

THE ATTITUDES OF DEFECTOLOGISTS

**The Attitudes of Defectologists Towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education
in Kyzylorda**

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This letter now confirms that your research project entitled: The attitudes of defectologists towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

You may proceed with contacting your preferred research site and commencing your participant recruitment strategy.

Yours sincerely

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Alima Abdulatif

Abstract

In Kazakhstan, inclusive education is implemented through accommodating learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in inclusive classrooms within mainstream schools and in specialized settings. Special education teachers, generally known as defectologists due to the Soviet correctional background of dealing with disability, work with students in those settings. They are believed to be one of the key stakeholders in the existing inclusive initiatives as the country moves toward inclusion. This qualitative study aimed to explore the experiences of defectologists in Kyzylorda and their attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education. The research investigated defectologists' understanding of inclusive education, their awareness of inclusive education reforms, challenges and concerns encountered in their practice and how defectologists perceive their role within the current inclusive policies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten defectologists working in mainstream schools. The findings indicate that several defectologists understand inclusive education as integrating students with SEND in mainstream education, whereas more than half of the participants are aware of its broad international definition. In addition, the study found that defectologists are well aware of the current inclusive policies in the country; however, the lack of an official source of information providing timely updates on changes in their field was stressed by participants. Furthermore, participants identified the professional competency of defectologists in the city, scarcity of comprehensive methodological support and attitudes in society as significant barriers to implementing inclusive education. The findings suggest that defectologists hold positive attitudes towards educating students with SEND in regular classrooms and are willing to work as their teachers and consultants to general education teachers. The present study emphasizes the need for better coordination of the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda by

stakeholders at the oblast and ministerial levels. Moreover, further large scale study on the attitudes and knowledge of other parties involved in inclusive education is recommended.

Keywords: inclusive education, defectologists, special education teachers.

Аннотация

В Казахстане инклюзивное образование осуществляется путем размещения учащихся с особыми образовательными потребностями и ограниченными возможностями здоровья (ОВЗ) в инклюзивных классах в общеобразовательных школах и в специализированных учреждениях. В этих условиях с учащимися работают учителя специального образования, которых обычно называют дефектологами из-за советского исправительного опыта работы с инвалидами. Считается, что они являются одними из ключевых участников существующих инклюзивных инициатив, поскольку страна движется в направлении инклюзии. Цель данного качественного исследования - изучить опыт дефектологов в Кызылорде и их отношение к внедрению инклюзивного образования. В ходе исследования изучалось понимание дефектологами инклюзивного образования, их осведомленность о реформах инклюзивного образования, трудности и проблемы, с которыми они сталкиваются в своей практике, а также то, как дефектологи воспринимают свою роль в рамках текущей инклюзивной политики. Полуструктурированные интервью были проведены с десятью дефектологами, работающими в общеобразовательных школах. Результаты показали, что некоторые дефектологи понимают инклюзивное образование как интеграцию учащихся с ЗПР в общеобразовательную школу, в то время как более половины участников знают о его широком международном определении. Кроме того, исследование показало, что дефектологи хорошо осведомлены о текущей инклюзивной политике в стране; однако участники подчеркнули отсутствие официального источника информации, который бы своевременно информировал об изменениях в их области. Кроме того, в качестве существенных препятствий для внедрения инклюзивного образования участники назвали профессиональную компетентность дефектологов в городе, недостаток

комплексной методической поддержки и отношение в обществе. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что дефектологи положительно относятся к обучению учащихся с ЗПР в обычных классах и готовы работать в качестве их учителей и консультантов для учителей общеобразовательных школ. Настоящее исследование подчеркивает необходимость улучшения координации внедрения инклюзивного образования в Кызылорде заинтересованными сторонами на областном и министерском уровнях. Кроме того, рекомендуется дальнейшее масштабное исследование отношения и знаний других сторон, участвующих в инклюзивном образовании.

Ключевые слова: инклюзивное образование, дефектологи, учителя специального образования.

Аңдатпа

Қазақстанда инклюзивтік білім беру ерекше білім беру қажеттіліктері бар және мүмкіндігі шектеулі оқушыларды орта мектептерде инклюзивтік сыныптарға орналастыру мен мамандандырылған мекемелерде орналастыру арқылы іске асырылады. Әдетте мүгедектермен кеңестік түзету тәжірибесіне байланысты дефектологтар деп аталатын арнайы білім беру мұғалімдері студенттермен осындай жағдайда жұмыс істейді. Олар қазіргі инклюзивті бастамалардың негізгі мүдделі тараптарының бірі болып саналады, өйткені ел инклюзивтілікке бет бұруда. Бұл сапалы зерттеу Қызылордадағы дефектологтардың тәжірибесін және олардың инклюзивті білім беруді енгізуге қатынасын зерттеуге бағытталған. Зерттеу барысында дефектологтардың инклюзивті білім беру туралы түсініктері, олардың инклюзивті білім беру реформалары, олардың тәжірибелерінде кездесетін мәселелер мен мәселелер туралы білімдері, сонымен қатар дефектологтардың қазіргі инклюзивті саясат шеңберіндегі рөлін қалай қабылдайтындығы зерттелді. Жалпы мектептерде жұмыс істейтін он дефектологпен жартылай құрылымдалған сұхбат жүргізілді. Нәтижелер көрсеткендей, кейбір дефектологтар инклюзивті білім беруді мүмкіндігі шектеулі студенттердің жалпы білім беру жүйесіне интеграциясы ретінде түсінеді, ал қатысушылардың жартысынан көбі оның кең халықаралық анықтамасы туралы біледі. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу дефектологтардың елдегі қазіргі инклюзивті саясат туралы жақсы білетіндігін көрсетті; дегенмен, қатысушылар өз салаларындағы өзгерістер туралы уақтылы ақпарат беретін ресми ақпарат көзінің жоқтығын атап өтті. Сонымен қатар, қатысушылар қаладағы дефектологтардың кәсіби құзыреттілігін, жан-жақты әдістемелік қолдаудың жетіспеушілігін және инклюзивті білім беруді енгізудегі маңызды кедергілер ретінде қоғамда қарым-қатынасты анықтады. Алынған мәліметтер дефектологтар мүмкіндігі шектеулі оқушыларды қарапайым сыныптарда оқытуға оң көзқараспен қарайтындығын және

олардың мұғалімдері мен жалпы білім беру мұғалімдеріне кеңесші ретінде жұмыс істеуге дайын екендігін көрсетеді. Осы зерттеуде облыстық және министрлік деңгейлерде мүдделі тараптардың Қызылордада инклюзивті білім беруді енгізуді үйлестіруді жақсарту қажеттілігі атап өтілді. Сонымен қатар, инклюзивті білім беруге қатысатын басқа тараптардың қарым-қатынасы мен біліміне одан әрі ауқымды зерттеу жүргізу ұсынылады.

Кілт сөздер: инклюзивті білім беру, дефектологтар, арнайы білім беру мұғалімдері.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Inclusive Education - Global Outlook

Inclusive education has been globally recognized as the most effective form of education that aims to eliminate exclusionary attitudes, establish supportive environments, and provide education for all (UNICEF, 2014). Although there are numerous interpretations of inclusive education which results in a lack of shared understanding of the concept (Reindal, 2015), one can infer the working definition of inclusive education from international organizations such as the United Nations and its agencies. The concept of inclusive education was first articulated in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in 1994. It postulates that mainstream schools should accommodate all children despite their intellectual, physical, social, linguistic, and other conditions (UNESCO, 1994). Slee (2018) further explains inclusive education as a policy that implies ensuring and maintaining the rights to access, participation and successful outcomes in their nearby mainstream school for all children. Apart from such an educational objective, Slee (2018) claims that inclusive education is a political aspiration that aims to ensure justice and equity because it encourages local schools to remove barriers to access, presence and success and be able to accommodate all students and young individuals including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In other words, the learning process and environment must be adapted to the needs of a child as opposed to a child adjusting to the education system. Booth and Ainscow (2002) state that the adoption of inclusion in education by schools in a broader term means restructuring their cultures, policies and practices so that they can respond to the diversity of children in their neighborhood.

As countries worldwide embrace the concept of inclusive education, inclusion policies greatly vary across contexts when putting them into practice despite the

internationally recognized articulation of its definition (Haug, 2017). For instance, in many places, inclusive education is mainly understood as a policy that calls upon mainstream schools to accommodate children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (Miles & Singal, 2010). In other contexts, inclusive education is viewed more broadly as an approach that embraces and maintains a diversity of all students (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). On the other hand, in most post-soviet countries today, inclusion is predominantly perceived as disability, and special needs focused educational policy due to the historical segregation of individuals with disabilities (Makoelle, 2020a). While there are attempts to guarantee access to learning and participation for all within the framework of inclusive education practices, there also appear to arise specific barriers to sustaining inclusion across contexts. Those barriers range from a misunderstanding of the notion, teachers' beliefs towards students with disabilities and inclusive education to the lack of resources and qualified personnel in developing countries (UNESCO, 2020). According to Stepaniuk (2019), in Post-Soviet states and Eastern European countries, for example, societal attitudes and the way people perceive individuals with disabilities were found to be the main factors hindering the process of inclusion.

Inclusive Education for Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Historically, students with SEND have been accommodated in segregated settings in many contexts. In this regard, Hornby (2014) states that within the emerging global call for embracing inclusive education policies, inclusive education seems to be used as a term to replace special education in many countries. However, unlike special education, where children with disabilities and special educational needs are accommodated in segregated environments, inclusive education refers to educating learners with various special needs

and disabilities in mainstream classrooms along with their peers without disabilities with the support of specialists if needed (Zagona et al., 2017). Proponents of inclusive education claim that including students with SEND in the mainstream educational process is likely to benefit not only those students identified as having special needs but also a wider number of students in classrooms who have any kind of learning difficulties (Ainscow, 1995). This assumption is underpinned by the necessity of teachers rethinking their teaching strategies and applying different methods to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms. Ainscow (1995) also suggests that by accommodating students with SEND in regular classrooms, schools have a chance to increase their overall capacity, as they are bound to search for ways to respond to various challenges they encounter. As inclusive education is inextricably linked to special education when it is about students with SEND, Hornby (2014) articulated the notion of inclusive special education. Inclusive special education aims to ensure that students with various disabilities and needs have several placement options ranging from mainstream classrooms to resource rooms, special classes within mainstream settings and separate special schools according to their demands. This way, children with SEND are guaranteed to receive education in the most appropriate setting throughout their school years.

Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan

The implementation of inclusive education in many countries has been heavily influenced by their historical, cultural and ideological beliefs. The notion of inclusive education in Kazakhstan is often seen as being narrow as it focuses solely on disabilities and more extreme socioeconomic status resulting in only a small number of students being allowed to receive additional support (Pons et al., 2015). In spite of the country's plan to provide 70% of schools with inclusive settings and 20% of schools with barrier-free access

by 2020 (MES, 2010), various barriers to the successful implementation of inclusive policy occur. Among those emerging issues within the reform, Allan and Omarova (2021) emphasize the predominance of the medical model of disability that deals with remediating individual disorders, while the intrinsic value of inclusive education aligns with the social model of disability, which initially recognizes that people are disabled because of the society they live in (Oliver, 2013). Moreover, the language used to label those students with disabilities is another major impediment to the country's way towards inclusion (Allan & Omarova, 2021; Makoelle, 2020b). The latter is believed to emanate from the Soviet practice of defectology, where the needs of students with disabilities were met in segregated settings or correctional classes by special education teachers called defectologists (Rollan & Somerton, 2019). According to the State Program of Education Development (SPED) 2020-2025 (MES, 2019), 60% of schools in Kazakhstan maintained conditions for inclusive education. The Program stresses the necessity of transitioning from the "medical" to the "pedagogical" model in identifying the educational needs of children through the organization of Psychological-Medical-Pedagogical Consultations (PMPC). Particularly in Kyzylorda, schools started implementing inclusive education within the Roadmap framework for 2020-2022 (Seykhuninfo.kz, 2021). According to the Roadmap, 43 schools have special inclusive cabinets with assigned special education specialists such as defectologists and speech therapists who work with students with SEND.

Statement of the Problem

In Kazakhstan, inclusive education is currently understood as dealing with students with disabilities due to the Soviet correctional approach to disability (Makoelle, 2020a). Although the country has been taking bold steps toward inclusion in recent years, some schools are hesitant to adopt inclusion mainly due to misinterpretation of inclusion (Rollan, 2021). In inclusive education, two models of integrating students with disabilities into

general education are practised in Kazakhstan (National Academy of Education [NAE], 2015). According to the first model, no more than three students with SEND are included in regular classrooms. The second model is based on accommodating students with disabilities in special or correctional settings. Special education teachers called defectologists work with students with special educational needs in those settings (Rollan & Somerton, 2019). Teachers in regular classrooms are reluctant to include children with SEN in mainstream classrooms because they feel insecure to work with them (Helmer et al., 2020). The assumption is that the knowledge and skills of defectologists can contribute to better accommodating students with SEN in inclusive classrooms. Therefore, it is essential to explore how defectologists view inclusive education and how they see their role within the current transformation of educational contexts in the country. In their research on pre-service defectologists, Makoelle and Burmistrova (2021) highlight that defectologists' perception of inclusive education is still heavily influenced by the Soviet correctional approach to disability. Several studies conducted in the Kazakhstani context on inclusive education reflect the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education (Makhmudayeva, 2016; Sagandykova, 2020) and reveal that teachers are hesitant about including students with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms due to the lack of assistance and lack of necessary knowledge to meet special needs. In this regard, special education teachers (defectologists) are key stakeholders who can meet the needs of students with SEND. However, very few studies focus on their opinion about inclusive education in the Kazakhstani and Central Asian context, which suggests the gap in the literature. Passeka (2020) investigated the perceptions of special educators towards their role in inclusive education in Kazakhstan and highlighted the need for further research that explores their attitudes as there is a risk that special educators' influence on inclusive

education may be ignored due to the general term defectology peculiar to the Kazakhstani context.

Purpose of the Study

Given that within this context, special education teachers are central in inclusive education in terms of the framework for policy and implementation relating to specialized schools and correctional or inclusive classes in the mainstream, it becomes imperative to explore the attitudes of these teachers toward inclusive education. Bearing in mind the crucial role defectologists play as one of the main stakeholders in inclusive education, the purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of the defectologists in the city of Kyzylorda, and their attitudes toward the implementation of the current inclusive education policies. Such a study will highlight challenges or possibilities for moving inclusive education forward in Kazakhstan. In the absence of such a study, it will be unclear as to what special education teachers think and believe about inclusive education and the current system of separating children with SEN and disabilities will continue. This study will provide evidence of these defectologists' attitudes to highlight what may be necessary to improve the system of support to become more inclusive. The present study aims to add to the existing knowledge and suggest possible ways in which defectologists can help to support each other and their colleagues in mainstream classrooms with an aim to implement a more equitable and inclusive education.

Research Questions

The overarching research question in this study is:

What are defectologists' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda?

The sub-questions are:

1. How do defectologists understand the concept of Inclusive Education?
2. To what extent are defectologists aware of the new policies in the field of inclusive education in the country?
3. What do defectologists consider to be some of the challenges that schools in Kyzylorda face in implementing inclusive education?
4. How do defectologists in Kyzylorda understand their role in the implementation of current inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan?

The Significance of the Study

The present research is significant for several reasons. Firstly, investigating what defectologists understand by inclusive education can help to reveal how the policy of inclusive education is being put into practice in Kyzylorda. Secondly, collecting data on the first-hand experience and challenges of defectologists may inform policymakers to reconsider some aspects of the current reform. Thirdly, investigating their attitudes toward their role in the implementation of inclusive education in the country can help to identify whether defectologists are doubtful or willing to work towards inclusion. Finally, deciding on common patterns in their attitudes can improve practice by suggesting ways in which defectologists can support each other and their peers in mainstream classrooms to support inclusive education. Taking into account the absence of research, particularly on defectologists' attitudes, the present study can greatly contribute to the body of literature in the field of inclusive education.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To better understand the attitudes of defectologists toward inclusive education, the literature review on this subject is presented in this chapter. Firstly, theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have arisen from previous research will be discussed and their suitability for the current research explained. The difference between defectologists and special education teachers from the historical perspective will be highlighted as the chapter reviews the literature on both of these specialists. The subsequent sections are organized into the role of special education teachers in inclusive education from the plethora of available resources in the international context to the attitudes of general and special education teachers. In closing, the chapter will discuss the research on defectologists conducted in the Central Asian and Kazakhstani contexts.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In investigating the attitudes of defectologists toward inclusive education in the present study, it is crucial to determine how they conceptualize disability because the research suggests that the opinions teachers hold regarding inclusion greatly influence their practices (Haug, 2017). According to Florian and Becirevic (2011), there are two distinct models of disability, namely social and medical, which tend to be held by general education teachers and defectologists engaged in inclusive education policies. Levitt (2017) explains that the idea behind the social model of disability first arose from the Fundamental Principles of Disability document articulated by the Union of the Physically Impaired which stated that people are disabled not by their impairments, but rather by the disabling attitudes and barriers they encounter in society. To be precise, Oliver argues that disability can only be understood in context; therefore, it is “culturally produced and socially structured” (as cited in Clough & Corbett, 2000, p. 113). Although advocates of

the social model of disability and those who benefited from it acknowledge the positive changes it has brought since its introduction (Levitt, 2017), according to Gabel and Peters (2004), there is increasing critique around the social model of disability. In particular, Oliver (2013) states that one of the most common concerns around the social model is that it does not consider diversity and tends to view people with disabilities as one group, while in fact their needs and lives are much more complicated.

The medical model or individualised model of disability, on the other hand, is often associated with the words such as “labeling” and “deficits” (Ferrante, 2012). In other words, the present model focuses on individual impairments of individuals and on remediating them. Moreover, Ainscow (2000) states that the language utilized in the medical model of disability is mainly characterized by the segregation of students with disabilities. According to Florian & Becirevic (2011), while general education teachers tend to view inclusion from the social model perspective, defectologists’ perception is strongly rooted in the medical model. Similarly, the findings of the study on pre-service defectologists in Kazakhstan conducted by Makoelle and Burmistrova (2021) reveal that defectologists’ understanding of SEND is inclined towards the peculiarities of the medical model. This traditional medical approach is prevalent in Kazakhstan as it stems from the Soviet “defectology” according to which students with impairments are diagnosed and further categorized (Makoelle, 2020a).

When specialists engaged in inclusive education initiatives maintain theoretical orientation derived from the medical model of disability, they are likely to focus on rehabilitating individual students and apply impairment-oriented teaching strategies (Haug, 2017). Meanwhile, the concept of inclusive education involves valuing diversity and difference, social justice and equity matters (Hornby, 2014); thus, it is in alignment with the social model of disability which implies a human rights-based approach to educational

opportunities and deals with mitigating barriers to learning and participation instead of stressing on individual problems of students (Clough & Corbett, 2000). However, when it comes to inclusive education for students with special education needs and disabilities, Hornby (2014) states that SEND cannot be regarded as completely socially constructed, because the influence impairments have on students' learning should be taken into account. Thus, the impact of psychological and physiological factors along with social factors must be equally recognized in dealing with students with SEND.

In examining defectologists' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education, the discussion of the two models of disability is highly relevant as it is believed that none of the teaching methods and inclusive initiatives will be effective if teachers hold deficit-oriented attitudes assuming that students with disabilities must be rehabilitated rather than provided with opportunities for participation (Makoelle, 2020b). Distinguishing between the medical and social models of disability whilst exploring defectologists' opinions about including students with SEND can guide the study to decide from what perspective in-service defectologists interviewed for the study are prone to execute tasks, and most importantly how their understanding of inclusive education affects their daily teaching practice.

With regards to the theoretical perspective, the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997) emanated from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is believed to be applicable to the research. Taking into consideration the value of self-efficacy, the research assumes that defectologists who are confident in their abilities to work with different types of students tend to have successful academic and social results with students. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as the "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 37). In other words, self-efficacy is a person's particular set of beliefs in their abilities that determines whether they are able to

succeed in a certain situation. According to Bandura (1997), this belief influences practice, and eventually performance outcomes. He states that individuals can develop their self-efficacy through four main mechanisms. The most influential source of efficacy is the interpreted results of one's prior performance, or mastery experiences (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences are the experiences individuals gain when they embrace and succeed in new challenges. They can serve as positive examples that form attitudes about future abilities to repeatedly fulfill the same or related responsibilities. Mastery experiences or performance achievements are believed to be the most effective way to acquire a strong sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Owing to such a positive way of thinking that he or she is capable of performing any task effectively, the likelihood of practising the existing knowledge and mastering a new skill increases. The second source of self-efficacy is vicarious experiences. They involve observing how peers successfully complete a task. Bandura (1997) states that seeing others become successful in something without unfavorable outcomes by investing a continuous effort raises the observer's belief that he or she is also able to succeed in similar situations. The third way to develop self-efficacy is with the help of verbal or social persuasion (Bandura, 1997). When people receive verbal feedback or suggestions from others while executing a complex task, they are inclined to believe that they possess the necessary skills and capabilities to succeed in completing a task if they, for instance, previously felt unqualified and unsure of their ability to accomplish that particular task. The last source of information to develop self-efficacy is through physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). The physical, physiological, and emotional well-being of an individual may affect how they perceive their personal abilities in a certain situation. Bandura (1997) suggests that improving one's self-efficacy is a lot less difficult when a person is feeling well and healthy. For instance, it can be difficult for a person to build self-efficacy when they are suffering from depression or

anxiety because they might perceive and interpret emotional and physical reactions as something that disables them rather than viewing them as a contributor to task achievement. Instead, one can develop a sense of self-efficacy by learning how to deal with anxiety and bad mood when undergoing difficult circumstances.

