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**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION RESEARCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN:
A QUANTITATIVE AND THEMATIC REVIEW (2019-2024)**

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Abstract

Inclusive education has become a key priority of educational policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan, reflected in national legislation and strategic development programs. Along with the expansion of inclusive practices, the number of academic publications devoted to inclusive education has increased. However, the structure and thematic focus of this research field remain insufficiently systematized. The present article aims to analyze the current state of research on inclusive education in Kazakhstan through a quantitative and thematic review of scientific publications. Given the aim of mapping the eLIBRARY-indexed segment of national academic discourse, the study was designed as a structured thematic review based on the eLIBRARY database. Using the keywords “inclusion” and “Kazakhstan” within the humanities domain, 946 publications were initially identified. After applying relevance criteria, 96 publications were included in the final analytical corpus. The selected studies were classified according to educational level and dominant research focus. The results demonstrate a clear predominance of research on secondary and preschool inclusive education, as well as studies addressing teacher readiness and professional competence. Inclusive education in higher education is represented by a significantly smaller number of publications and is often examined in a fragmented manner. The findings highlight structural imbalances within the eLIBRARY-indexed national research landscape and point to underexplored areas requiring further scholarly attention, particularly at the institutional and higher education levels.

Keywords: inclusive education; Republic of Kazakhstan; thematic review; research landscape; eLIBRARY; educational policy; teacher preparation.

**ҚАЗАҚСТАН РЕСПУБЛИКАСЫНДАҒЫ ИНКЛЮЗИВТІ БІЛІМ БЕРУ
САЛАСЫНДАҒЫ ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕР: САНДЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ТАҚЫРЫПТЫҚ ШОЛУ
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Аңдатпа

Инклюзивті білім беру Қазақстан Республикасының білім беру саясатының басым бағыттарының бірі болып табылады және бұл ұлттық заңнамалық құжаттар мен стратегиялық бағдарламаларда көрініс табады. Инклюзивті практикалардың кеңеюімен қатар, осы салаға арналған ғылыми жарияланымдар саны

да артып келеді. Алайда инклюзивті білім беру бойынша жүргізілген зерттеулердің құрылымы мен тақырыптық бағыттары жүйелі түрде талданбаған. Толық халықаралық шолу жүргізудің орнына eLIBRARY дерекқорында көрініс тапқан ұлттық академиялық дискурстың бір сегментін картаға түсіру мақсатын ескере отырып, зерттеу Қазақстандағы педагогикалық зерттеулердің негізгі платформасы болып қала беретін eLIBRARY дерекқорына негізделген құрылымдалған тақырыптық шолу ретінде жасалды. «Инклюзия» және «Қазақстан» түйінді сөздері бойынша 946 жарияланым анықталып, іріктеу нәтижесінде 96 мақала талдауға енгізілді. Нәтижелер инклюзивті білім беру бойынша зерттеулердің басым бөлігі мектепке дейінгі және жалпы орта білім беру деңгейіне, сондай-ақ педагогтердің кәсіби даярлығына бағытталғанын көрсетеді. Жоғары білім беру жүйесіндегі инклюзия мәселелері шектеулі және фрагментарлы түрде қарастырылады. Зерттеу нәтижелері eLIBRARY дерекқорында көрініс тапқан ұлттық зерттеу ландшафтының құрылымдық теңгерімсіздіктерін көрсетеді және әсіресе институттық және жоғары білім беру деңгейлерінде ғылыми назар аударуды қажет ететін аз зерттелген салаларды көрсетеді.

Түйінді сөздер: инклюзивті білім беру; Қазақстан Республикасы; тақырыптық шолу; зерттеу ландшафты; eLIBRARY; білім беру саясаты; педагогтерді даярлау.

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ В ОБЛАСТИ ИНКЛЮЗИВНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ КАЗАХСТАН: КОЛИЧЕСТВЕННЫЙ И ТЕМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ОБЗОР (2019-2024 гг.)

