

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract. This thesis examines the role and significance of inclusive education in the social-emotional development of preschool children. The study analyzes how joint education of children with special educational needs alongside their peers influences their social adaptation, empathy, and communication skills. Furthermore, based on the decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the “Ilk Qadam” state curriculum, the pedagogical and psychological conditions for organizing an inclusive environment are substantiated.

Keywords: inclusive education, social-emotional development, preschool education, empathy, social adaptation, special educational needs, infrastructure, UNESCO, pedagogue, material and cultural factors.

Preschool age (from 3 to 6–7 years) is one of the most critical stages of human development, during which the fundamental psychological and social qualities of personality are formed. Many scholars describe this period as the stage in which the foundation of personality is established. In particular, Lev Vygotsky emphasized that a child’s development is closely connected with the social environment and activity, especially during early childhood.

One of the key characteristics of this period is that play becomes the leading type of activity. Through play, children explore the *окружающий* world, acquire social roles, and develop communication skills. According to the theory of Jean Piaget, at this stage children's thinking acquires a symbolic nature and develops through play activities.

This stage is also characterized by intensive psychological development, during which speech, memory, attention, and thinking rapidly improve. Children's frequent

“Why?” questions indicate a high level of cognitive activity. At the same time, during emotional development, children begin to regulate their emotions and develop empathy toward others.

According to the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Preschool Education and Upbringing,” every child has the right to quality education and comprehensive development. The document also emphasizes the principles of inclusive education, recognizing the provision of equal opportunities for all children as a priority of state policy.

Inclusive education is a system that ensures all children, including those with physical or mental differences, study together with their peers in general educational institutions. This approach aims not to isolate children from society but to promote their social integration.

Previously, children with disabilities were mainly educated in specialized institutions. However, modern approaches emphasize their integration into general education systems. Studies published by UNESCO highlight inclusive education as one of the most effective means of ensuring social equality.

An inclusive environment plays a significant role in the social-emotional development of children. In such an environment:

- children learn self-awareness and self-acceptance;
- they engage in cooperation with peers;
- empathy and tolerance are developed.

According to pedagogue-psychologist L.R. Muminova, an inclusive environment reduces social isolation and enhances a child’s adaptability to society.

The role of teachers and psychologists is crucial in effectively organizing inclusive education. They consider individual characteristics of children, provide emotional support, and create a healthy psychological environment. In Uzbekistan, additional financial incentives for teachers working in inclusive settings demonstrate the practical importance of this field.

The effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on the family environment. Parents’ belief in their child’s abilities fosters self-confidence, while a healthy family environment facilitates the development of social relationships. However, societal stereotypes and stigmatization may negatively affect inclusive

processes. Continuous exposure to negative attitudes can lead to social isolation, making it essential to promote an inclusive culture in society.

The accessibility of the external environment is also a key factor. Ramps, adapted playgrounds, and accessible transport systems increase children's independence and self-confidence, thereby enhancing their social activity.

Modern media also plays an important role in promoting inclusive values. Television, the internet, and social networks help reduce negative stereotypes and foster acceptance within society.

Conclusion. In conclusion, inclusive education is not only an educational approach but also an essential mechanism for establishing equality and tolerance in society. Creating an inclusive environment during preschool years has a direct positive impact on children's social-emotional development. Ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan, including the improvement of the "Ilk Qadam" state curriculum and the adoption of relevant policies, further confirm the importance of this direction. The success of inclusive education depends not only on pedagogical approaches but also on the cooperation of family, society, and infrastructure. Only in an open, supportive, and stereotype-free environment can every child fully realize their potential.

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