

ACCESSIBILITY OF INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH THE EYES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract: *Currently, the problem of providing optimal conditions for the creative development, self-education and professional development of persons with disabilities is increasingly relevant for higher educational institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In this regard, of major importance is to study the peculiarities of organizing work with students in the context of inclusive education. The main purpose of the study was to analyze and determine the degree of accessibility of high-quality higher education as viewed by students with disabilities, and based on the research results, to offer recommendations for addressing the identified problems. The survey included 52 students aged 17-23 years enrolled in different courses and faculties of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University with disabilities of various types: visual impairments-16 students; musculoskeletal disorders- 20 students; somatic diseases-16 students. The questionnaire was developed by specialists of the Resource Advisory Center of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan.*

Keywords: inclusive education, disability, students with disabilities, motivation, support of the educational process, barrier-free environment.

It should be noted that over the last few years, the rights and interests of persons with disabilities have been reflected in the Kazakh legal standards, thus there has been a positive shift in the country at the legislative level as regards the adoption of the needs of persons with disabilities.

„The State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020” also defines the development of inclusive education as one of the important tasks.¹ The Law „On Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” was signed on February 20, 2015 № 288-V. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force on May 21, 2015.²

¹ On approval of the State Program for the Development of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020, Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan №1118 of December 7, 2010, Astana, Akorda.

² Bulletin of international treaties of the Republic of Kazakhstan, no. 5, 2015, art. 43, retrieved from www.tengrinews.kz, accessed in 25.01.2018.

The population of Kazakhstan is 17 million people, of whom more than 563.000 are persons with disabilities, including 65.800 children with disabilities. Their share relative to the total population of the country is 3,4%. According to the current legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, persons with disabilities are endowed with all rights and freedoms on an equal basis with other citizens of the country.³

The Republic of Kazakhstan, as a party to many international instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, has signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto.⁴

Despite the positive changes in relation to persons with disabilities that have taken place in recent years in Kazakhstan, there are still significant socio-psychological and personal barriers in organizing the accessibility of higher education.⁵ Practice shows that in the process of spontaneous integration of students with disabilities into the educational space of the university, there are problems related to the organization of the educational process and the creation of a barrier-free environment for the student. To address this issue, a survey of students with disabilities was conducted.

Methods

The study is based on the sociological method (survey, questioning, conversation). The survey included 52 students aged 17-23 years enrolled in different courses and faculties of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University with disabilities of various types: visual impairments-16 students; musculoskeletal disorders-20 students; somatic diseases-16 students.

The survey was conducted between March and April of the 2016-2017 academic year. In early March, e-mails were sent to students

³ A. R. Rymkhanova, K. S. Tebenova, G. N. Museeva, T. Sh. Serikov, M. A. Bayanov, „To the question of readiness of a teacher of a higher education student with special educational needs”, in *International journal of applied and fundamental research*, no. 3, 2016, pp. 673-676.

⁴ On approval of the report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by the Republic of Kazakhstan, retrieved www.egov.kz, accessed in 11.02.2018

⁵ Z. A. Movkebayeva, „Modernization of higher education programs with the account of needs of persons with restricted development opportunities”, in *Special Education*, no. 1, 2016, pp. 22-23.

indicating the purpose of the study, summarizing the procedure for participating in the study and providing information about the researcher, the place and time of the survey as well as contact details. For the questionnaire, handouts were prepared indicating. The questions were grouped in the following areas. Time for completing the questionnaire was not limited.

