' experience. No significant associations were found between demographics and inclusion views. While 68.3% reported familiarity with inclusion, only 11.3-21.5% received training. A moderate relationship was seen between training and reported inclusive practices. Lesson plan adaptation (35.3%) and accessible materials (39.2%)



topped reported strategies. However, 24% described limited inclusion efforts. Statistically significant differences emerged by training level.

Curriculum adjustments, teacher training, and individualized plans were viewed as most impactful strategies to enhance inclusion. Overall, targeted professional learning was linked to stronger implementation. Findings can advise education policies and practices to foster inclusion.

Discussion

The findings of this study aim to demonstrate the perceptions of teachers of inclusivity in education in Uzbekistan. According to the results of the survey, majority educators are familiar with inclusion practices, however, only minority received formal training in the field. The levels of awareness and possession of necessary skills by educators to support inclusivity in the classroom must be aligned if the country aims to implement inclusive education. The same concern was expressed by previous researchers Väyrynen (2020) and Fernandez (2023), who linked effective implementation of inclusive education to teachers' professional development.

Respondents selected curriculum adjustments, teacher training, and individualized plans as the most important in inclusivity integration, which is in line with previous findings of Makoelle (2014) and Väyrynen (2020), who pointed that teacher collaboration, participation, and ongoing development as the most vital in building capacity and raising awareness of inclusion.

Another interesting point made by the participants about lesson plan adaptation and provision of accessible materials agrees with the findings of Sailor (2015), who also mentioned the importance of multi-tiered support systems and universal design for learning (UDL) that are indispensable when introducing inclusion.

In general, the findings of the present study strongly highlight the need for urgent introduction of inclusive education in Uzbekistan. If the necessary support is provided and teachers receive professional development training, it will become possible to create inclusive learning environments where all students can realize their full potential irrespective of their challenges or abilities.

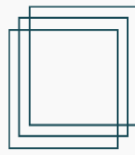
It is vital to continue the research involving policymakers and educators, to effectively implement inclusivity into education system of Uzbekistan.

Conclusion

The need for enhanced teacher capacity and institutional support in fostering inclusive classrooms is underscored by several studies. The need for enhanced teacher capacity and institutional support in fostering inclusive classrooms is a critical aspect of education. Grigoryan (2019) emphasizes the importance of faculty development and support in creating inclusive environments. This is further underscored by Tampubolon (2023) by discussing the role of teacher professional development in promoting inclusive practices, including the adoption of student-centered approaches and the

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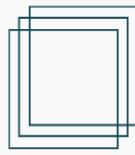


implementation of flexible instructional methods. These studies collectively emphasize the need for ongoing support and training for teachers to effectively foster inclusive classrooms. Other studies emphasize the importance of teacher capacity and institutional support in creating inclusive classrooms (Hymel, 2019; Farmer, 2019). Hymel (2019) and Farmer (2019) both highlight the role of teachers in promoting social inclusion and managing classroom dynamics, particularly in diverse classrooms. These studies collectively emphasize the need for ongoing professional development and support for teachers to effectively foster inclusive environments.

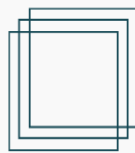
The research had some limitations due to the characteristics of the sample. Specifically, the sample size and geographical region covered were relatively small. This means the results cannot be generalized to all teachers across Uzbekistan. However, the findings provide a factual basis and practical guidance for strengthening inclusive education, especially in contexts similar to the areas studied in Uzbekistan. While the study may not represent all regions, it offers empirically supported recommendations applicable to improving teacher awareness and inclusion in the examined settings. The commitment to inclusive education, as emphasized by Porter (2011), requires ongoing monitoring of awareness changes and feedback-informed refinement of awareness modules. This is particularly important given the obstacles faced, such as inadequate infrastructure and limited resources (Nuphanudin, 2021). Despite policy changes, inclusive classroom practices have not been easily achieved (Black-Hawkins, 2017). These insights collectively underscore the importance of ongoing, multi-level support for educators in championing inclusive philosophies. Overall, championing inclusive philosophies demands correspondence between vision and reality through ongoing, multi-level support for all educators.