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Аннотация

Инклюзивное образование является одним из приоритетных направлений образовательной политики Республики Казахстан, что отражено в нормативно-правовых документах и стратегиях развития системы образования. Параллельно с расширением инклюзивных практик наблюдается рост числа научных публикаций, посвящённых данной проблематике. Вместе с тем структура и тематическая направленность этих исследований остаются недостаточно систематизированными. Поскольку целью исследования было составление карты сегмента национального академического дискурса, представленного в eLIBRARY, оно было разработано как структурированный тематический обзор на основе базы данных eLIBRARY. По ключевым словам «инклюзия» и «Казахстан» было выявлено 946 источников, из которых после применения критериев релевантности в анализ включены 96 публикаций. Результаты исследования показывают преобладание работ, посвящённых инклюзии в среднем и дошкольном образовании, а также вопросам профессиональной готовности педагогов. Исследования инклюзивного высшего образования представлены в значительно меньшем объёме и носят фрагментарный характер. Полученные результаты выявляют структурные дисбалансы в представленном в eLIBRARY сегменте национальной системы научных исследований и указывают на недостаточно изученные области, требующие дальнейшего научного внимания, особенно на институциональном уровне и уровне высшего образования.

Ключевые слова: инклюзивное образование; Республика Казахстан; тематический обзор; ландшафт исследований; eLIBRARY; образовательная политика; подготовка педагогов.

Introduction

Inclusive education is currently considered one of the priority areas for the development of the educational system of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is due to both the international obligations of the state and domestic social demands. The right to education for students with special educational needs is enshrined in key regulatory documents, primarily in the Law of the

Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education”, where inclusive education is defined as a form of ensuring equal access to training, taking into account the individual capabilities of students [1]. A significant stage in the institutionalization of inclusion was the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated June 26, 2021 No. 56-VII, aimed at expanding legal guarantees and clarifying mechanisms for supporting students with special educational needs at all levels of education [2]. The implementation of these provisions is further specified through by-laws, including the rules of psychological and pedagogical support that regulate the activities of specialists and forms of support in educational institutions [3].

A number of studies examine the conditions for the introduction of inclusion in secondary schools and emphasize the role of psychological and pedagogical support for students with special educational needs [4, 5]. A separate body of research is devoted to issues of teachers' professional readiness to work in an inclusive environment, the formation of inclusive competence and overcoming professional barriers [6, 7, 8, 9]. In addition, several studies address the organizational aspects of inclusive education and the assessment of the readiness of educational organizations to implement inclusive practices [10, 11, 12].

Most publications focus on the secondary level and local practices, while inclusion in the higher education system, as well as institutional and managerial aspects of the development of an inclusive educational environment, are significantly less represented. Quantitative analysis demonstrates this imbalance: of 96 publications on inclusive education in Kazakhstan included in the analytical corpus, more than half (56%) address secondary and preschool education, about a quarter (26%) focus on teacher training and professional development, while less than one-fifth (18%) concern higher education. At the same time, there are very few review studies that allow for a quantitative and thematic characterization.

In this context, the problem addressed by the study lies in the lack of a holistic view of the structure and focus of scientific publications on inclusive education in the Republic of Kazakhstan, despite their quantitative growth and the normative importance of the issues under consideration.

The eLIBRARY database was selected for this review because it serves as a primary national platform for indexing scholarly publications in education and pedagogy. This makes it suitable for mapping the eLIBRARY-indexed segment of inclusive education research within the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The object of the study is the scientific discourse of inclusive education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The subject of the study is publications addressing issues of inclusive education presented in the eLIBRARY scientific database for the period 2019-2024.

The purpose of the article is to conduct a quantitative and thematic analysis of scientific publications on inclusive education in the Republic of Kazakhstan in order to identify the distribution of research accents by levels of education and the main areas of research.

To achieve this goal, the article solves the following tasks:

1. to identify and select relevant publications on inclusive education;
2. to analyze the quantitative distribution of publications by levels of education;
3. to identify the main thematic areas of research on inclusive education;
4. to characterize the structure of the modern research field in this field.

The article is structured as follows. The introduction substantiates the relevance of the study, considers the degree of development of the problem and formulates the goal and objectives. The section “Materials and methods” describes the procedure for selecting and analyzing publications. The “Results” section presents quantitative and thematic analysis data.

In the “Discussion” section, the identified trends are interpreted and prospects for further research are outlined.

Materials and methods

This study was conducted as a structured thematic review that maps the eLIBRARY-indexed research landscape of inclusive education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The review focused on identifying dominant research themes and the distribution of scholarly attention across different levels of education.