The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics		Year of study				Total n=52	%
		1	2	3	4		
Gender identity	Female	16	9	4	6	35	67,3
	Male	6	7	3	1	17	32,7
By types of impairment	Visual impairments	8	5	2	1	16	30,8
	Musculoskeletal disorders	9	7	3	1	20	38,5
	Somatic diseases	5	4	2	5	16	30,7
Disability group	Group I	-	3	1	-	4	7,7
	Group II	4	1	2	2	9	17,3
	Group III	18	12	4	5	39	75
Specialization of professional work	Social sciences and humanities	18	12	6	3	39	75
	Economic science	1	2	-	1	4	7,7
	Engineering science	3	2	1	3	9	17,3
Permanent place of residence	City	13	9	5	5	32	61,5
	Village	9	7	2	2	20	38,5

Results and discussion

An analysis of the data presented in Table 1 makes it possible to conclude that the number of those willing to enter the university increases every year, compared to the 4th year of study, the number of enrolled students increased by 3%. It was also revealed that the majority

of respondents (75%) chose social sciences and humanities. This shows the availability and attractiveness of these disciplines.

Table 2: Results of the survey on motivation when studying at the university

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Obtain a diploma of higher education	7,8	3,9	3,9	1,9	17,5
Obtaining higher education will give me higher chances of finding a job	13,7	21,5	9,8	9,8	54,8
Get a higher salary	3,9	-	3,9	1,9	9,7
Become a highly qualified specialist	33,3	21,5	7,8	11,7	74,3

The survey revealed that 74,3% of students expressed a desire to be high-level specialists, of them 33,3% are the first-year students. However, the opinion of senior students is changing, down to 2%. This shows that the motivation for obtaining a diploma of higher education is not the main purpose of study.

54,8% of students believe that obtaining a diploma of higher education can help find a job, which means that they will not be unemployed and will be able to take care of themselves financially. Only 9,7% of respondents would like to have a high salary, thus, they change their opinion in their last year of study.

A sound academic background can help become a sought-after specialist and get a well-paid job.

Table 3: Results of the survey on the reasons for choosing a specialty

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
A childhood dream	1,9	3,9	3,9	-	9,7
A desire to travel around the world	1,9	-	-	-	1,9
A desire to protect the environment	-	1,9	-	-	1,9
A desire to help people	1,9	5,9	1,9	3,9	30,7
A desire to learn something new	1,9	-	-	-	1,9
Interest in the specialty	23,5	9,8	1,9	5,9	41,1
A highly sought-after specialty	7,8	3,9	1,9	3,9	17,5
Because of illness	1,9	-	1,9	-	3,8
Parent's proposal	1,9	5,9	1,9	-	9,7

When choosing a specialty, 41,1% of students showed increased interest, i. e. they purposefully chose their specialty, 30,7%-wanted to

help people, and 17,5% believe that the specialty chosen by them is in demand today, i.e. after graduation they will not be unemployed.

Table 4: Results of the survey on obtaining information about the university and specialty

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Advice of parents and friends	11,7	13,7	3,9	5,9	25,2
Advice of teachers	3,9	3,9	-	-	7,8
I will get a quality education here	23,5	17,6	3,9	5,9	50,9
Many people who have the same health problems study	-	-	1,9	-	1,9
It will be easier to get a job	1,9	3,9	3,9	-	9,7
I find it interesting	17,6	11,7	7,8	5,9	43
On the Internet	7,8	5,9	1,9	9,8	25,4

50,9% of respondents believe that they will receive a quality education at this university, i. e. in the future they will become good specialists and will not be unemployed, and will strive for this. 43% chose their specialty based on their interest, in their opinion it is interesting to study at this university. 25,4% responded that they found information about the university and this specialty on the Internet, and 25,2% relied on the recommendation of their parents.

Table 5: Results of the survey on preferences upon entering the university

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
To simplify the mechanism for passing the entrance examinations	19,6	15,7	1,9	7,8	45
To be provided with a discount as for a person with disability	11,7	9,8	5,9	3,9	31,3
To not be denied admission to the university because of the diagnosis	13,7	13,7	5,9	5,9	39,2
To receive examinations carried out by specially trained persons	-	1,9	-	-	1,9

45% of respondents believe that the mechanism for passing the entrance examinations should be simplified, because applicants for admission to the university have various disabilities. 39,2% believe that the university should not deny them because of the diagnosis of

disability. 31,3% of respondents expressed the desire to be provided with a discount upon applying for paid education.