In Kazakhstan, both teachers in regular classrooms and special education teachers (defectologists) are reluctant to include children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms because they believe they are not capable of working in them (Helmer et al., 2020). The fact that teachers view themselves as not being qualified enough to meet the diverse needs of learners in their classrooms can be partly attributed to the low self-efficacy levels of teachers. Research suggests that both general education teachers and special education teachers with high self-efficacy tend to be more positive about challenges, feel more responsible for students' learning and participation, and are more enthusiastic about accommodating the diverse needs of students, including those with special needs (Hernandez et al., 2016).

Another theory that is effective in analyzing attitudes, beliefs and concerns is Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985). The theory of planned behavior consists of six constructs that all together determine an individual's control over his or her behavior. For the purpose of this study, the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) is connected to attitudes. The theory postulates that a person's intention to carry out a behavior determines his or her behavior itself. It suggests that one's intention towards a behavior predicts the behavior which in turn is linked to their attitudes. Hence, the more positive are the attitudes of teachers toward behavior and its outcomes, the greater are their intentions to act on that particular behavior (Ajzen, 1985). The theory indicates that teachers' intentions toward orchestrating learning in inclusive classrooms are affected by their attitudes toward both inclusive education itself and students with special needs and

disabilities. In their narrative on the role of teacher attitudes in inclusive education, Boyle et al. (2020) highlight the link between attitudes and behaviors of teachers. Therefore, teachers' beliefs about the outcomes of inclusion are what dictate their particular behavioral patterns.

Apart from the self-efficacy aspect, the implication of the theory of planned behavior emphasizes the fact that teachers' intentions toward inclusive education is yet another predictor of their actions in particular circumstances. Although the theory of planned behavior does not take into account economic or environmental aspects that may affect one's intention to perform a behavior (Shields, 2020), it will guide the research during in-depth interviews in assessing the overall attitudes and motivation of defectologists toward inclusive education.

The Difference Between Defectologists and Special Education Teachers

One of the earliest encounters with the term defectology in the literature can be inferred from the research conducted by Galmarini (2012) on the welfare policies and notions of rights in Soviet society between 1917-1950. According to Galmarini (2012), the origins of defectology as a science date back to the 1920s when Russian defectologists in the Soviet Union began to claim that children's defects could be identified and further treated. It is worth noting that defectologists of that time paid attention to creating "healthy" environments that were suitable to the peculiarities of the child and believed that it was "abnormal environments" that led to children's defectiveness. Nevertheless, their opinions were strongly rooted in the notion that "defects" must be corrected (Galmarini, 2012). Today, universities in Kazakhstan prepare educational support specialists known as defectologists, who rely on the above-mentioned Soviet special education methodology to assist students with SEND (Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2021).

On the other hand, the origins of special education in the United States stem from several historical occasions from the Civil Rights Act in 1964 to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in 2004. Salend and Duhaney (2011) state that, although special education dealt with meeting the needs of students with sensory impairments and cognitive impairments in the beginning, these days, students with socially imposed disabilities constitute the majority of students accommodated within special education. In particular, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are overrepresented.

Although defectology and special education are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, it is important to note that they are not synonymous (Florian & Becirevic, 2011). Accommodating students with special needs and disabilities through the approach of defectology is very common in post-Soviet societies, whereas in Western countries the provision for such children is underpinned by special education. To date, there has been a lot of criticism around the notion of defectology first introduced by Vygotsky (1978) as it is assumed to focus on human “defects” and correcting them. While one group of researchers view the philosophy of defectology as opposed to that of inclusion, others claim that Vygotsky’s defectology set the prerequisites for including students with SEND in regular education. In his work “Impact of Lev Vygotsky on special education”, Wang (2009) interprets the main ideas proposed by Vygotsky’s defectology and concludes that the initial aim of this discipline was to provide children with special educational needs with an opportunity to participate in social life along with others instead of emphasizing their physiological deficiencies for it is believed that coping with social deficiency is more challenging for students with special educational needs than their real physical disabilities. In fact, Gindis (1999) claims that Vygotsky’s philosophy implies that learners with disabilities must be accommodated within a mainstream socio-cultural setting with

the deployment of modified and alternative educational approaches. In this sense, the initial idea behind defectology coincides with the intrinsic intention of inclusive education which also attempts to educate students with SEND in the regular education system (Zagona et al., 2017).

The Role of Special Education Teachers in Inclusive Education

Among the different barriers to implementing inclusive education, the lack of special knowledge to provide special support to students with SEND is stressed across many contexts. Consequently, various studies point out the important role of special education teachers in the current move toward inclusive education around the world as they believe the collaboration between both general education and special education teachers to be essential in sustaining inclusive education (Florian, 2019; Mihajlovic, 2020). In fact, special education teachers' knowledge is seen as an invaluable asset in establishing inclusion in schools (Somma, 2019). In order to understand how special education teachers' knowledge and experience are being utilized to make educational institutions more inclusive, it is necessary to look at the changes that different countries have undergone on their path toward inclusion.

In Sweden, Emanuelsson et al. (2005) describe how the role of special education teachers has transformed since the importance of equal rights to education and providing necessary support to those in need in educational institutions was emphasized in the National Curricula in 1990. Thus, special education teachers who were previously in charge of solely teaching tasks began to provide guidance to colleagues in their working environment and introduce developmental initiatives to the school community in addition to their teaching responsibilities. As a result, dealing with the various needs of students is attributed not only to experts such as special teachers but also to general education teachers

and students themselves. However, transforming the role of special educators is considered to be insufficient, as Goransson et al. (2011) list several factors such as competency of staff, engagement of school leadership, constant in-service personnel training and class size that are also necessary to facilitate inclusion in the Swedish school system.

According to Pavlovic Babic et al. (2018), in Serbia, the adoption of the concept of inclusive education has brought considerable changes to the educational system since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In order to support the implementation of inclusive education policies, the country is establishing different mechanisms. While cooperation between teachers and specialists has been proven to be the most effective way of catering to the diverse needs of learners in Serbian schools, the role of defectologists in the education process is recognized as one of the key actors. In other words, their work is crucial in terms of providing recommendations to general education teachers and parents on how to prepare suitable teaching materials and ways to practice with children. In their study, Pavlovic Babic et al. (2018) also note that general teachers eagerly receive support from their counterparts in specialized settings as "...they are afraid that they will do something wrong" (p. 10). This way, owing to regular collaboration among professionals, the entire school and community are engaged in the duty of meeting the special needs of learners.

On the other hand, in Cyprus, Liasidou and Antoniou (2013) found that there is an underestimation of the professional roles of special education teachers by head teachers and teachers, which in turn leads to miscommunication between them. Such lack of collaboration among school teaching staff and special education teachers seems to arise from the fact that special education teachers provide additional support to students in segregated settings in Cypriot schools. Although the professional responsibilities of special education teachers include immediate cooperation with the school leadership, parents,

teaching staff and other specialists, the former report that they do not feel welcomed and valued by their peers in mainstream settings and this hinders them from collaborating in their daily work.

Dally et al. (2019) in their study on existing issues in Australian special and inclusive education stress the necessity of training teachers with the “heart” and “hands” of inclusion (Sharma et al., 2013) in addition to equipping them with professional skills and knowledge to teach students with various needs in mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, they recognize the disability-related knowledge that special education teachers possess which can equip both special and inclusive classrooms. Therefore, they conclude that it is important to value the roles of both general and special education teachers in educational settings while employing their complementary skills to implement inclusive education policies.

A case study conducted by Lindacher (2020) in one federal state of Germany explores how co-teaching relationships can be established among general and special education teachers in inclusive schools and how each of these categories of teachers views their professional roles in creating inclusive communities. General education teachers tend to be more focused on the academic success and achievement of learners, whereas their special education colleagues supplement those aspirations of their general education partners by providing students with the necessary tools to improve their learning processes. Moreover, the study revealed that along with students with special educational needs for whom initially these co-teaching approaches were intended, students without disabilities also benefit from the presence of special education teachers in inclusive classrooms.

The Attitudes of General Education Teachers to Inclusive Education

A plethora of research has been conducted on the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion in different contexts. As teachers are a direct influence on students, teacher beliefs and attitudes are believed to be crucial to how inclusion is put into practice both in individual classrooms and within the entire school (Boyle et al., 2020). Most importantly, research shows that attitudes and beliefs can predict teacher behavior in inclusive education (Clipa et al., 2020; Curcic, 2009). Findings of studies vary greatly according to different factors such as work experience, self-efficacy of teachers, type of disability and appropriate infrastructure. For instance, quantitative research conducted in Poland by Chrzanowska (2019) revealed that the majority of teachers with less teaching experience have positive attitudes towards inclusion, while those with a higher level of seniority are less in favor of inclusive education. The authors speculate that greater levels of professional burnout may be one of the factors that affect the relatively negative attitudes and lower levels of enthusiasm demonstrated by teachers with extensive experience in supporting inclusive education. On the other hand, while also establishing that teachers with more years of experience hold quite negative attitudes, Vaz et al. (2015) presume that older teachers may not have had sufficient training in inclusive education, thus they find it rather burdensome to adjust to a new reality of inclusive schools.

Another factor that determines mainstream teachers' attitudes towards inclusion is believed to be their professional expertise derived from prior experience of working with students with special educational needs. Round et al. (2016) investigated secondary school teachers' concerns about including students with additional educational needs in regular classrooms in Victoria, Australia. The findings reveal a mild level of concern experienced by teachers. They were mainly concerned about the supply of adequate resources to support inclusion: appropriate teaching materials and the availability of specialized support

staff who could mediate the inclusion process. Furthermore, it was evident that teachers who were confident about their competencies to work in inclusive classrooms expressed less concern about inclusion. Those teachers who were confident appeared to have had a prior successful experience with inclusion. This was true for teachers surveyed in Kazakhstan who indicated having positive opinions about inclusion owing to their previous experience in working with students with special educational needs (Agavelyan et al., 2020). Similarly, in their quantitative study on Tanzanian teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, Hofman et al. (2014) state that teachers' self-efficacy and work experience predict their attitudes to inclusive education. For instance, the survey results showed that the attitudes of Tanzanian teachers towards accommodating students in inclusive classrooms are rather negative than positive. Tanzanian teachers in the research who possess higher levels of self-efficacy are believed to tackle challenges more effectively. The main issues confronted by the teachers who participated in the survey were found to be problems with supervising students with various disabilities in the classroom, deficit of learning and teaching materials, shortage of professional training and inadequate working conditions. According to Vaz et al. (2015), the self-efficacy of teachers is a key factor in determining the attitudes of teachers toward inclusive education. Likewise, they found that teachers without sufficient knowledge of working with disabilities expressed negative attitudes towards inclusion.