The literature search was conducted using the eLIBRARY scientific database, which remains one of the primary platforms for indexing pedagogical and educational research in Kazakhstan. The search was limited to publications indexed between 2019 and 2024 within the humanities field. The keywords “inclusion” and “Kazakhstan” were used to identify relevant sources. This initial search yielded 946 publications, which constituted the primary dataset. The 2019–2024 timeframe was selected to capture the most recent stage of inclusive education development in the Republic of Kazakhstan, following the legislative consolidation marked by the 2021 amendments to the Law on Education and the subsequent expansion of inclusive practices across the system. This period also corresponds to the most active growth of academic publications on inclusive education indexed in eLIBRARY, ensuring sufficient material for thematic analysis.

Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as a mapping of publications indexed in eLIBRARY. They do not claim exhaustive coverage of all research on inclusive education in Kazakhstan, especially publications available only through international databases or local institutional repositories.

The selection of publications was conducted in several stages. At the first stage, search results were screened sequentially, with attention given to the relevance of each publication to the educational context. Studies focusing on inclusion in non-educational domains, for example economics or medicine, as well as publications addressing foreign education systems without reference to Kazakhstan, were excluded. Publications in which the concept of inclusion was used outside of pedagogical discourse were also removed from the dataset. Following this screening process, 96 publications were retained for further analysis and formed the final analytical corpus.

The retained publications were analyzed using qualitative thematic classification procedures. The coding procedure followed two steps. At the first step, each publication was assigned a preliminary category on the basis of its title and abstract. At the second step, the category was checked against the research aim and conclusions. When a publication combined several themes, the category reflected the aspect that determined the main argument. Borderline cases were resolved through author discussion until consensus was reached. A formal inter-rater reliability coefficient was not calculated; this point is included in the limitations of the review.

In addition to thematic classification, publications were grouped according to the level of education that constituted the main object of analysis. The three analytical categories are presented in Table 1. This approach made it possible to identify broader structural patterns in the distribution of research attention and to characterize the current configuration of inclusive education research in Kazakhstan within the selected corpus.

Results

The search for publications was carried out in the eLIBRARY database using the following parameters:

- database: eLIBRARY;

- keywords: “inclusion”, “Kazakhstan”;
- time period: 2019-2024;
- field of knowledge: Humanities.

Based on these parameters, 946 publications were identified, forming the primary array of sources.

At the next stage, a sequential screening of publications was carried out in the order of their presentation in the database. A total of 10 pages with search results were considered. The limitation of the analysis to this range is due to the fact that in subsequent positions there was a sharp decrease in the thematic relevance of publications in the context of inclusive education.

Publications excluded from further analysis were:

- considered inclusion in economic or political contexts without reference to education;
- considered inclusion in medical or sporting contexts without reference to education;
- were devoted to foreign educational systems without reference to the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- used the term “inclusion” outside pedagogical discourse.

Based on the applied criteria, 96 publications directly related to the problems of inclusive education in Kazakhstan were included in the analytical corpus.

All selected publications were classified according to the level of education, which was the main object of research in each work. In the case of cross-level research, the publication belonged to the category that dominated in terms of content (table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of publications by level of education

Level of education	Number of publications	Share
Secondary and preschool education	54	56%
Teacher training and professional development	25	26%
Higher education	17	18%
Total	96	100%

Thus, more than half of the publications focus on issues of inclusion in the system of secondary and preschool education.

Publications related to secondary and preschool education (n = 54) were further grouped into main thematic areas identified through analysis of titles and stated research goals.

Table 2 below presents the main thematic areas of research on inclusion at the secondary level.

Table 2. Main thematic areas of research on inclusion at the secondary level

Thematic area	Examples of research topics
Psychological and pedagogical support	support for children with special needs, the activities of an educational psychologist
Inclusive learning practices	subject inclusion (music, foreign languages, physical education)
Socialization and tolerance	formation of a tolerant attitude, social integration
Use of technology	ICT and innovative pedagogical technologies
Institutional support	PMPK, resource and mobile centers

These publications primarily focus on **the practical implementation of inclusion** at the level of individual educational organizations and study groups.

A separate group consists of publications aimed at analyzing the preparation of teachers for work in inclusive education (n = 25). This group includes studies devoted to both primary pedagogical education and the system of advanced training (table 3).

Table 3. Thematic areas of research in teacher training

Direction	Examples of topics
Professional readiness	Readiness of future teachers for inclusive education
Inclusive competence	Formation and development of inclusive competencies
Psychological readiness	Attitudes, self-efficacy of teachers
Specialized training	Training of defectologists and educational psychologists
Advanced training	Inclusion in the system of additional education of teachers

Publications addressing inclusive education in higher education comprise 17 studies (table 4).

