



From Special Education To Inclusive Education.

Pedagogical Foundations For The Social Integration Of Children With Special Educational Needs

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Abstract

The transition from special to inclusive education raises a pedagogical question: how can access to a common school become meaningful participation in learning and community life? This article examines that question through a targeted narrative review of research, international guidance and Uzbek education legislation. It distinguishes the integration of a child into an unchanged institution from inclusion through changes in teaching, support and relationships. The synthesis identifies five connected conditions: accessible learning environments, flexible teaching, coordinated specialist support, reciprocal peer participation, and partnership with children and families. A proposed framework links these conditions to observable indicators of participation and to a cycle of planning, implementation and review. Published evidence is treated cautiously: rights-based commitments establish educational responsibilities, while research on placement alone does not demonstrate uniform academic or social benefits. For Uzbekistan, the article connects existing provisions for inclusive education and individual support with practical questions for school improvement. The framework is a conceptual contribution requiring local empirical evaluation; no original participant data are reported.



Keywords: Inclusive education; special educational needs; inclusive pedagogy; social participation; belonging; teacher collaboration; Uzbekistan.

1. Introduction

Moving from special education to inclusive education concerns the organisation of learning, the distribution of expertise and the relationships through which children become members of a community. A child may attend a general school while remaining outside its common activities. Consequently, school placement, educational participation and social integration should be examined separately. The central problem addressed here is how pedagogical practice can connect these dimensions without reducing inclusion to an administrative transfer.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016, para. 11, advance unedited version) distinguishes integration, which expects learners to fit existing institutional arrangements, from inclusion, which requires changes to educational structures and practices. This distinction provides the conceptual starting point of the article. "Social integration" in the title refers to participation in community life, relationships and shared activities; it does not mean requiring a child to conform to an unchanged school. Inclusive education is treated as a continuing process of removing barriers to such participation.

The term "children with special educational needs" is used here to describe learners who require additional or adapted educational support. It is not treated as a uniform diagnostic group or as an explanation of a child's potential. The discussion concentrates on school-age learners and on the relationship between classroom participation and wider social life. Disability-related rights are particularly relevant, although educational support needs and disability are not interchangeable categories.

Uzbekistan offers a relevant policy context. Article 20 of the Law on Education defines inclusive education in relation to equal educational opportunities and the diversity of learners' needs and individual capacities (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020). The pedagogical question is how schools can make that commitment visible in everyday learning. This article asks which



conditions connect access with meaningful participation, how special educational expertise can contribute to that process, and what schools should monitor. Its contribution is an explicitly proposed framework connecting pedagogical actions with indicators, rather than a claim to have demonstrated an intervention's effectiveness.

2. Materials and Methods

The article uses a targeted narrative review and conceptual analysis. Sources were purposively selected for three functions: defining inclusion and social participation; examining teaching practices and the limits of outcome evidence; and establishing the Uzbek policy context. The resulting evidence set comprises eight sources: three peer-reviewed research publications, one United Nations committee document, two institutional guidance resources, and two Uzbek legal instruments. Source checking was completed on 18 September 2026 through publisher or university records, institutional websites and the LexUZ legal database.

Selection required a direct connection with at least one research question and an identifiable author or issuing institution. Research evidence, pedagogical guidance and legal requirements were analysed as different kinds of material. The research set includes a study of inclusive pedagogy, a literature study of social participation and a systematic review of placement outcomes. The institutional materials address rights, educational access and Universal Design for Learning. Uzbek sources comprise Article 20 of the education law and the regulation approved by Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 638, read in its amended form.

Each source was examined for its central claim, scope, implications for classroom practice and limitations. The synthesis compared recurring relationships between access, teaching, support, peer relations and school-family cooperation. Where full text was not retrievable, use was limited to claims explicitly supported by the verified abstract or repository record. No effect sizes were recalculated, no database search was presented as exhaustive, and no formal risk-of-bias assessment was performed for this narrative review. The results below are thematic interpretations and



proposed applications. They are not observations from Uzbek classrooms, a systematic review, or a validated assessment instrument.

3. Results

3.1. Participation provides a more precise objective than placement

The first finding of the synthesis is that a useful account of social integration requires several dimensions. Koster et al. (2009) identify friendships and relationships, interactions and contacts, the learner's own perceptions, and acceptance by classmates as central themes in the social dimension of inclusion. These dimensions make it possible to distinguish occupying a place in a classroom from becoming involved in its social life. They also show why attendance statistics alone provide an incomplete account of inclusion. For the proposed framework, participation is therefore examined through opportunities, actual involvement and the child's experience. These are related but different questions: was an activity accessible, did the child contribute, and did the child experience the contribution as meaningful? A teacher's observation of frequent interaction should not automatically be interpreted as friendship or belonging. Conversely, a learner's preference for limited interaction should not itself be classified as failure. The proposed criterion is access to valued relationships and activities with appropriate choice, rather than an imposed level of sociability.