Results of several studies illustrate that the attitudes of teachers toward educating students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms differ depending on the type of impairment and available resources to accommodate learners with SEND. For instance, in their study conducted in Greece, Pappas et al. (2018) discovered that Greek general education teachers possess positive attitudes toward the inclusion of learners with mobility impairments or particular learning problems, but appear less supportive of including

students with mental retardation or genetic syndromes. Nevertheless, they highlight the benefits of inclusion both for students with and without disabilities. In particular, students with SEND develop social skills and improve their behavior, whereas those without learning difficulties can cultivate empathy and embrace diversity. Moreover, the teachers in the study identified several barriers to inclusion namely shortage of qualified personnel, lack of appropriate resources and materials and parental attitudes.

When investigating the attitudes of general education teachers toward inclusion, similar challenges and concerns tend to arise in developing countries. Sagandykova (2020) found that teachers in Kazakhstan hold neutral attitudes towards inclusive education and detected the factors affecting such attitudes. The quantitative study findings revealed the relationship between teacher competency, confidence and experience and attitudes toward inclusion. Thus, the more years of experience teachers possess, the more positive they are likely to be towards inclusion. In addition to the professional knowledge and experience of teachers, Makhmudayeva (2016) described several challenges to the implementation of inclusive education in Kazakhstan that may lead to negative attitudes such as the deficit of methodology and supporting materials, classroom facilities, the absence of constant staff training, lack of parental involvement and so on. Overall, studies on teacher attitudes highlight professional experience and self-confidence, previous experience, and access to resources as common factors that influence teacher attitudes towards inclusion.

The Attitudes of Special Education Teachers Towards Inclusion

With regards to the attitudes of special education teachers, researchers have found that they tend to be more enthusiastic about inclusive education in contrast to their peers in mainstream classrooms. Shields (2020) explored the differences in the attitudes, beliefs, sentiments and self-efficacy of general and special education teachers who work in inclusive classrooms in the U.S. This quantitative-comparative research found that how

general and special education teachers perceive inclusive education differs and their views are affected by several factors. In particular, while special education teachers were more positive about including students with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms, general education teachers expressed more concerns regarding training, collaboration, self-efficacy, support, time, type of the disability and students' IEP aims. Likewise, a study conducted in another school district in the U.S. revealed that special education teachers were more willing to accommodate students with special needs in mainstream education than their colleagues in general education settings (Hernandez, 2020). Moreover, the research states that the self-efficacy levels of special education teachers were significantly higher in comparison to general education teachers, which can be justified by the fact that the former tend to possess the necessary knowledge and experience to work with different needs. In her large-scale study conducted in Finland, Saloviita (2020) analyzed the attitudes of the classroom, subject and special education teachers towards inclusion. Classroom and subject teachers scored below average, which means they viewed inclusion predominantly in a negative way. Special education teachers, on the other hand, scored above average. The author proposes that their perceptions of inclusion are more positive because, unlike classroom and subject teachers, special education teachers may perceive more issues in the segregated special education classrooms. In addition, despite the fact that inclusion is believed by classroom and subject teachers to create additional workload, special education teachers may not share similar concerns. Mihajlovic (2020) also conducted a case study in Finland examining the special educators' opinions about their main responsibilities in inclusive education as well as challenges in their practice. The participants of the study view teaching students with disabilities individually or in groups as their main duty. Although consultation and collaboration with their colleagues in mainstream classrooms exist, they have not yet become part of special educators' daily

work. Furthermore, the case study found that the severity of disability affects the attitudes of special educators toward educating learners in regular classrooms. In regards to challenges in implementing inclusive education, scarcity of resources and attitudes of classroom and subject teachers toward students with SEND were identified as major barriers by special educators in the study. Similarly, in her study on the perceptions of special educators' roles in inclusive education, Passeka (2020) found that type of disability is one of the barriers to inclusion in Kazakhstan, as special educators in the study believe that not all types of disability can be accommodated in a mainstream setting. However, the study shows the overall positive attitudes of special educators toward inclusion and their willingness to become activists and advocates for inclusive education.

Research on Defectologists in Central Asia

As Central Asian countries move slowly towards inclusion, defectologists remain one of the key actors involved in inclusive education reforms in the region (Ramberg, 2021). However, there is barely any research focusing on the experience and attitudes of defectologists in the Central Asian context and their role is mentioned solely within the framework of research on inclusive education in these countries. Lapham and Rouse (2013) investigated the implementation of inclusive education in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Having conducted six case studies, the authors consider the Soviet legacy of categorising disability, the accommodation of certain groups of students in self-sustained special settings, and the professional approach derived from the concept of defectology as barriers to inclusion in Central Asian countries. For instance, due to its Soviet background, in Tajikistan, inclusive education is linked to the principles of defectology. Although the government does not allocate sufficient funding and teachers lack appropriate training, resource centres have recently opened in the country, where special educators such as defectologists provide support for children with disabilities

(Lapham, 2019). Likewise, in Uzbekistan, the Department of Defectology has been preparing specialists to work with students with special educational needs and disabilities (Nazarqosimov et al., 2020). Currently, a 32-hour inclusive education course is offered only in such departments (Nam, 2019). Lapham and Rouse (2013) provide examples of individual centers where parents of children with special educational needs can appeal in order to receive special services from defectologists, speech therapists and other special support staff.

As far as the role of defectologists in inclusive education in Kazakhstan is concerned, parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities in the country also emphasize the need for support from defectologists (Helmer et al., 2020). In terms of defectologists' professional preparation, Zholtayeva et al. (2013) claim that in addition to the existing training defectologists receive in Kazakhstani universities, the establishment of resource methodical centers on advisory assistance must be intensified in order to meet the increasing need of society in the specialists and defectologists capable of working in inclusive classrooms. In their study on the investigation of the resource centers established to ensure inclusive practices, Somerton et al. (2020) highlight the importance of such centers in providing additional educational support for students with special educational needs. In particular, professional assistance received from specialists, such as defectologists in the resource centers was found to be crucial in catering to the needs of students who require additional educational support. However, the Soviet approach derived from defectology, and thus focusing on remediating individual differences, seems to also manifest in the practice of resource centers: therefore, parents and teachers tend to view these centers as a way of excluding children from mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, the authors strongly encourage further planned collaboration among general education and special education personnel, such as defectologists along with other stakeholders, so as to

continue inclusive teaching practices. It is evident that the majority of the research in the Kazakhstani context calls for additional training of teachers as the country proceeds with the implementation of inclusive education policies. Another study on teacher education in inclusive education in Kazakhstan by Makoelle and Burmistrova (2021) found that teachers themselves also emphasize the need for methodological training on inclusive education and feel as if they are not yet ready to work in inclusive classrooms. The latter was explained by the fact that teacher training programs currently prepare teachers to work mainly in special schools rather than inclusive ones. In this regard, Makoelle and Burmistrova (2021) emphasize the need for a shift from defectology oriented teacher preparation programs towards more comprehensive teacher education on inclusive education.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the conceptual and theoretical frameworks which will underpin the present study in analyzing the attitudes of defectologists. It discussed the role of special education teachers and defectologists in including students with SEND in regular classrooms within inclusive education policies. Moreover, the chapter attempted to investigate the attitudes of specialists towards inclusive education and various factors that influence those attitudes in different contexts in order to understand what possible data may emerge from the current research. Finally, it concluded with a review of literature on defectologists in Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter describes a comprehensive explanation of the methodology selected to collect data in order to answer the overarching research question: *What are defectologists' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda?*

Moreover, it provides justification for the usage of an appropriate research design followed by the description of the participants and the research site. Data collection procedure and analysis as well as the ethical considerations are also discussed accordingly.

Research Approach

There are two major distinct research paradigms commonly applied in the field of educational research: quantitative and qualitative. In quantitative research, the researcher identifies several variables and tests a hypothesis using statistical data. Qualitative research, on the other hand, seeks to gain a detailed understanding of a single concept - a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative approach was adopted for this study as it aims to understand more deeply the perceptions, beliefs and attitudes as well as experiences of defectologists whose attitudes have been identified as a central phenomenon in this inquiry. Moreover, Bogdan and Biklen (1997) state that qualitative research is appropriate when research aims to understand behavior from the account as perceived by participants, that is why applying the qualitative approach to this study is justified, as it provided an in-depth analysis of defectologists' attitudes and how these attitudes may have been formed.

Research Design

Within the qualitative nature of the research, a phenomenological research design was employed because the research aims to investigate the lived experiences of

defectologists and analyze what they have in common as they work toward inclusive education (Creswell et al., 2007).

There are three common branches of phenomenology derived from different philosophical viewpoints: hermeneutic, transcendental and existential. Van Manen (2016) describes hermeneutic phenomenology as a process where a researcher selects a phenomenon that he is interested in and then reflects on what constructs the essence of the given lived experience while trying to retain connection with the topic of research. Transcendental phenomenology, on the contrary, seeks to eliminate a researcher's own pre-assumptions and experiences and study a phenomenon from a fresh perspective (Warnock, 1970). Existential phenomenologists believe that our knowledge of everyday life exists according to social order and people experience several realities of the world (Cohen et al., 2002). Although Moustakas (1994) claims that transcendental phenomenology is rarely ideally achieved, the present study followed his guidelines to proceed with the phenomenological inquiry.

Participants

Creswell (2013) describes several sampling strategies that can be used either before the data collection starts or after it has begun. The study employed the latter method, namely snowball sampling within which the researcher initially identified a small number of key individuals who, in turn, assisted to access other informants that possessed the necessary characteristics (Cohen et al., 2002). For this study, the researcher emailed the local department of inclusive education in order to receive the contact details of several defectologists who could direct to other specialists in the city. Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that it is necessary to recruit individuals who are diverse enough from one another so as to capture unique stories that augment the experiences at the heart of the study. Therefore, the study recruited up to 10 participants eligible and willing to participate in the

research, because according to (Polkinghorne, 1989), the sample size of 5 to 25 participants is sufficient for a phenomenological study. The eligibility criteria consisted of the following requirements: 1) participants must hold a degree in defectology, 2) currently fulfill this position in Kyzylorda. The work experience of defectologists mainly consisted of around two years, particularly in mainstream settings. Many participants had previously worked in the field of education prior to becoming a defectologist. This particular city was chosen due to the fact that the previous research on special educators by Passeka (2020) was conducted in another city and it emphasizes that further research on the attitudes of particularly defectologists with a larger sample size in the Kazakhstani context would be valuable. Following that recommendation, the present study attempts to add to the body of knowledge on inclusive education from the perspectives of defectologists in Kyzylorda where no research on a similar topic has been previously conducted.

