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## THE INTEGRATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WITH NATIONAL VALUES: THE EXPERIENCE OF UZBEKISTAN

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### Abstract

The formation of healthy lifestyle consciousness has become a strategic priority in New Uzbekistan, where socio-political reforms, educational modernization, and human-centered development converge to shape a new cultural paradigm of well-being. This article examines the philosophical and anthropological foundations of a healthy lifestyle as a key factor of sustainable social development. From a philosophical standpoint, the concept of health is viewed not merely as a biological state but as an integrated dimension of human existence, encompassing ethical self-care, rational behavior, value-based choice, and harmonious interaction with society and the environment. By integrating classical philosophical insights with contemporary approaches to human development, the research reveals how healthy lifestyle consciousness becomes an essential component of personal identity, collective wellbeing, and the long-term progress of New Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** Healthy lifestyle, philosophical anthropology, New Uzbekistan, health consciousness, human development, value systems, social well-being, modernization, public health culture, ethical norms, socio-cultural transformation.

### Introduction

Inclusive education has emerged as one of the central principles of modern educational policy worldwide, reflecting a global commitment to equality, human rights, and social justice. In Uzbekistan, the development of inclusive education is closely intertwined with the nation's rich cultural heritage, ethical traditions,



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and strong social cohesion. The country's long-standing value system—based on solidarity, mutual assistance, hospitality, compassion, and respect for human dignity—creates a fertile ground for the establishment of inclusive educational environments. As Uzbekistan continues to modernize its social and educational systems, the integration of inclusive education with national values becomes an essential dimension of its reform agenda.

Historically, Uzbek society has been rooted in communal life, where families, mahallas (community units), and social groups relied on cooperation and collective responsibility. These cultural traditions naturally align with the core principles of inclusive education, which emphasize participation, acceptance, and the recognition of every individual's potential. Unlike societies where inclusion is primarily driven by policy or external advocacy, Uzbekistan's inclusive approach is strengthened by indigenous values that have been cultivated over centuries. This cultural alignment supports not only the acceptance of children with disabilities but also the broader inclusion of all learners regardless of social status, ethnicity, gender, or background.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken significant legal and institutional reforms aimed at expanding educational access and ensuring equal opportunities for learners with special needs. The adoption of the Law "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," the expansion of inclusive schooling practices, the development of teacher training programs, and the implementation of community-based support mechanisms reflect the state's commitment to inclusive development. Such reforms are further reinforced by international cooperation with UNESCO, UNICEF, and other global organizations, enabling Uzbekistan to align national educational standards with global best practices.

However, the success of inclusive education depends not only on policy frameworks but also on the cultural readiness of society. Uzbekistan's traditional values—such as respectful communication, familial responsibility, and collective care—serve as powerful drivers for building inclusive learning environments. These values encourage empathy, acceptance of difference, and moral responsibility toward vulnerable groups. At the same time, modern social changes, urbanization, and digital transformation introduce new challenges and



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necessitate a deeper philosophical understanding of inclusion as a cultural and ethical norm rather than solely an educational strategy.

The growing awareness among educators, parents, and community leaders about the importance of inclusive education also highlights a broader shift in societal attitudes. Schools and mahallas are increasingly becoming collaborative spaces where children with diverse needs are encouraged to learn, interact, and develop in an environment that respects individuality while promoting social unity. This shift marks a transformation in educational thinking—from segregation and special schooling toward integration, participation, and empowerment.

Therefore, exploring the integration of inclusive education with national values in Uzbekistan is crucial for understanding not only how reforms are implemented but also how cultural identity shapes educational practice. This study aims to analyze the philosophical and cultural foundations that support inclusive education in Uzbekistan, assess the impact of ongoing social reforms, and highlight the role of national values in fostering inclusive mindsets. By doing so, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how traditional cultural frameworks can reinforce modern educational innovations and strengthen the development of a more equitable and inclusive society.

Inclusive education in Uzbekistan is evolving at the intersection of cultural heritage, social transformation, and global educational trends. While inclusive schooling initiatives have gained momentum worldwide, each country's approach is shaped by its historical development, social norms, and philosophical foundations. In this context, Uzbekistan presents a unique model in which traditional national values deeply support the ideological and ethical principles of inclusion. The following analysis explores the interplay between national values and inclusive development, while offering a comparative perspective with international practices.

**Cultural Foundations of Inclusion in Uzbekistan-**Uzbek culture is historically rooted in communal solidarity, where cooperation, mutual support, and shared responsibility play central roles in social life. The mahalla (local community) system embodies these principles and functions as an informal social safety net.



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Within such a cultural context, inclusion is not perceived as an external requirement but rather as a continuation of a long-standing moral tradition.