3.2. Flexible teaching and individual support are complementary

Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) examined classroom practice through observations and interviews with 11 teachers in two Scottish primary schools. Their analysis illustrates an approach that expands learning opportunities ordinarily available to everyone. This provides a pedagogical reason to begin lesson planning with the range of learners already present, rather than constructing a complete lesson and only then considering those who cannot access it. The small, context-specific study offers examples of practice; it does not establish a universal causal effect on achievement. CAST's Universal Design for Learning Guidelines organise design options around engagement, representation, and action and expression, with learner



agency as their overarching goal (CAST, 2024). For this article, those categories function as planning prompts. Teachers can ask how learners encounter information, how they engage with the task and how they show understanding. The guidelines are used as a design resource, not as evidence that every activity described as UDL produces better outcomes.

A hypothetical lesson illustrates the proposed application. In a shared investigation of local plants, learners might explore physical specimens, accessible descriptions and labelled pictures before explaining a comparison through speech, writing or supported communication. The common objective would remain the identification of relevant similarities and differences. A learner who needs explicit vocabulary instruction could receive it in preparation for the same investigation. The example demonstrates a planning principle only: varied access routes and targeted instruction can contribute to a shared intellectual task.

3.3. Specialist expertise needs a shared pedagogical purpose

The transition considered here changes how specialist knowledge is organised. A useful role for a specialist is to help identify a barrier, design an appropriate response and review whether the response enables learning with peers. In the proposed approach, responsibility for a child's education remains shared across the teaching team. Support is judged by the opportunity it enables and the progress it makes possible, rather than by the number of separate sessions delivered.

This proposal has a concrete connection with Uzbekistan's regulatory framework. The regulation approved by Resolution No. 638 provides for individual educational programmes and assistance from specialist educators and assistant teachers. It also addresses individual planning and the roles of teaching staff (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021, Annex 1, paras. 25–27, 31–36, as amended). These provisions establish organisational possibilities; their existence alone does not demonstrate consistent implementation or positive outcomes in every school.

A proposed practical arrangement is a brief joint planning meeting around one upcoming lesson. The class teacher identifies the learning objective; the specialist identifies access and communication requirements; the child and



family contribute relevant preferences and experience. The team records the intended support and a date for review. Where individual instruction takes place outside the classroom, its purpose and connection with shared learning should be explicit. Changes in assistance should follow evidence of what the child needs, including the continuing use of support that enables participation.

3.4. A framework connecting conditions, actions and indicators

UNICEF's institutional guidance connects inclusive education with teacher preparation, accessible materials and buildings, and action against stigma in the community (UNICEF, n.d.). Read alongside the pedagogical and social-participation literature, this supports attention to conditions beyond the individual lesson. Table 1 presents the article's proposed synthesis. Its indicators are questions for school review, not standardised scores, diagnostic criteria or evidence of effects already achieved.

Table 1. Proposed pedagogical conditions and participation indicators

Pedagogical condition	Proposed school action	Question for review
Accessible environment	Check materials, communication and access to shared activities.	Can the learner use the resources and reach the activity?
Flexible teaching	Offer appropriate ways to engage, learn and demonstrate understanding.	Can the learner contribute to the common learning objective?
Coordinated support	Agree roles, individual goals and review dates across the teaching team.	Does the planned support enable the intended participation?
Reciprocal peer participation	Design meaningful group roles and address exclusion in daily activities.	Does the learner have opportunities to contribute and relate to peers?



Child and family partnership	Discuss priorities and review adjustments through accessible communication.	Are the learner's preferences and family observations considered?
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The five conditions should be considered together. For example, an accessible textbook does not establish that a child has an active role in a group task, while a welcoming peer group does not establish access to the curriculum. The proposed framework therefore treats the absence of one condition as a question for investigation rather than compensating for it with a high score elsewhere. No overall inclusion score is proposed, because the relative importance and interpretation of the indicators require local testing.