Data Collection Instrument

The present qualitative study selected semi-structured interviews as a data collection instrument. Although one-on-one interviews have been identified as the most time-consuming and costly method (Creswell, 2013), the advantage of this instrument was that it allowed the researcher to collect data that is rich in description of the experiences and opinions of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The interview questions were devised with the aim of answering the overarching research question and guided by the literature review. The interview protocol included open-ended questions in order to maintain a certain degree of flexibility both for the researcher and the interviewees by allowing them to expand their ideas (Cohen, et al., 2002). The interview questions were designed by referring to the examples of a three-structure phenomenological interview technique (Seidman, 2006). According to this strategy, the questions of the interview pursue three sub-aims: setting up

the context of the interviewees' experience, building up the details of the experience within the given context and stimulating the interviewees to reflect on the meaning of this experience for them. There were approximately 10 questions including main points and follow-up prompts. The first block of questions focused on the participants' demographic and professional background information such as their education and prior experience in working with students with special educational needs and disabilities. That way, it allowed the researcher to get better acquainted with the participants as it was their first encounter. Following the second sub-aim, the participants were asked to provide details of their everyday experiences within the phenomenon. In this regard, interview questions were informed by the conceptual framework of the study and focused on whether defectologists view disability from the medical or social model and subsequently how they understand inclusive education. Moreover, they attempted to investigate if defectologists are aware of current inclusive education policies in the country and what challenges they face while aspiring to comply with those policies in their settings. The third block of questions was designed to encourage defectologists to share reflections on their role in the existing inclusive reforms as defectologist. Interview questions were constructed from the literature review on the role of special education teachers in inclusive education in various contexts. For example, "What do you believe is your contribution to the implementation of inclusive education?". This question was drawn from the case of Serbia where defectologists are seen as one of the key actors in promoting inclusive education in the country (Pavlovic Babic et al., 2018). Participants were provided with informed consent (see Appendix A) information in Kazakh and Russian languages in advance. Likewise, the interview questions were devised in English and translated into Kazakh and Russian languages. Interviews lasted approximately from 40 minutes to one hour which was a sufficient amount of time to cover all the questions.

Data Collection Procedures

After gaining ethics approval from the Nazarbayev University review board (Creswell, 2013), the researcher requested a support letter from the Graduate School of Education. She then emailed the letter to the local department of education detailing the aims and purpose of the research and a request to contact the gatekeeper of each of the proposed research sites. Having received research site details, the researcher made contact with the gatekeeper of each of the proposed research sites via email and sought permission to conduct the research (e.g. school principals where defectologists work). This email (see Appendix C) described the aims and purpose of the research and also the voluntary nature of participation and the risks and benefits associated with participation. Once permission was received the researcher contacted the potential participants and provided information about the study including the details already provided to the gatekeeper. Each participant was provided with an introductory letter, participant consent form, and a support letter from the researcher's institution prior to providing consent to participate.

The researcher organized a suitable time and location directly with each participant in which to conduct the interview. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, physical access to research sites was denied, thus the researcher arranged individual online meetings with the participants via Zoom. Creswell et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of ensuring a comfortable atmosphere for interviewees, therefore the researcher conducted interviews in the most suitable settings for a participant. At the time of the interview, the researcher read through the informed consent to the participant and asked if they had any questions concerning the research and ensured that the participant understood their rights in relation to their voluntary participation, risks and benefits, withdrawal from the study, and the protocols that were in place to protect the confidentiality of the participant. The researcher asked each participant if they consent to have the interview recorded. The researcher

recorded the interview using her smartphone upon the consent of each participant. Once the participant signed the consent and had no further questions the interview began. The researcher made notes as the interview proceeded to enable clarification of any responses that were not clear. When the participant indicated they did not wish to answer a question the researcher proceeded to the following question. If the participant indicated they are uncomfortable at any time during the interview process, the researcher was ready to halt the questioning and seek clarification from the participant to ascertain if they were happy to continue. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the participant and provided them with a transcript. The interviews were transcribed upon the consent of each participant. The researcher assigned a pseudonym such as P1 or P2 to each participant and the details of the participant's name were stored against their pseudonym. Furthermore, the results of the research will be shared with the participants when the study is completed.

Data Analysis

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the data analysis was carried out through texts, interpretations and meaning. Site memos and the researcher's reflective journal was used during the interviews. According to the guidelines for phenomenologically analysing interview data (Cohen et al., 2002), the recorded interviews were fully transcribed on a laptop noting not only the verbal statements, but also non-literal paralinguistic interaction. Furthermore, the researcher "bracketed out" as much as possible of her own interpretation (see Appendix D). and sought to understand what participants wanted to say instead of what she wanted to hear according to the feature of the transcendental phenomenology (Warnock, 1970).

At first, the researcher went through the entire transcripts of all the interviews several times using an analytic memo and started highlighting important sentences, statements or quotes which gave an overall understanding of defectologists' experience.

The interview transcripts were coded by applying the InVivo coding method to capture and represent the essence of the participant's meaning (Saldana, 2013). Further inductive analysis involved coding for patterns and broader themes by creating a table which helped the researcher observe relevant phenomena and collect examples of those phenomena; and analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures (Basit, 2003). Next, the collected categories were narrowed down into five broad themes (see Appendix E) in accordance with the purpose of the study and research questions (Creswell, 2013). Also, the description of defectologists' experiences of the phenomenon was presented (Creswell et al., 2007). A complete report on the findings consisting of conclusions, implications and further recommendations was provided (Cohen et al., 2002).

Ethical Issues

The research project was conducted following ethical principles and standards according to the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE) Ethics Review Committee. According to ethical guidelines, the researcher was obliged to treat participants with an ethic of respect, protect their interests and ensure that the risk of participating in the study held no more risk than engaging in their ordinary duties at work.

Cohen et al. (2002) identify three main aspects of ethical considerations - informed consent, confidentiality and further consequences of the interviews. Participation in the study was on the basis of informed consent which was signed by the participant after the researcher had ascertained verbally that the participant understands the voluntary nature of participation, the risks and benefits, and their rights in participating prior to beginning data collection. These included the right to withdraw at any time and to withdraw their data from the study at any stage of the research process if they see fit. The research was not considered to be any more than minimal risk, because the topic under investigation was not

regarded as 'sensitive' nor it did not involve a 'vulnerable' population. Nevertheless, there was a minimal risk of breaching confidentiality if for example the data was not secured appropriately. To mitigate this risk, protocols were put in place to secure the data and the identity of participants. The participant's name and pseudonym (key) were stored on a word document in a password protected file on the researcher's laptop separate from the files containing the interview transcripts. In this way, the risks of breaching confidentiality were minimized if the laptop was stolen. As an emerging advocate for inclusive education, the researcher also informed the participants about the potential benefits of their participation in the study. In particular, the contribution of the present research to address policymakers about the current issues of inclusive education in Kyzylorda and its likelihood of improving defectologists' practices in the long term were discussed.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the relevant methodology to collect data in accordance with the research purpose and questions. It provided a rationale for choosing a selected research design and justified the usage of data collection instruments. The chapter concluded with ethical issues that may arise during the process of data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of data collected through interviews. The chapter will first give background information on the participants of the study (see Table 1). There were five broad themes that will be presented according to the research questions in order to answer the overarching research question (see Table 2). The results respond but are not limited to the four research questions that were posed in Chapter one and address the aims of the study in exploring defectologists' experiences as they work towards inclusion and their attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda. The overarching research question is:

What are defectologists' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda?

The sub-questions are:

1. How do defectologists understand the concept of Inclusive Education?
2. To what extent are defectologists aware of the new policies in the field of inclusive education in the country?
3. What do defectologists consider to be some of the challenges that schools in Kyzylorda face in implementing inclusive education?
4. How do defectologists in Kyzylorda understand their role in the implementation of current inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan?

Background Data Collected on Participants

A total of ten participants were recruited for the present study and responded to all questions outlined in the interview protocol (Appendix B) as well as to follow-up prompts. Nine respondents are defectologists working in mainstream schools in Kyzylorda within the recent inclusive education reforms, one defectologist is the Head of PMPC. More details on the background information of defectologists are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Participant Profiles

#	Main specialization/ education	Current place of work	Previous work experience	Years of experience	Personal experience/reason
#1	B – defectology with a focus on Speech therapy - East Kazakhstan Pedagogical University M – Almaty Professional courses – Turkey	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	Internship as a university student	3 full years as a defectologist	State scholarship for university
#2	“Defectology” - Bolashak university	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	Worked with a child with ASD	2 nd year as a defectologist	Defectologists are needed nowadays
#3	“Defectology” - KazNPU after Abay	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	Speech therapist in a mainstream school and kindergarten	2 nd year as a defectologist	Limited options for university admissions

#4	Geography teacher – Kazakh National University Defectology – Shymkent social-pedagogical university	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	Geography teacher Science deputy principal	14 years in the sphere of education 2 years as a defectologist	There was a lack of special education teachers
#5	B’s in preschool education M – Women pedagogical institute	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	Internship during 3 rd and 4 th years of university	Second year as a defectologist	Had an interest in special education after studying pre-school education
#6	Medical college Speech therapist-defectologist - KazNPU after Abay	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	8 years in the field of education 5 years as a speech therapist	1,5 year as a defectologist	Limited program options for university admission
#7	Defectology - “Bolashak” University	Inclusive center in a mainstream school	No prior experience	2 years as a defectologist	There is a need for defectologists today
#8	B’s in Pedagogy-psychology – Korkyt Ata University 1-year training in Defectology – SATR*	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	Psychologist at a correctional center in Kyzylorda	10 years in the sphere of education 2 years as a defectologist	Work experience in a correctional class

#9	B's in two foreign languages – Kyzylorda Training on defectology - Almaty	PMPC	14 years as a deputy director of the rehabilitation center	1 st year as a Head of PMPC #1	Lack of specialists in the early years of the rehabilitation center
#10	B – Pavlodar State Pedagogical University M – at KazNPU after Abay	Mainstream school in Kyzylorda	2 years as a defectologist	3rd year as a defectologist and 1st year as a speech therapist	State scholarships for this specialty

Key: B – Bachelor in Defectology, M – Master's in Defectology, KazNPU – Kazakh National Pedagogical University; SATR - Rehabilitation Center for children and adolescents with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Table 2.