Table 4. Main areas of research on inclusion in higher education

Direction	Examples of topics
Student support	Support for students with special educational needs
Adaptation of educational programs	Adaptation of curricula and programs
Readiness of the teaching staff	Attitudes and professional readiness of the teaching staff
Organizational strategies	Formation of an inclusive space at the university
Subjectivity of students	The position of students with special educational needs (SEN) in the educational process

The corpus also includes a group of publications (n = 22) focused on theoretical understanding and policy analysis in inclusive education. These works overlap with other thematic blocks, but were singled out in a separate category based on the dominant focus of the study (table 5).

Table 5. Types of theoretical and normative publications

Publication Type	Examples
Analysis of educational policy	Development of inclusive education in the Republic of Kazakhstan
Legal research	Legislative support of the right to education
Conceptual overviews	History and approaches to inclusive education
Strategic documents	Problems and prospects of inclusion

Thus, after applying the relevance criteria, out of the initial array of 946 publications identified in the eLIBRARY database for the period 2019-2024, 96 publications directly devoted to inclusive education in Kazakhstan were included in the analytical corpus. Overall,

the results indicate an uneven distribution of research across levels of education within the selected corpus, with a predominance of works focused on secondary education practice and teacher training, and a more limited number of publications on inclusion in higher education.

Discussion

Within the selected corpus, the results demonstrate a steady concentration of scientific research on inclusive secondary and preschool education, which accounts for more than half of all selected publications. This imbalance reflects the institutional and regulatory logic of the development of inclusion in Kazakhstan, where general education has been the main object of reforms and methodological support over the past decade.

In scientific publications, inclusion at the secondary level is presented primarily as a practical task addressed at the level of a specific educational organization or teaching staff. This explains the wide spread of research on psychological and pedagogical support and formation of a tolerant environment, as well as subject inclusion and use of pedagogical technologies. Thus, inclusive education in the scientific discourse of Kazakhstan is constructed primarily as a practice of everyday pedagogical interaction, with less attention to systemic change in educational policy.

One significant finding is the high proportion of publications focused on teacher training and professional readiness. Every fourth work focuses on the formation of inclusive competence, psychological attitudes and personal readiness of teachers to work in an inclusive environment.

The strong focus on teacher readiness and inclusive competence observed in the analyzed publications reflects research preferences and broader policy implementation gaps in the development of inclusive educational environments. In the absence of fully institutionalized support systems and clearly articulated organizational responsibilities, the practical burden of inclusion is often shifted to individual teachers. This pattern should be understood as a discursive characteristic of the research field. It is not a critique of teachers' professional capacity or commitment. The prominence of teacher-centered studies highlights the central role educators play in sustaining inclusive practices under conditions of limited institutional support.

This pattern points to a personalization of responsibility for inclusion, which appears characteristic of the research field, when a specific teacher becomes the key subject of change. In this context, inclusion is understood through professional qualities and attitudes, as well as skills and values attributed to individual teachers, while institutional and organizational conditions, as well as infrastructural and managerial conditions of the educational environment, remain on the periphery of scientific analysis.

Such an approach reflects the real role of the teacher in the implementation of inclusive practices. At the same time, it limits the possibilities of a comprehensive understanding of inclusion as a systemic process that goes beyond individual professional training.

Across all thematic blocks, the dominance of research focused on supporting students with special educational needs is clearly evident. Psychological and pedagogical support, tutoring, volunteer practices and the activities of specialized services are considered as central mechanisms for ensuring inclusion.

In the international literature, inclusive education is often discussed through the distinction between support-based (compensatory) and transformation-oriented (systemic) models. Within the first approach, inclusion is understood primarily as the provision of additional support services and targeted assistance that help students with special educational needs adapt to an existing educational environment. Transformation-oriented models emphasize structural change, including curriculum redesign and assessment change, as well as

institutional policy reform and the creation of universally accessible learning environments. This distinction corresponds to international approaches to inclusive education, where UNESCO emphasizes a shift from individual support mechanisms toward system-level transformation [13]. The dominance of research focused on psychological and pedagogical support in Kazakhstan suggests that the national scientific discourse largely aligns with a compensatory understanding of inclusion, where the emphasis is placed on supporting the learner, while transformation of the educational system receives less attention [14].

