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International Scientific Educational Center
of NAS RA

Concept Paper
on Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education: Main Issues and Objectives

Globally, tertiary enrollment has increased both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population. Tertiary enrollment in OECD countries has nearly doubled over the past two decades (from 20% to 36%), and in about half of OECD countries, tertiary education is now the most common level of education.

Also in Armenia, during the period of independence, the number of institutions implementing higher education programs and the number of involved students has significantly increased. At present, only about 85,000 students study at the universities of the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

Along with an increase in general participation, the representation of students from groups in need of special conditions of social inclusion in the higher education system is significantly lower than in society, which is partly due to the lack of student support services and accessible infrastructure at universities, as well as the insufficient level of a culture of social inclusion.

These main groups are:

- children from low or middle- income families
- children of parents with a low level of education,
- young people with disabilities,
- participants in the war,
- adult students,
- students and employees who are responsible for taking care of children, sick relatives,
- Unilaterally or bilaterally orphaned students,
- representatives of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minorities,
- students from remote or rural areas, urban problem areas, areas with inadequate public services (e.g., transport),
- students who are the children of fallen servicemen,
- cadets who have completed military service under the contract (B/Z),
- refugees,
- etc.

Unlike other social spheres, the presence of an inclusive culture and the attractiveness of higher education for students belonging to the above-mentioned groups is largely due to the effective learning conditions created for all, primarily the development of teaching methods, learning forms and assessment methods in educational programs and courses that will ensure

- elimination of differences in prior knowledge(e.g. differences in progress/performance at the previous level of education);

- leveling differences in prior experience (e.g. adult students with work experience need learning approaches that are immediately different from the needs of other students, they can also make practical contributions during the course);
- addressing issues related to breaking down stereotypes about inclusiveness (e.g. disability, cultures and religions);
- flexible learning paths, including by correspondence or using the possibilities of the continuing education system of the university

The Current State of the Inclusive Education System in the International Scientific Educational Center of NAS RA

In the context of inclusive education development, the ISEC NAS RA faces the following challenges:

- university buildings and infrastructures are not fully adapted for people with disabilities,
- educational programs have not yet been brought into line with the principles of the proper education development
- most of the administrative, teaching and educational support staff are not trained, they do not have the appropriate skills to work with people who need special educational conditions,
- etc.

Current situation

At present, ISEC NAS RA applies certain elements of support for inclusion in higher education (for example, discounts, benefits, additional tools to assist students financially, such as partial payment or installments, deferred payment, loans, work-education programs, etc.), the existing procedures regulating their operation, however, do not constitute an effective, sustainable and coherent system of inclusive education.

- Every year, ISEC NAS RA provides partial reimbursement of tuition fees in the amount of at least 7% of the budget formed from students' fees. In 2020 the amount of compensation was 13.9%; in 2021 – it was 14.2% accordingly
- Students interested in scientific research have the opportunity to publish their peer-reviewed scientific works in the collection of scientific articles «Kachar» on a free basis
- To strengthen the research capacity of students, an annual student conference is organized at which students can publish their peer-reviewed papers free of charge

- Students also receive support and assistance from the Student Council and the Student Scientific Association, which not only provide advice, but are also self-governing bodies that protect the rights and interests of students
- The Public Relations and Career Department supports the professional orientation of students/graduates, organizes trainings for the development of professional and non-professional skills of students and by increasing their competitiveness in the labor market, organizes events, orientation visits, meetings with experts in various fields, etc.
- The foreign languages and intercultural communication club of the ISEC NAS RA offers foreign language courses and intercultural communication trainings for the students and faculty members of ISEC NAS RA

General Directions of the Development of Inclusive Education System in the

International Scientific Educational Center of NAS RA

The goal of forming an effective and comprehensive system of inclusive education implies the planning of a long-term process, in which all the main components of the system should be developed and implemented in stages.

The main issue of the first stage of the inclusive education system development and implementation process (2023-2025 years) is the formation of mechanisms to ensure the students and faculty's utmost involvement in the inclusive education process.

The following are the main features of the development and implementation of the inclusive education system for the first phase.

In 2023, the issues of inclusive education will be coordinated by the Inclusion Council in ISEC NAS RA.

The main functions of the Inclusion Council are:

Revelation and identification of students with special educational needs based on intra-university analysis will allow the beneficiaries to understand their target groups, special educational needs and steps to be taken.

- Analysis of the current situation. After collecting information on the student population, it is desirable to conduct an analysis of the current situation, which will allow understanding what services are provided to students, whether the services provided meet educational requirements and students' special educational needs as well as what additional support services and steps can be implemented to make their learning process more efficient and collaborative.
- The mechanisms of institutional support can be accessible infrastructure adaptations, reallocation of the budget, training and awareness- raising activities, etc.
- Development of inclusive approaches to teaching, learning and evaluation, defining clear actions aimed at strengthening inclusive approaches to teaching, learning and evaluation. This may include, the revision of curricula, the provision of reasonable facilities for examinations and seminars, and the development and implementation of accessible formats and others.
- Establishing a quality assurance policy, which should include clearly defined quality assurance tools and mechanisms that will strengthen and disseminate an inclusive culture in the institution. Quality assurance tools can include questionnaires, focus group meetings with internal institutional stakeholders, etc. Analysis of the results of the latter will help to understand existing gaps and challenges in ensuring the inclusiveness of the educational process.
- Monitoring that will allow evaluating the human, financial and material resources allocated to the effective organization and implementation of inclusive education.

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