Description of Themes

#	Theme
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4.3.	Defectologists' understanding of inclusive education
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4.3.1.	<i>Inclusion as a term limited to students with SEND</i>
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4.3.2.	<i>Inclusive education as related to international definitions</i>
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4.4.	Defectologists' awareness of new policies in the field
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- 4.5. Challenges and concerns expressed by defectologists
 - 4.5.1. *Professional competency of defectologists in the city*
 - 4.5.2. *Scarcity of methodological support*
 - 4.5.3. *Attitudes in society*
 - 4.6. The role of defectologists in the implementation of inclusive education
 - 4.6.1. *Defectologists as teachers of students with SEND*
 - 4.6.2. *Defectologists as consultants to teachers and parents*
 - 4.6.3. *Defectologists as activists in promoting inclusion*
 - 4.7. Recommendations and suggestions proposed by defectologists to improve practice
-

SQ1. Defectologists' Understanding of Inclusive Education

It should be restated that mainstream schools in Kyzylorda adopted inclusive education within the last two years; hence the term is relatively new in the given context. Therefore, the researcher firstly sought defectologists' understanding of the concept. In general, all participants demonstrated their familiarity with inclusion and inclusive education. According to the defectologists in the study, their job involves teaching students with developmental disabilities individually twice a week and in a group with other students with SEND once a week. Thus, four defectologists viewed inclusive education solely concerning students with SEND. However, the remaining six were aware of its broad international articulation that considers all learners, including those with SEND.

Inclusion as a Term Limited to Students with SEND.

One group of defectologists in the research described inclusion as integrating learners with SEND into mainstream educational settings and providing them with a right to receive education along with their peers in regular classrooms. D6: *"Inclusive education is educating children with developmental disabilities together with regular children,*

integrating them. People have equal rights regardless of origin, gender and a member of the education system as an individual". The definition given by another defectologist implies a narrow medicalized understanding of inclusion: "*For us, inclusion is "treating" and "correcting" our children with developmental disabilities (D2). D5 stressed that inclusive education "creates barrier-free zones for children with special needs to support their adaptation into the potential social and educational environment" in integrating students with SEND. Likewise, D9 defined: "Inclusive education is about the elimination of discrimination towards children with SEND. Concealing their "deficits" and recognizing them as an individual*". Defectologists mainly described inclusive education as an individual approach to children with SEND, that is creating "*individual education plans*" (D8), providing "*additional support*" to those children [students with SEND] during lessons (D2) and presenting a topic in the form of games or cards to make it more engaging (D10). Furthermore, D4 emphasized that inclusive education means the adjustment of the educational system so that it meets the needs of a student:

Creating conditions for the child as a whole. The lesson aims to explain to children the tasks in a way that is easier to learn and evaluate the child at the appropriate level. Because he can't keep up with others, changing the evaluation criteria.

Inclusive Education as Related to International Definitions

It is true that the study participants mainly discussed inclusion within the framework of students with SEND. However, more than half of the defectologists admitted that they are aware that inclusive education is a broad term that includes children with SEND and all children who have specific barriers to learning and participation, which is evident from the response of D1:

When we talk about inclusive education, we consider only children with SEND. However, inclusive education is about removing barriers for children with deviant behavior, repatriates, children with language-related obstacles, etc.; quite often, our children's first language is Russian. They say 'teacher is saying something

unclear'. You see, this is also a barrier for that child. He can't understand the education in Kazakh. So it can also be attributed to inclusive education. I think we will come to it. For now, the association is only with students with SEND.

While demonstrating a broad understanding of inclusive education, defectologists explained that their assistance is needed, particularly for children with SEND. It is clear from the answer given by D3: *"Inclusion is a broader concept because it covers not only the special but also all children... regardless of origin, religion, or mental state, all children should be included in the same class in the regular education process"*. Likewise, when asked whether she is aware of the international definition of inclusive education, D10 stated:

I am aware of it. However, defectologists are needed only for children with physical or psychological needs; therefore, I am talking about my side. For example, we have repatriates in our school, and a psychologist usually monitors their adaptation to classes, non-discrimination, and free intervention.

SQ2. Defectologists' Awareness of New Policies in the Field

It should be acknowledged that all defectologists in the study demonstrated a high level of awareness about the current inclusive education reforms in the country. As D8 mentioned: *"Our president himself is supporting inclusion stating that everyone must receive education, be able to work. Now barrier-free zones are being created for inclusive support: a special elevator, alarm bells, a toilet, tactile yellow stripes are being installed"*. Nevertheless, all defectologists responded that most of the time, there is no official figure or methodologist who would directly notify them about and provide timely updates on recent changes or news in their field. Therefore, they mainly have to seek information by themselves by collaborating with other colleagues in the city. As D2 replied:

We have our chat with defectologists of the city and region. We hear that a change has been made, and we don't know where, how, or under what circumstances it was made. We all eventually end up asking each other. It is the truth. There is no need to lie. Neither the city methodologists nor the regional methodologists inform us. We were told that one change had been made recently. Then we were all asking each other. Finally, we found out that they changed the word consultation to

psychological and pedagogical support. This is the change, no other change, they said.

However, while almost all defectologists stated that they have to search for information on their own, only one defectologist (D7) responded: *“We have a pedagogue – organizer of the inclusive education center in our school. She regularly gathers all defectologists and other special education teachers and informs us about the recent changes and reforms”*.

Consequently, when asked whether those new reforms affect their practice in any way, defectologists stated that policy modifications do not bring changes to their routine as much as they do to documents. D3 explained this as follows: *“If the legislation changes, the documentation will change. It's likely to occur in short-term and annual plans. There will be no significant changes in practice”*.

Regarding the documentation, D9 stated some changes due to the transition from the medical model to the social-pedagogical model: *“Before, we used to give medical conclusions for students who go to mainstream schools. Now in order to avoid discrimination, we do not assign a diagnosis to a child. Instead, we give individual recommendations”*.

In general, defectologists shared the sources they usually receive information from. For example, six defectologists out of ten reported WhatsApp chats with defectologists of Kyzylorda, Zoom conferences and webinars with defectologists of other cities, the Internet and social networks as the most common sources of information. Furthermore, the following means of accessing relevant news were mentioned by defectologists: National Academy of Education www.nao.kz, (D5, D7, D10); webinars from the Local Department of Education (D3, D6); "National Scientific and Practical Center for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education" www.special-edu.kz (D2, D8); Laws and State Standard on Mainstream Education and PMPC (D4, D9); National Center for Professional

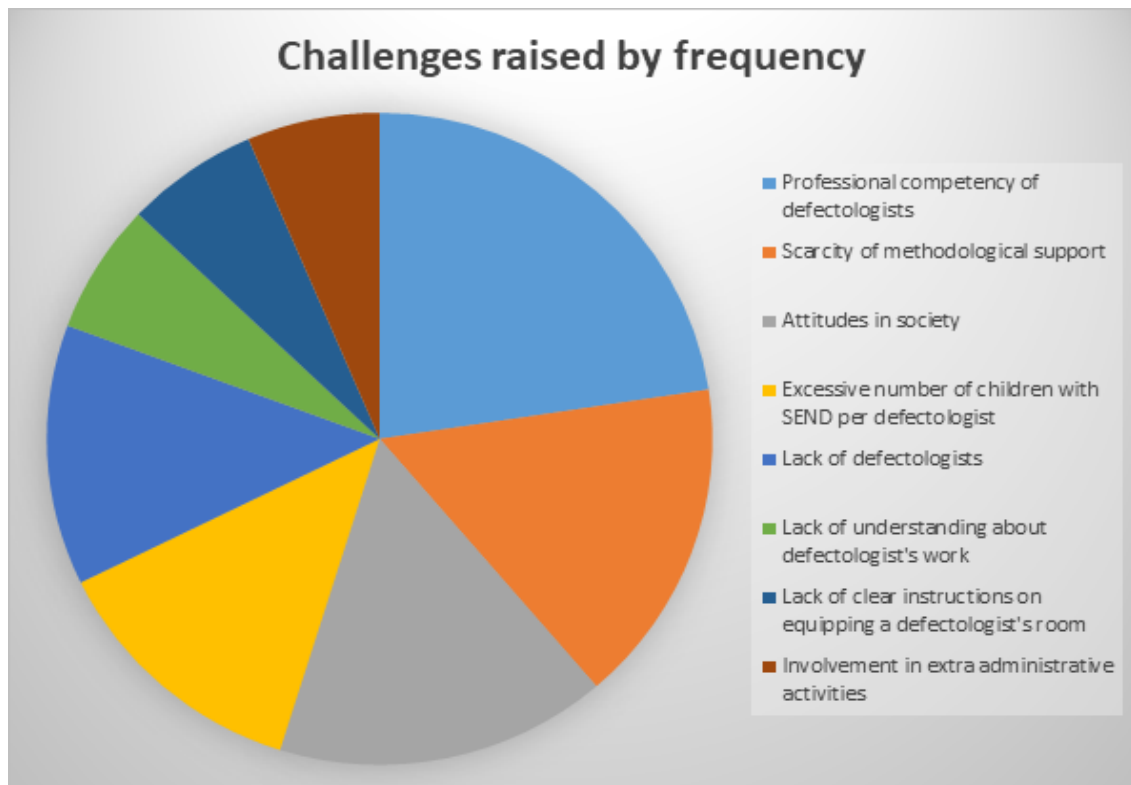
Development “Orleu” (D6); meetings with parents of children with SEND and authorities, people from the city administration, head doctors from hospitals at the Youth Center every half a year (D3); professors, supervisors from university (D5).

SQ3. Challenges and Concerns in Supporting Students with SEND in Inclusive Education

Participants listed several issues that they face in their day-to-day work as they strive toward ensuring inclusive education. The pie chart below shows the frequency of some of the major challenges and concerns mentioned by defectologists in Kyzylorda. It can be seen that the professional competency of defectologists was the most dominant, according to three-quarters of the participants. The study found the other two most common problems mentioned by half of the interviewees to be the lack of methodological support and controversial attitudes in the community. Although the rest of the issues in the chart were raised by two or three participants, they are still likely to hinder the implementation of inclusive education in the city.

Figure 1.

Challenges and concerns addressed by defectologists



Professional Competency of Defectologists in the City

When asked about challenges, the most frequent codes were “lack of special courses”, “professional development”, and “competency of specialists”. Seven out of ten defectologists stated that more training is needed. In addition, relatively experienced defectologists expressed concern about the level of preparedness of newly graduated defectologists. As D1 explained:

Since inclusive education is developing rapidly and a lot of attention is being paid, I know specialists who have received their training remotely and become defectologist after being in HR. They then ask, “How will I teach that child?”. We get to work with such specialists. The low professional competency of such specialists is our major regional barrier. I cannot say that we do not have qualified specialists, but professional competency is lower than in other cities. No institution trains defectologists according to particular state standards in Kyzylorda. The

more specialists with high self-efficacy, the more productive they will be if they train other specialists or work with students with SEND.