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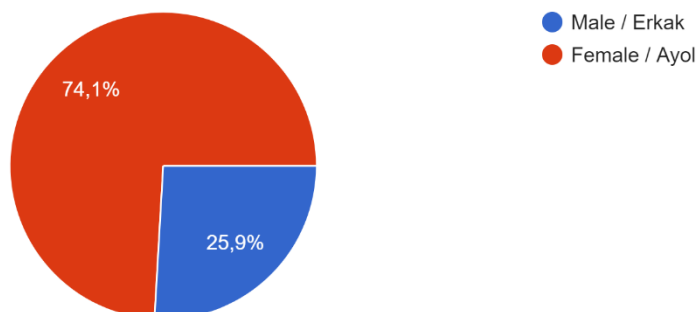


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Appendix

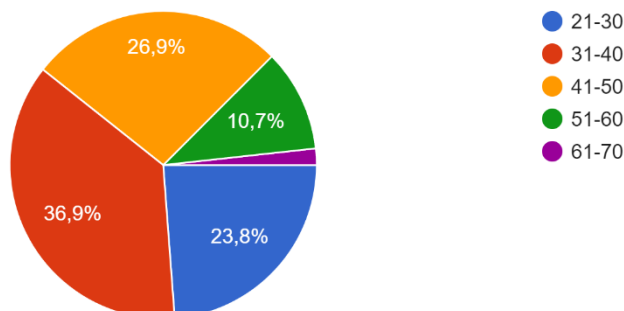
1. Your gender / Jinsingiz:

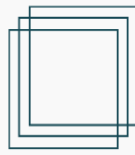
521 ответ



2. Age group / Yoshingiz:

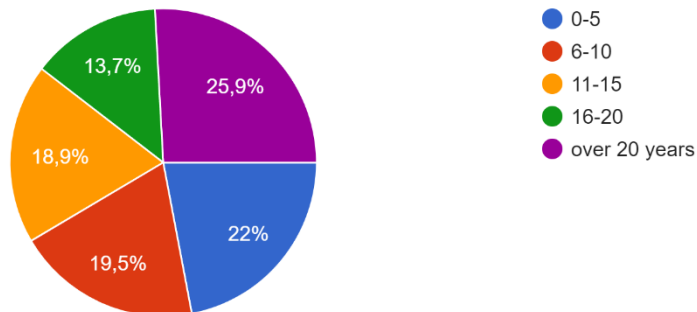
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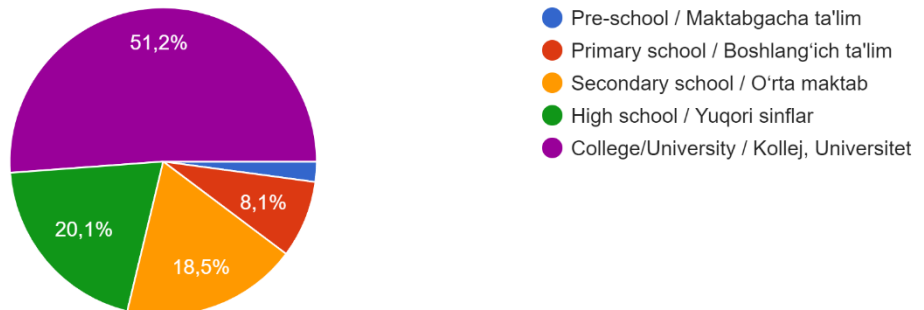
3. Teaching experience (in years) / Pedagogik tajribangiz (yillar kesimida):

518 ответов



4. Grades you teach / Nechinchi sinflarga dars berasiz:

518 ответов



5. Subject/subjects you teach / Siz o'rgatadigan fan/fanlar:

481 ответ

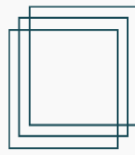
English

English

Ingliz tili

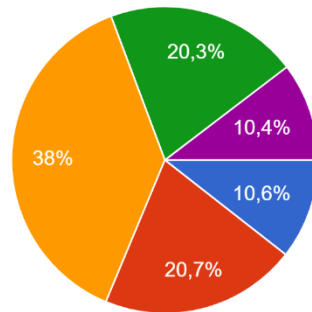
Ingliz tili

Psixologiya



6. How familiar are you with the concept of inclusive education? / Siz inklyuziv ta'lim tushunchasi bilan qanchalik tanishsiz?