4. Discussion

4.1. Rights and outcome evidence answer different questions

The normative case for inclusion should be distinguished from evidence about a particular placement or teaching arrangement. Dalgaard et al. (2022) synthesised 15 non-randomised studies in their review of children with special educational needs in inclusive and segregated settings. The pooled estimates for language and literacy, mathematics and overall psychosocial adjustment were small and not statistically significant; the review also identified substantial methodological weaknesses. These findings do not establish that the settings are equivalent for every learner, or that inclusion inevitably improves outcomes. They show why a claim about placement should not substitute for examination of the actual provision experienced by children.

For this article, the implication is methodological. The proposed framework identifies features that a future study would need to observe before interpreting an outcome as an effect of inclusive practice. A school's designation as "inclusive" gives insufficient information about lesson accessibility, support, relationships or pupil agency. Research should specify those features and the learners involved. A rights-based commitment can



guide the goals of provision while empirical inquiry examines which practices realise those goals and where barriers remain.

4.2. From classroom participation to community life

The connection between school inclusion and integration into society should be formulated as a pathway to investigate, rather than an automatic consequence. Within the proposed framework, a child's experience of contributing to shared tasks creates opportunities to practise communication, decision-making and cooperation. Whether these opportunities extend into life beyond school depends on the accessibility of community activities and the continuity of relationships and support. Classroom achievement alone cannot establish that this wider transition has occurred.

Schools could make the connection explicit through accessible clubs, visits and projects involving local institutions. For example, a class project with a community library could include varied communication roles and accessible materials. Success would involve each child's opportunity to make a valued contribution, not merely appearing in a group photograph or attending the event. Such activities are proposed applications of the framework and should be evaluated through children's own accounts as well as adult observations.

Family partnership also requires attention to whose perspective is being heard. A meeting may gather useful information from parents while still overlooking a child's preferences. The proposed review process should therefore provide an accessible route for the child to express choices, including communication supports where needed. Families should be invited to describe practical barriers and priorities, but the framework does not make them responsible for providing the school's educational resources. Disagreements should be recorded as matters for discussion rather than treated as evidence of family unwillingness to cooperate.

4.3. Applying and evaluating the framework in Uzbekistan

A feasible starting point would be a focused school review rather than immediate adoption of a complex scoring system. The school could select



one class or year group, examine barriers in recurring activities and agree on a small number of changes. The proposed cycle has four stages: identify a participation barrier; plan an adjustment and allocate responsibility; observe its use in ordinary activities; and review it with the learner, family and teaching team. Decisions should record what changed and why, allowing later review of the process.

For example, if a learner seldom contributes during group work, the team should examine the task, communication format, distribution of roles and availability of necessary support. It should avoid assuming that the cause lies solely in the child. A revised activity could introduce a clearly defined contribution that the learner values and can access. Follow-up observation would consider whether the opportunity was used, how peers responded and how the learner evaluated the experience. This is an illustrative inquiry sequence, not a prescribed intervention with established effectiveness.

Local evaluation should combine evidence of learning with accounts of participation. Possible materials include work samples, structured observations, accessible child interviews and records of adjustments. Baseline and follow-up information would help identify change, but change alone would not demonstrate causality. Comparative designs, attention to differences between groups and documentation of how support was delivered would strengthen subsequent research. Regional, linguistic and resource differences would also need consideration before extending findings across Uzbekistan.

4.4. Limitations

This article draws on a small, purposively selected evidence set and does not claim exhaustive coverage of the literature. Some research contributions were available only through verified abstracts, which limited the depth of methodological appraisal. International studies cannot establish what happens in Uzbek classrooms, and legal provisions cannot be used as evidence of implementation. The proposed indicators have not been tested for reliability, validity or practical workload. Future work should examine their usefulness with children who have different communication and



support requirements, while preserving their opportunity to influence what counts as meaningful participation.

5. Conclusion

The pedagogical transition from special to inclusive education requires a connection between access, learning, support and participation. This article proposes five related conditions and a review process through which schools can examine that connection. Specialist expertise remains valuable when it helps children engage in common learning and social activities. Monitoring should consider learning opportunities, actual contributions, relationships and children's own experiences, alongside attendance and achievement.

For Uzbekistan, the proposed framework offers a way to discuss the classroom implications of existing inclusive-education provisions. Its value is conceptual and practical: it specifies questions that teachers and school teams can investigate. Its effectiveness remains an empirical question. Further research should test the proposed relationships in local settings and examine whether changes in everyday school participation extend to sustained opportunities in community life.

6. Acknowledgements and Declarations

The article draws on the published work of the authors and institutions identified in the reference list. It is a literature-based conceptual analysis and reports no study involving participants, no newly collected personal data and no original experimental results.

7. References

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