D8 also shared D1's concerns regarding the professional competency of less experienced specialists:

We wish there were more special courses for defectologists. They do not know what order to work and ask in our common WhatsApp chat. Therefore, we ask to educate new specialists more. It requires a lot of research, not settling in one place.

Similarly, D9 stated:

Defectology, in my opinion, cannot be taught remotely. It is a subtle matter. Therefore, a specialist must study full-time and ultimately acquire theory and practice. Nowadays, everyone learns through distance learning. They enrol on a university and do not go to classes but graduate from there. I am sorry, but I wonder what that specialist knows. She does not know the program.

Those defectologists who possess relatively less experience highlighted the challenges they encounter while working with students with SEND due to the lack of knowledge on the peculiarities of diagnoses their students have: *"It is a problem that we do not have courses that develop us, specialists. If we are not informed properly it is hard for us to work with children and their parents"* (D6).

Scarcity of Methodological Support

Several defectologists emphasized the need for comprehensive methodological support in their work. For instance, the absence of a specific sample on the creation of special calendar plans, lesson plans (D2, D8, D10); the deficit of literary, educational and methodological manuals for supporting children with SEND, especially in the Kazakh language: *"I wish there were more methodological tools in Kazakh. Now we are doing everything we can, it would be better if they came from 'above'"*(D7); didactic materials necessary for the learning of students with SEND: *"Firstly, they gave a room and a specialist to each school. Now I wish they could provide us with didactic tools depending*

on the diagnoses of children. For example, Braille keyboard for a child with vision impairment” (D5).

D8 added:

There are certain materials necessary for the educational process. We create a special calendar plan and lesson plans for those children. For now, we struggle with it. We are collaborating with all defectologists of the city and asking each other whether to draw up this or that way. There is no specific sample on how to fill in the documents and create those plans.

D10 also highlighted the challenges with special programs for students with SEND:

For example, general education teachers have materials that are repeated every year. What is given on the Internet does not suit the student. If general themes are given, we could take what is necessary for that particular child from there.

Attitudes in Society

According to more than half of the defectologists, although an increasing number of people in Kyzylorda are becoming aware of inclusive education in recent years compared to the initial periods of its implementation, controversial opinions towards inclusion still exist among school principals, general education teachers, parents, subject teachers, speech therapists, psychologists. As D6 put it:

Our leaders still do not know what inclusive education is. They do not know how much we work, what kind of equipment we need. Therefore, I think leaders, the department of education, pedagogues and specialists should be trained on the republican level.

Talking about this issue, an interviewee said:

Recently we were discussing the conditions provided for inclusion on the oblast level. Some school leaders were complaining: “I do not need adjustments; a child with cerebral palsy will not come to my school”. I say: “If not today, he will come tomorrow” (D9).

Apart from the resistant attitudes of principals, parents of other children are also reported to argue against inclusion, D9: “*We have parents who complain, “Why is that*

child [a child with SEND] in my child's group?" It seems we still have a social exclusion of these children".

Other participants (D1, D3 and D8) also felt that the negative attitudes of parents and the community might hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda. Defectologists expressed the belief that society is only starting to form its understanding of inclusion. Furthermore, participants shared (D1, D2, D3, D6) that their colleagues at school and parents are not entirely aware of what a defectologist's job entails. D2 and D4 shared that the school administration does not know the nuances of educating a child with SEND and expects immediate progress from a defectologist (D2) and overwhelms them with additional administrative work. In contrast, defectologists' work and time must be dedicated solely to a child (D4). Likewise, D4, D7, D8 felt that more attention to paperwork/reports rather than students themselves also distracts defectologists from their primary duties: "*We prove our work with documents. Not with a result from a child, but with papers*" (D8). Finally, defectologists (D2, D4, D9) believe that inclusive education implies the need for comprehensive support for a child (psychologist, parents, classroom teacher, subject teacher, peers), not only the work of a defectologist. In addition, D2 noted a lack of clear and universal guidelines for equipping a defectologist's room. Similarly, other participants (D4, D8) mentioned that they had to search for the instructions on the Internet by themselves to order teaching materials and instruments. Overall, D9, Head of the PMPC in Kyzylorda, stated an urgent need for more special education teachers, particularly defectologists in Kyzylorda, since the introduction of inclusive education in mainstream schools as the number of students with SEND per defectologist in schools is rapidly increasing.

SQ4. The Role Defectologists Fulfill Within Current Inclusive Education Policies

During the interviews, all defectologists acknowledged their pivotal role in ensuring inclusion in their schools and communities. Whilst recognizing themselves as key stakeholders within the current move towards inclusion, the three primary functions of these specialists emerged from the discussions with defectologists.

Defectologists as Teachers of Students with SEND

Firstly, defectologists emphasized the importance of correctional-developmental work they conduct with a child with SEND. According to defectologists (D1, D3, D7, D10), there are cases when they removed a student with SEND from the PMPC list due to year-round work with a defectologist. As D1 said:

My main contribution to inclusive education is increasing the development level of students I am working with. For instance, last year [2020], we had 17 students with PMPC conclusion in September, and this number decreased to 13 by May. We removed 4 students from the PMPC list, stating that they were “corrected”. The competency of specialists is seen here because it is tough to achieve results with a child with SEND. He cannot learn and say the things you teach him like a regular child due to his peculiarities with perceiving the material. If he is removed from the list, he is ready to acquire the regular program.

Defectologists as Consultants to General Education Teachers

Secondly, defectologists are consultants to the classroom and subject teachers, parents, and school staff. They know their children better than anybody else. They regularly give advice and instructions on behaving towards a child and deliver explanatory speeches at pedagogical meetings about inclusive and special education.

Subject teachers come to me since I am a defectologist. They ask me: “What kind of a child is he/she? How can I work with him/her?”. I understand students with developmental disabilities better than their subject teachers because it is my profession. I describe a child: “they like or dislike something and often try to praise that student. Ensure individual approach, come up to them and ask, look at the

student's workbook, because those children cannot keep up with others". So I give consultations to teachers.

Defectologists as Activists in Promoting IE in the Region

In response to the question: Do you think defectologists should be involved in inclusion initiatives? All participants unanimously stated that their participation is essential to exchange practice, qualifications and experiences with other specialists. As D1 said: *"Forming society's attitudes and creating conditions for the preparedness of pedagogues is in our hands. If we keep excluding them, they [students with SEND] will be left in the corner as an isolated world"*.

Moreover, D5 provided an example of a school defectologist who was able to promote inclusion despite the absence of state-funded initiatives in her school:

Our school became a winner of the "Small grants" program of the U.S. Consulate in Kazakhstan. I heard that the school defectologist at that time applied for it. So they opened a center for children with SEND and mothers of homeschooled students in collaboration with the Public Association "Ak bosaga" in 2019. Today 20 students with SEND come to this center to receive support from a defectologist and psychologist.

Defectologist's Recommendations and Suggestions to Improve Current Inclusive Practices in Kyzylorda

Several recommendations emerged from the responses of defectologists to the interview questions. They reflected on their practice and suggested ways to improve current initiatives. For example, D1 shared:

Nowadays, various competitions are held for students with SEND separately. This is right, but why not organise a contest for students with and without SEND? That is the purpose of inclusive education – including in society and the environment. At tournaments and competitions today, I witness they [organizers] write in brackets special for students with SEND. Okay, a student with SEND can take 1st place in his group, but they should be able to compare themselves with regular students. Perhaps apply different criteria for students with SEND. Then self-esteem and a student's desire for life will increase.

According to defectologists (D2, D8, D10), students with SEND who study at higher grades (e.g. 9th & 10th) are often embarrassed to visit a defectologist's room because their classmates may bully them. Defectologists suggested assisting children with SEND at earlier ages to avoid such embarrassment. Another suggestion is that since the society is not entirely familiar with the terms inclusive education and defectology, D3 recommended posting short excerpts from lessons with a defectologist on schools' social media pages so that parents understand what their children do and how they are taught. Keeping the name and face of a child invisible to maintain confidentiality was added. Finally, D2 and D9 spoke about the necessity of introducing a uniform for tutors who work with children with unexpected behavior because they must be able to chase and supervise that child before they harm other students. As D9 described:

Recently a child grabbed a tutor's hair and pulled her onto the ground. As a result, she had a concussion. So I tell my employees: "Why don't you cover your hair? You do not work in a cool office; you work with special children".

Finally, defectologists proposed adding more classes for students with SEND on life skills rather than forcing them to engage in school subjects. According to D1, "some children get easily bored during 45 minutes of a class because many students with SEND in mainstream classes have short attention spans". Subsequently, D9 and D10 shared their idea of including more disciplines in learning about their environment and coping with daily tasks such as going to a store or paying a bus fare. In other words, they proposed differentiating the curriculum to make it more entertaining for students with SEND. D10 discussed what inclusive education looks like in some countries:

Inclusive education is understood as teaching only school subjects in our country. However, it is not only about learning subjects. In Germany, they take students to nature and involve themselves in manual labor. Yes, it can be dangerous, but children will be under supervision. The diagnoses of their students were heavier. They [diverse lessons] are available only in special schools in Kazakhstan.

Proceeding the previous comment about special schools, D9 shared her experience of implementing new classes every year while she was the Head of the rehabilitation center:

For instance, if one year we equipped a room for adjusting to social life, next year we prepared a fashion room for children. Why not be stylish, and comb their hair? They participate in celebrations singing, and dancing; why would they not feel pretty?

Chapter Summary

The overarching question for this research study was: *What are the attitudes of defectologists towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda?*

In general, defectologists in Kyzylorda hold strongly positive attitudes towards having students with SEND in mainstream education. They think that society is becoming more and more accepting of these students and schools are providing the necessary conditions. Moreover, defectologists highlighted several benefits of studying in a school environment for a child with SEND. For example, children with SEND attempt to imitate the demeanor of their peers in regular classrooms (D2, D10), thus learning how to sit at a desk, open their books and communicate with a teacher and classmates (D8). On this matter, D5 explained:

Of course, I support inclusion. For example, I studied Pre-school education for 4 years. The difference between a child who went to kindergarten and a child who went to the first grade right from home, for example, is like chalk and cheese.

In addition, D7 emphasized the importance of inclusion for other children without disabilities in the classroom: *“Students will become aware of the existence of children with SEND among us. They realize that not everyone is born with the same abilities”*.