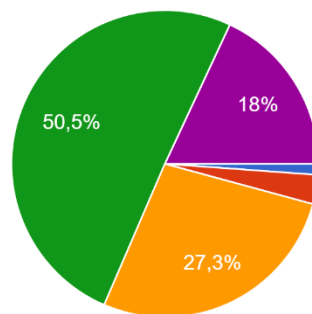
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- Not at all familiar / Umuman tanish emas
- Somewhat familiar / Biroz tanish
- Moderately familiar / O'rtacha tanish
- Very familiar / Juda tanish
- Extremely familiar / Yuqori darajada tanish

7. If you are familiar with the concept of inclusive education, do you believe that inclusivity is important in the educational system? / Ta'lim tizimining inklyuzivlik muhim ahamiyatga ega ekanligiga ishonasizmi?

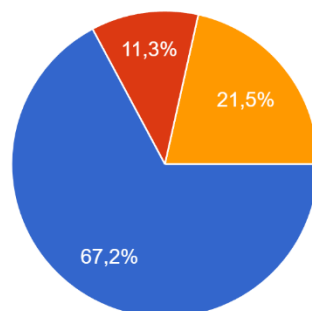
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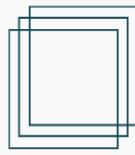
- Strongly disagree / Bu aslo muhim emas
- Disagree / Bu muhim emas
- Neutral / O'rtacha
- Agree / Muhim
- Strongly agree / O'ta muhim

8. Have you received any training/professional development related to inclusive teaching practices / Siz inklyuziv o'qitish amaliyoti bilan bog'liq har qanday kasbiy o'sish kurslarida qatnashgansizmi?

521 ответ

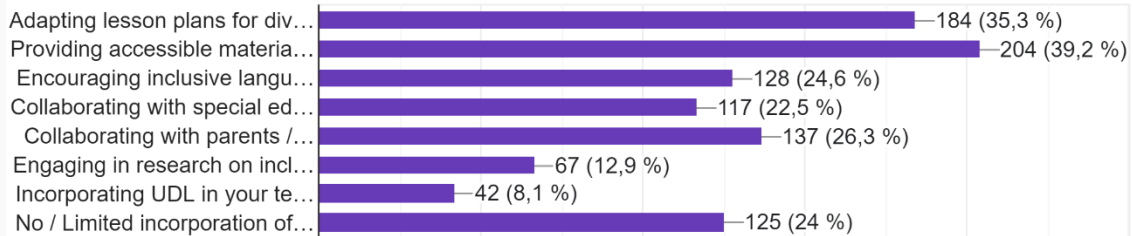


- None / Aslo
- Yes, training / Ha, treningda
- Yes, professional development / Ha, malaka oshirishda



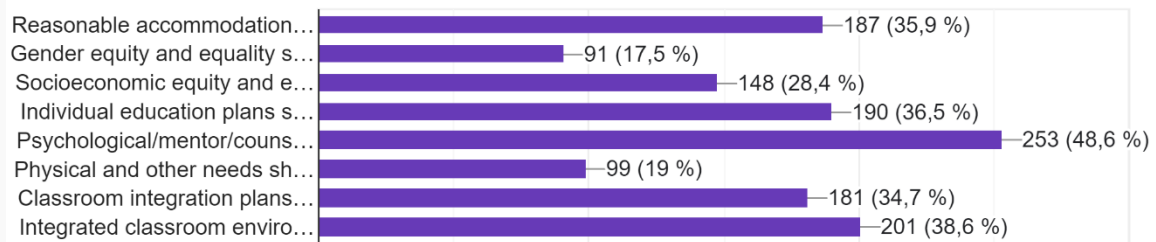
9. How do you currently incorporate inclusivity in your teaching? (Select all that apply) / Hozirda pedagogik faoliyatingizda inklyuzivlikni qanday qo'llayapsiz? (Barcha tegishlilarini tanlang)

521 ответ



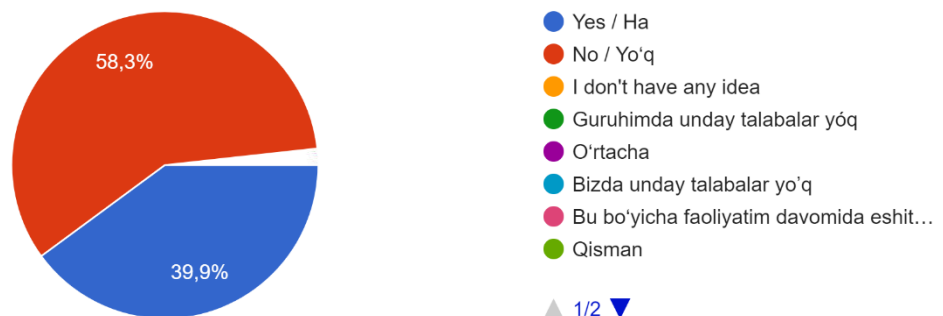
10. How do you think the current learning environment should be made more inclusive / Sizningcha, hozirgi ta'lim muhitini qanday qilib inklyuziv qilish mumkin?