More recent international scholarship develops the same logic by treating inclusion as a matter of system design and institutional responsibility. UNESCO's 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report links inclusion with barriers created inside education systems [15]. Ainscow describes inclusion and equity as principles for system reform, with attention to leadership and evidence-informed change [16]. For higher education, Moríña shows that inclusion requires accessibility and teaching practices, as well as faculty development and student participation to be considered as connected dimensions of university policy [17]. These positions provide a theoretical frame for interpreting the limited representation of institutional and higher-education themes in the Kazakhstani corpus.

This pattern allows the prevailing research logic to be characterized as a compensatory model of inclusive education, in which the focus is on the adaptation of the student to the existing educational environment. Transformation of the environment itself receives less analytical attention. In scientific publications, inclusion is more often understood as a process of support and assistance, while transformation of educational programs and institutional practices is represented less consistently.

Within the analyzed corpus, several works stand out by their citation impact and serve as reference points for the field. The most cited publication is Agavelyan, Aubakirova, Zhomartova and Burdina (2020), addressing teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Kazakhstan [8]; this work has shaped subsequent discussions of teacher readiness. Roshchina (2022) [11], focusing on pedagogue self-efficacy and "learned helplessness," represents another influential entry point. The terminological reference work by Malofeev, Movkebaeva, Khitryuk et al. (2020) [12], produced jointly by Belarusian and Kazakhstani specialists, has been widely cited as a conceptual foundation. Turlubekova and Bugubaeva (2021) [7] offered an early systemic analysis of inclusive education organization, while Bolshakov and Dolgova (2022) [14] provided a comparative perspective on the post-socialist context, including parental satisfaction. These works together define the most-discussed entry points into the national research field.

Beyond their thematic distribution, the analyzed publications share recurring structural features within each classified group. Studies on inclusion at the secondary level typically frame the problem as a gap between policy declarations and classroom practice, rely predominantly on case studies and teacher interviews, and conclude with recommendations for strengthening psychological-pedagogical support. Publications on teacher training share a problem orientation around insufficient inclusive competence, employ surveys and standardized attitude scales as their primary methodology, and recommend enhancing pre-service and in-service preparation. Studies on inclusive higher education frame the problem as fragmented institutional support, draw on case studies of individual universities or program adaptations, and call for accessibility improvements and faculty training. The theoretical and normative publications cluster around the problem of conceptual clarity, employ document and literature analysis, build their argumentation on the alignment of national policy with international frameworks, and recommend further strategic and legislative development. This recurrence of

problem framings and recommendation patterns across groups indicates a relatively standardized research format within the national field.

Of particular note is the relatively limited number of publications addressing inclusive higher education, which make up less than one-fifth of the general corpus. At the same time, even within this segment, research is fragmentary and, as a rule, focuses on selected aspects: support for students with SEN and accessibility of the educational environment, as well as adaptation of curricula and readiness of the teaching staff.

The underrepresentation of inclusive higher education in the research corpus may partly reflect a combination of structural factors, including weak institutional mandates and uneven regulatory guidance, as well as limited disability support services and restricted research funding specifically targeted at inclusion at the tertiary level. As a result, inclusive practices at universities remain less visible both in institutional policy and in academic research agendas.

Inclusion in the university context is rarely considered as an institutional phenomenon affecting academic policy, architectural and digital accessibility, the organization of the educational process, and the management system. As a result, inclusive higher education rarely emerges in scientific discourse as an independent and holistic area of research. It more often continues the secondary education logic of support at the university level.

The identified group of theoretical and normative-oriented publications indicates another characteristic feature of the research field - the predominance of the declarative and review approach. In many works, inclusive education is described through the prism of strategic documents and legal norms, while the empirical component is either absent or presented in a minimal volume.

This type of publication contributes to the consolidation of inclusion as a normative value, but limits the ability to analyze the real mechanisms of its implementation and assess the effectiveness of the measures taken. As a result, scientific discourse may reproduce official rhetoric without moving on to a critical understanding of existing practices.

An additional feature of the research field is the subject and local segmentation of publications. Inclusion is often considered within the framework of individual disciplines, for example foreign languages or physical education, as well as at the level of specific educational organizations and regions.

Such research expands understanding of the diversity of inclusive practices. Its local nature and the lack of comparable methodological foundations make it difficult to form a holistic picture of inclusive education at the national level.

To visually summarize the results of the analysis of publications on the problems of inclusive education in Kazakhstan, a visual scheme was developed that reflects the main directions and research accents (Figure 1). The presented visual structures the identified thematic blocks and correlates them with the current state of scientific discourse.