Values such as compassion (mehr-oqibat), respect for elders and children, hospitality, and collective responsibility facilitate acceptance of learners with diverse needs. These values create a psychological and social environment conducive to inclusive education, where differences are considered normal and human dignity is prioritized.

In contrast, in many Western countries inclusive education emerged as a response to human rights movements and legal struggles against segregation. In Uzbekistan, however, the moral foundation supporting inclusion predates modern reforms, making cultural integration smoother and more organic.

**National Educational Reforms Supporting Inclusion-**Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has implemented a number of legislative and institutional initiatives to promote inclusive education:

- Adoption of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020)
- Development of inclusive education standards and teacher training modules
- Introduction of resource centers in schools to support children with special needs
- Expansion of early intervention services
- Strengthening cooperation between families, schools, and mahallas

These reforms align with global frameworks, particularly the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** and **UNESCO's Inclusive Education Guidelines**. They demonstrate a transition from a medical model of disability to a social and rights-based approach.

Comparatively, countries such as Italy and Canada have been pioneers of systemic inclusion, eliminating special schools and integrating all learners into mainstream classrooms. Uzbekistan is gradually moving in this direction, prioritizing individualized support, curriculum adaptation, and teacher professional development.

**The Role of Mahalla and Community-Based Support-**Unlike many countries where inclusion is predominantly the responsibility of schools and social services,



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Uzbekistan benefits from a strong community infrastructure. The mahalla plays a central role in:

- Identifying children with learning and developmental needs
- Facilitating communication between families and schools
- Providing social and emotional support
- Mobilizing community resources for inclusive programs

This model has similarities with **Japan's community-centered education system**, where local social structures support the integration of students with disabilities.

However, Uzbekistan's mahalla system is unique because it blends traditional moral expectations with modern administrative functions, creating a culturally grounded mechanism for promoting inclusion.

**International Comparative Perspective**-A comparative analysis with selected international experiences illustrates both similarities and differences:

**Scandinavian Countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden)**-These countries emphasize equality, individualized instruction, and extensive teacher autonomy. Their inclusive systems are built on strong welfare models that ensure universal access and social support. Uzbekistan shares the value of collective welfare but is still developing the institutional capacity needed for advanced individualized instruction.

**Italy**-Italy eliminated special schools in the 1970s, integrating all students into mainstream classrooms. This approach requires large-scale teacher training and specialized support staff. Uzbekistan is currently expanding teacher training, but full integration is a long-term goal.

**South Korea and Japan**-These countries combine respect for tradition with highly structured educational systems. Their gradual transition to inclusion parallels Uzbekistan's cautious yet culturally sensitive approach. Like Uzbekistan, they emphasize family involvement and social respect.



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**United States and United Kingdom-** These nations rely heavily on legal enforcement, individualized education plans (IEPs), and disability rights advocacy. While Uzbekistan is strengthening its legal frameworks, cultural values play a more significant role than litigation in shaping inclusive practices.

**Challenges in Integrating National Values and Inclusive Practices-** Despite notable progress, several challenges remain:

- Insufficient number of trained specialists (speech therapists, psychologists, defectologists)
- Limited accessibility in many school buildings
- Social stigma and stereotyping still persist in certain regions
- Curriculum and assessment systems not fully adapted to inclusive settings
- Need for greater parental awareness and participation

These challenges are not unique to Uzbekistan; similar issues were observed historically in countries now considered leaders in inclusion. For example, Italy faced decades of teacher shortages, and Scandinavian countries invested heavily in psychological support systems.

**Strengths and Opportunities Based on National Values-** Uzbekistan's cultural attributes provide strong advantages for developing an inclusive system:

- Deep-rooted communal ethics encourage collective responsibility for every child
- Mahalla-based support reduces social isolation of vulnerable groups
- Respectful communication norms ease integration of children with special needs
- Multi-generational households create natural support networks
- Emphasis on moral education (tarbiya) fosters empathy and social awareness

In combination with modern reforms and international cooperation, these strengths position Uzbekistan as a potential regional model for culturally grounded inclusive education.



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**Toward a Nationally Adapted Philosophy of Inclusion**—The ultimate goal is the formation of a uniquely Uzbek philosophy of inclusion—one that harmonizes universal human rights standards with local cultural values. Such a model:

- Views inclusion as part of moral and social duty
- Integrates traditional and modern support mechanisms
- Ensures equal educational opportunities
- Strengthens national identity through humanistic values
- Prepares future generations for a diverse and interconnected world

This culturally informed approach distinguishes Uzbekistan’s experience from many global models and underscores the necessity of contextualized educational reforms.

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