Table 6: Results of the survey on which specialists should work in the university with persons with disabilities

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Teacher-psychologist (psychologist, special psychologist)	23,5	15,7	7,8	5,9	52,9
Visual impairment specialist	3,9	3,9	3,9	-	11,7
Teacher of persons who are hearing impaired	5,9	-	3,9	-	9,8
Sign language interpreter	5,9	1,9	1,9	-	9,7
Teacher-tutor	5,9	3,9	1,9	-	11,7
Social worker (social teacher)	21,5	5,9	3,9	7,8	39,1
Specialist for special hardware and software	7,8	9,8	1,9	1,9	21,4
Assistant who provides persons with disabilities with the necessary technical assistance	11,7	9,8	5,9	1,9	29,3

52,9% of respondents believe that a teacher-psychologist is always needed, since students with disabilities always need psychological help. 39,1% responded that they needed a social worker, a specially trained staff, who would help in studies and in movements. Students responded to the question in view of their diseases.

Table 7: Results of the survey on the attitude of teachers and university supervisors to students with disabilities

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Unfriendly	1,9	1,9	-	-	3,8
The same way as to others	31,4	31,4	7,8	13,7	84,3
With special admiration and surprise	1,9	-	3,9	-	5,8
Have not noticed	5,9	-	-	-	5,9

The survey revealed that 84,3% of teachers and supervisors treat them the same way as others. This shows that most teachers have professional experience, i. e. they are able to work with students without pushing them away. However, the unfriendly attitude is still observed (3,8%).

Table 8: Results of the survey on the attitudes of fellow students to students with disabilities

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Benevolently	17,6	11,7	5,9	5,9	41,1
Friendly	31,4	21,5	9,8	13,7	76,4
They help with studies	9,8	5,9	7,8	3,9	27,4
They help with movement	7,8	1,9	1,9	1,9	13,5
They have their own interests	1,9	-	-	-	1,9
Understandingly	11,7	13,7	3,9	3,9	33,2
Pityingly	3,9	-	-	-	3,9
Indifferent	3,9	-	-	-	3,9

The results of the survey show that 76,4% of respondents believe that fellow students have a friendly attitude towards them, which indicates that fellow students respect inclusive education.⁶ Benevolence ranks second-41,1%. This explains that there is mutual understanding between fellow students. Positive answers (33,2%) show that fellow students treat them with understanding, i.e. friends help with their studies, movement, etc.

Table 9: Results of the survey on the correspondence of the educational facility with the requirements of the „barrier-free environment”

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Corresponds	9,8	5,9	7,8	1,9	25,4
Does not correspond	1,9	1,9	1,9	1,9	7,6
Corresponds insufficiently	31,4	23,5	1,9	9,8	66,6

⁶ V. Zh. Esirgepova, *Inclusive education in Kazakhstan: status, prospects*, retrieved from www.ksu.edu.kz, accessed in 1.03.2018

One of the important values in obtaining a quality education is the correspondence of the classroom, etc. with the requirements of the „barrier-free environment”. 66,6% of respondents believe that the university does not adequately meet the requirements. These data indicate the need to further clarify the types of deficiencies that need to be addressed. Of interest are the responses of 25,4% of students who believe that all conditions have been created at the university for obtaining a quality education. We have to find out by what criteria the students were guided in assessing this issue.