Figure 1 provides a visual synthesis of the main thematic areas identified in the analyzed publications and their relative prominence within the national research landscape. The figure highlights the concentration of studies on secondary-level inclusion and teacher preparation, alongside the comparatively limited representation of research on inclusive higher education and institutional dimensions.

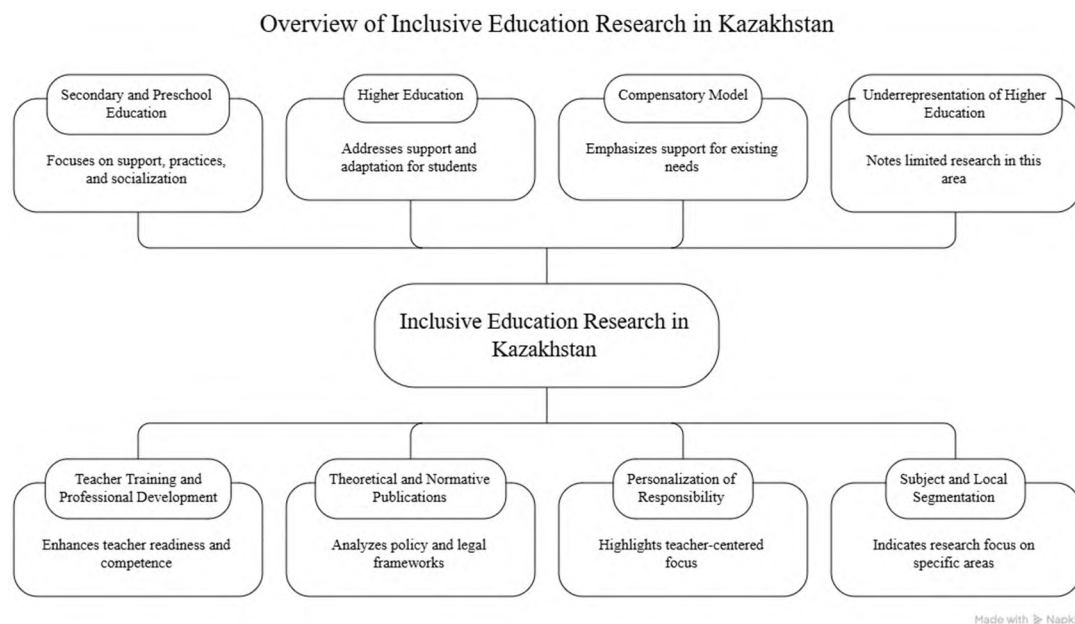


Figure 1. Main Thematic Areas of Research on Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan (2019-2024)

Conclusion

Taken together, the results obtained and their analysis allow us to assert that the eLIBRARY-indexed segment of scientific understanding of inclusive education in Kazakhstan is characterized by asymmetry and fragmentation. Research attention is focused mainly on secondary education practice and professional readiness of teachers, while inclusion in higher education and institutional aspects of the educational system remain underdeveloped within the analyzed corpus.

The identified features set the directions for further research related to the transition from compensatory and personalized models of inclusion to a systematic analysis of the educational environment and institutional policy, as well as management mechanisms and support infrastructure at all levels of education.

The review can therefore serve as a baseline study that systematizes the eLIBRARY-indexed research landscape of inclusive education in Kazakhstan and creates a reference point for further empirical investigation. Future research would benefit from a stronger focus on institutional-level analyses, particularly examining how inclusive policies are implemented within educational organizations. There is also a clear need for comparative studies of inclusive practices in higher education, both across universities within Kazakhstan and in comparison with international contexts. Research that critically examines the implementation of inclusive education policies beyond their normative formulation would contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms shaping inclusive education at all levels of the education system.

Several limitations of the present review should be acknowledged. First, the analysis was based exclusively on the eLIBRARY database; relevant publications indexed in Scopus or Web of Science without simultaneous indexing in eLIBRARY may have been omitted. Second, the language coverage was effectively limited to publications in Russian and Kazakh, which may underrepresent English-language research on inclusive education in Kazakhstan published in international journals. Third, the temporal window of 2019-2024 captures the most recent stage

of policy and research development, but does not allow for diachronic comparison with earlier periods. Fourth, the methodological approach relied on qualitative thematic classification and author consensus. No formal inter-rater reliability coefficient was calculated for the thematic coding, which limits the precision of structural claims about the research field. Finally, technical and vocational education was not differentiated from higher education in the original publication self-categorizations, and is therefore reported here as part of the higher education category. These limitations also indicate productive directions for further investigation.

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