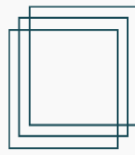
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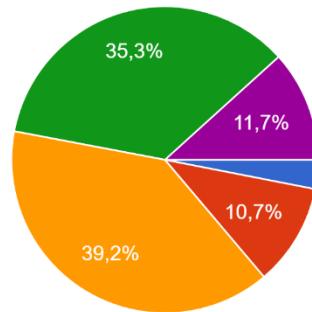
11. Are you aware of any specific challenges (ADHD - attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, etc.) faced by students...zilishlari, disleksiya va boshqalar) xabardormisiz?

521 ответ



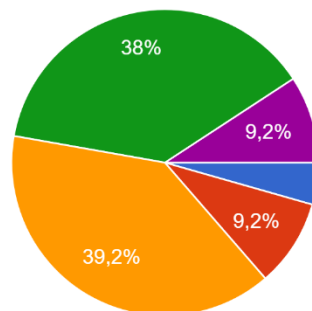


12. How comfortable do you feel discussing issues related to inclusivity with your colleagues / Siz hamkasblaringiz bilan inklyuzivlikga oid masalalarni...ishda o'zingizni qanchalik erkin(qulay) his qilasiz?
521 ответ



- Very uncomfortable / Juda noqulay
- Uncomfortable / Noqulay
- Neutral / Neytral
- Comfortable / Qulay
- Very comfortable / Juda qulay

13. How comfortable do you feel discussing issues related to inclusivity with school administration / Maktab ma'muriyati bilan inklyuzivlikga oid masala...hda o'zingizni qanchalik erkin (qulay) his qilasiz?
521 ответ

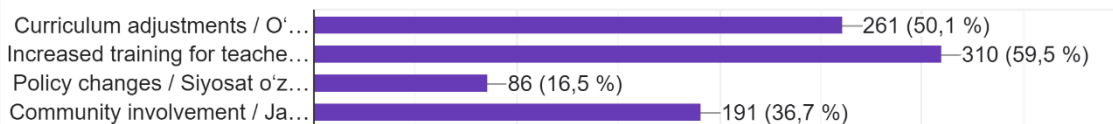


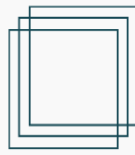
- Very uncomfortable / Juda noqulay
- Uncomfortable / Noqulay
- Neutral / Neytral
- Comfortable / Qulay
- Very comfortable / Juda qulay

14. In your opinion, what additional support or resources could enhance inclusivity in your teaching environment / Sizningcha, o'qitish muhitida inkl...un qanday qo'shimcha yordam yoki manbalar muhim?
521 ответ



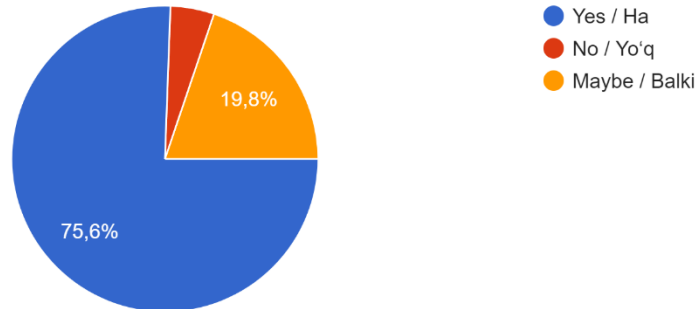
15. What steps, if any, do you think the education system in Uzbekistan should take to further promote inclusivity / Sizningcha, O'zbekiston ta'li...ivojlantirish uchun qanday qadamlar qo'yishi kerak?
521 ответ





16. Do you think the module of inclusivity should be taught at both PRESET and INSET levels / Sizningcha, inklyuzivlik moduli o'qituvchilarni tayyorlash kurslarida o'qitilishi kerakmi?

520 ОТВЕТОВ



17. If such module was taught, would you be willing to participate / Agar shunday modul o'qitilsa, siz qatnashishga tayyor bo'larmidingiz?

519 ОТВЕТОВ