Table 10: Results of the survey on the demand for the „barrier-free architectural environment” at the university for students with disabilities

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Accessibility of the adjacent territory	21,5	11,7	1,9	5,9	41
Accessibility of the entrance and circulation facilities	29,4	21,5	7,8	11,7	70,4
Availability of specially equipped sanitation facilities	11,7	11,7	7,8	5,9	37,1
Availability of special places in classrooms	11,7	5,9	7,8	-	25,4
Availability of special places in the student canteen	3,9	9,8	5,9	1,9	21,5
Availability of a barrier-free environment in student dormitories	19,6	11,7	7,8	5,9	45
Availability of the alarms and warning system	11,7	5,9	5,9	1,9	25,4

70,4% of respondents believe that the entrance and circulation facilities inside the building should be accessible so that each student with a disability could move independently on the territory of the university. 45% of respondents believe that student dormitories correspond to the barrier-free environment. 41% would like the adjacent territory to be accessible for persons with disabilities of all groups to have no difficulty in moving from one academic building to another. 37,1% of students would like to have specially equipped sanitation facilities in educational buildings. 25,4% of respondents would like to have special alarms and warning systems in classrooms and throughout the university. These points were noted by students with different

diseases, mostly by students with somatic diseases who do not need special help.

Table 11: Results of the survey on the necessary conditions for accompanying the educational process of students with disabilities

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Distance learning	17,6	5,9	-	3,9	27,4
Individual additional lessons	-	3,9	1,9	-	5,8
Transport support	7,8	11,7	5,9	1,9	27,3
Job placement assistance	19,6	21,5	7,8	11,7	60,6
Psychological and pedagogical support	11,7	7,8	5,9	1,9	27,3
Social support	9,8	5,9	5,9	3,9	25,5
Medical and sanitary support	17,6	9,8	7,8	5,9	41,1
Volunteer assistance to people with disabilities	3,9	5,9	1,9	-	11,7
Adaptation of the discipline "Physical Culture" for students with disabilities of various types	13,7	9,8	9,8	3,9	37,2

When asked about the necessary conditions for accompanying the educational process for persons with disabilities and the conditions for health protection at the university, 60,6% of students responded that job placement assistance was important. 41,1% of respondents consider that medical and health support is needed during their studies. In order to improve their health, 37,2% of respondents consider it useful to participate in the physical education class, and 27,3% responded that students always need psychological and pedagogical support, so the university should provide such support.

Table 12: Results of the survey on the need to improve the material and technical support of the university for persons with disabilities

Variants of answers	Year of study				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Availability of sound amplifying equipment, multimedia and other technical equipment for students with hearing impairments	25,5	17,6	9,8	7,8	60,7
Availability of Braille computer equipment, electronic lens, video magnifiers, programs of non-	29,4	13,7	9,8	3,9	56,8

visual access to information, speech synthesizers and other technical means for students with visual impairments					
Availability of computer equipment with special software adapted for persons with disabilities	15,7	17,6	11,7	5,9	50,9
Availability of alternative input devices and other technical means for students with musculoskeletal disorders	17,6	19,6	9,8	3,9	50,9

More than 60% of students noted that providing material and technical resources for the educational process of persons with disabilities is an important task of the university.

It should be noted that during the survey, many participants independently noted that in their spare time they are fond of drawing, reading books, collecting, writing, participating in social activities, dancing, singing, sports, sewing and other useful activities.

Conclusions

The analysis of the questionnaire made it possible to determine that students with disabilities note positive changes in the attitude towards providing conditions for obtaining higher education in Kazakhstan.

The results of the survey revealed that there are significant socio-psychological and personal barriers in organizing the inclusive accessibility of higher education. Among the surveyed students, 45% noted that it is necessary to simplify the mechanism for passing the entrance examinations. 39,2% of respondents indicated that they fear to be denied admission to the university due to disability.

The survey showed that in the context of inclusive education there is a need to consider the staff for working with persons with disabilities, including a teacher-psychologist, a social worker, an assistant, a specialist in special technical and software tools. Also, it is necessary to revise the curriculum of the university, taking into account inclusive education.

The study revealed that the implementation of informative and awareness-raising programs are at the proper level at the university.

The study also revealed that there is a need to improve the accessibility of the university's infrastructure and provide material and technical means for the educational process of persons with disabilities.

It should be noted that the university should more thoughtfully organize the leisure of students with disabilities.

The results of the survey showed a good level of tolerance of the university teaching staff to students with disabilities.