On the other hand, D1 and D10 suggested that schools apply criteria to include children with SEND in traditional settings. They described the cases when children with more significant impairments and mental disabilities distract the other 25 students in the

classroom, which affects the class performance or may harm other students causing parental concerns. As D1 commented:

Since they [students with SEND] had not communicated with the public, a student can be lying on the floor or leaving the room without your [teacher's] permission. It affects the regular children. No matter how much you prepare those 25 students saying, "It's normal. Don't look at him. Look at the blackboard". They still get distracted. I cannot say that they should not study in mainstream schools. Maybe they should be accommodated if they meet specific criteria.

Despite such comments from two participants, all defectologists in the study demonstrated their willingness to invest in work to support their students with SEND to succeed. Their enthusiasm is evident from the answer given by D8: *"The lower the development level of students, the higher should be the level of research of teachers. We must not settle in one place. We must always seek ways to make that particular child grasp the topic."*

Similarly, D9 said: I always tell specialists, *"If you do your job with heart, it will work ... I initially adopted the principle that there is no child who cannot be educated. If every defectologist follows this principle, their work will be revived"*.

D10 also emphasized that attitude is the most crucial thing in working with a student with SEND:

The education and experience of a specialist are not in the first place. Most importantly, you need patience and stress resistance. Then you will start understanding the job. On the one hand, you can see the 'defect.' On the other hand, society dictates what the norm is and what is not. For example, I would not say that children with Down syndrome and ASD are ill. They just see the world differently than us. They have got their world.

This chapter discussed the results of the data collection process for this study. The responses of defectologists were grouped according to research questions and follow-ups. The findings were thoroughly analyzed and articulated by the researcher. The next chapter will discuss the results in more details.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter presents further analysis and explanation of the results presented in the previous chapter. It aims to describe the significant findings following the research questions and some unexpected outcomes of the study. The chapter discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature in Kazakhstan and internationally and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The present study focused on investigating the experiences of defectologists as they work towards inclusion in Kyzylorda. The purpose of the research was to explore their attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda.

Defectologists' Understanding of the Concept and Awareness of IE Policies

The first research question in this study sought to determine how defectologists in Kyzylorda understand the concept of inclusive education. In general, findings suggest that there has been some progress towards inclusion. It is evident from the responses of the study participants that all of them possess a certain level of understanding of inclusion or inclusive education. The answers indicate that four out of ten defectologists in the present study view inclusion only in relation to students with disabilities, which is confirmed by previous research (Makoelle, 2020a; Miles & Singal, 2010; Pons et al., 2015). However, more than half were aware of its broad articulation at the international level. The definitions of the concept provided by defectologists have characteristics of both the medical and social models of inclusion. The research could deduce by three participants mentioning “correctional work”, “treating students with SEND” and “deficits” that those defectologists' perceptions of inclusion align more with the medical model. These results match those observed in previous studies that highlight the prevalence of the medical model of disability in the Kazakhstani context (Allan & Omarova, 2021; Makoelle, 2020b;

Rollan & Somerton, 2019). Although a few defectologists in the study used the language pertinent to the medical model of disability (Ferrante, 2012) and the Soviet defectology (Galmarini, 2012), they did not necessarily imply remediating those children with disabilities. In fact, the findings demonstrate that their work is based on teaching students through a simplified program and delivering a topic in a way that corresponds to their abilities. More than half of the participants discussed the importance of recognizing the individual rights of students with SEND to receive education to a certain extent. Therefore, the research assumes that definitions of inclusive education given by defectologists in the present study are mainly consistent with the social model of inclusion (Oliver, 2013).

The most interesting finding was that participants shared examples of how students with SEND are adopting positive behavioral changes due to their interaction with their peers without SEND, whereas the latter are becoming more accepting of them and developing empathy. This evidence presented by the defectologists supports the initial idea of “Education for All” (Ainscow, 1995) as well as the results of the previous research conducted in Greece (Pappas et al., 2018). The results also suggest that defectologists’ understanding of inclusion is also, to a certain extent, in agreement with the working definition of inclusive education proposed by Slee (2018), as the participants discussed tailoring the education system and removing barriers in a school environment to accommodate a student with SEND. For instance, D4 mentioned modifying the assessment criteria for students with SEND in inclusive classrooms.

The second question in this research aimed to discover to what extent defectologists are aware of current inclusive reforms in Kazakhstan. The findings indicate that most defectologists are not regularly and adequately informed about the news in their field neither by city methodologists nor other authorities. Therefore, participants have to search for information by themselves on the Internet. Only one participant, D7, responded that

there is a pedagogue organizer in her school responsible for informing special education teachers about the changes to their work, which can be explained by the fact that she works in an inclusive center within a mainstream school. Nevertheless, all participants unanimously demonstrated their awareness that much attention has been paid to inclusive education in the country recently. D9, Head of PMPC in Kyzylorda, discussed the changes in their practice due to the current policies and provided examples of the latest PMPC conclusions for students with SEND according to the social-pedagogical model (MES, 2019). The present research assumes that the observed shift in the defectologists' understanding of inclusion from the medical to the social approach could be attributed to such changes in the reform. The literature states that inclusive education policies vary significantly in practice (Haug, 2017). The lack of an official source of information for defectologists is one of the things policymakers should consider if they want their policies to be implemented accordingly by other stakeholders in place. One of the issues that emerge from this finding is that defectologists may misinterpret the reforms, which will inevitably affect the future of inclusive education in Kazakhstan as a whole.

Current Inclusive Education Practices in Kyzylorda

It should be noted that all defectologists in the study acknowledged significant progress accomplished in promoting inclusion in Kyzylorda in recent years. Nevertheless, qualitative data derived from the third research question have also demonstrated various difficulties and problems that sometimes hinder successful inclusive education. While particular challenges are similar to the findings of other studies, some unexpected results have arisen that are peculiar to the research site. It is evident from defectologists' responses that there are three significant barriers to implementing inclusive education: a) professional competency of defectologists, b) scarcity of methodological support, and c) attitudes in society. Although defectologists are recognized as one of the critical stakeholders of

inclusive education reforms in Kazakhstan (Helmer et al., 2020; Lapham, 2019; Ramberg, 2021), the findings suggest that the professional competency of defectologists remains the most prominent regional challenge in Kyzylorda. Requests to organize professional development courses addressed by three-quarters of the defectologists interviewed for the present study support the suggestions proposed by the previous research in Kazakhstan regarding the provision of additional methodological training for in-service defectologists (Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2021; Zholtayeva et al., 2013). In particular, the results indicate a need for more training of novice defectologists. The issue of professional competency is consistent with previous studies that stress insufficient training of specialists embarking on inclusive practices in Kazakhstan and internationally (Goransson et al., 2011; Hofman et al., 2014; Sagandykova, 2020; Shields, 2020). However, the problem is particularly astute in Kyzylorda as findings reveal an increase in the number of professionals who receive remote education and acquire diplomas due to the urgent need for defectologists within inclusive education. Secondly, the current study found that the scarcity of methodological support and adequate resources was another barrier to sustaining inclusion by defectologists. These results support previous studies that identified similar challenges general and special education teachers face in inclusive education (Makhmudayeva, 2016; Mihajlovic, 2020; Pappas et al., 2018; Round et al., 2016; Stepaniuk, I., 2019). The findings suggest that the lack of specific equipment and teaching materials necessary for students' learning according to their diagnoses, samples to create lesson plans and didactic materials in the Kazakh language are the main challenges for defectologists in their daily work. Thirdly, in this study inclusion of students with SEND was found to cause concerns and rather negative attitudes of school principals, pedagogues and parents of children in regular classrooms, which corroborates the findings from the literature (Makoelle, 2020a; Mihajlovic, 2020; Pappas et al., 2018).

One unanticipated finding was that the school community and society in Kyzylorda are not entirely familiar with the profession of a defectologist. According to four participants of the present study, school staff members, including leadership and teachers, and parents do not understand how a defectologist's job is run. The current research presumes that little understanding of defectologist's profession and the peculiarities of work with a student with SEND by other stakeholders may lead to other problems as the findings also suggest that defectologists are overwhelmed with extra paperwork and, in some cases, involved in school activities that are not relevant to their job. Although no data were found on this matter in the literature, the finding of the study on special education teachers in Cyprus by Liasidou and Antoniou (2013) is somewhat consistent with the present results as it established an underestimation of the professional roles of special education teachers by headteachers and teachers, which in turn leads to miscommunication between them. These data, however, must be interpreted with caution because the remaining six participants do not share similar concerns.

The findings also demonstrated that an excessive number of students with SEND per defectologist is another regional problem. The literature review (Goransson et al., 2011) discussed class size as one of the issues that need to be considered by schools to facilitate inclusion successfully. In Kazakhstani inclusive education, no more than three students with disabilities per class can be accommodated in a regular classroom (National Academy of Education [NAE], 2015). However, there are no regulations on how many students each defectologist must teach in a mainstream school per week. During the interviews, the researcher observed a considerable difference in the number of students per defectologist in schools of Kyzylorda.

Furthermore, the results showed that sometimes older students are ashamed to visit a defectologist's room on their school day due to peer pressure. A possible explanation for

this finding might be the name of the defectologist's room. The researcher discovered that defectologists themselves had assigned various names to their rooms, such as "correctional room of a defectologist", "a room for special children", and "a room for inclusive support," because there are no official guidelines to entitle their room. These challenges indicate a lack of coordination at the oblast and ministerial level and need to be addressed accordingly by stakeholders.

The Role of Defectologists in Inclusive Education

The analysis of the results obtained during the interviews with the participants indicates that defectologists define their primary role as teachers of students with SEND; thus, it coincides with the self-perceptions of Finnish special educators in the previous research (Mihajlovic, 2020). Furthermore, prior studies that have noted the importance of special education teachers' knowledge in supporting inclusion (Florian, 2019; Somma, 2019) are justified by the participants' responses in the present research. All defectologists mentioned how they share their expertise with the classroom, subject teachers and parents. In this regard, the role of special education teachers as consultants to general education teachers and parents found in the previous research (Dally et al., 2019; Lindacher, 2020; Pavlovic Babic et al., 2018) is observed in the practice of defectologists in Kyzylorda. However, further thorough research is required to establish how collaboration among specialists is achieved in different schools. Finally, this study produced results that accord with earlier research (Emanuelsson et al., 2005; Passeka, 2020) regarding special educators acting as activists promoting inclusion in the community. Several suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of current inclusive practices proposed by participants in the present study prove that defectologists have the potential to develop inclusive education initiatives.

The Attitudes of Defectologists Towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Kyzylorda

The overarching research question of this research was: *What is the attitudes of defectologists towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda?* The results suggest that defectologists in Kyzylorda hold very positive attitudes about including students with SEND in mainstream education. The current results were expected to a certain extent, as the earlier research found that special education teachers tend to support inclusion (Hernandez et al., 2016; Saloviita, 2020; Shields, 2020). On the other hand, a possible explanation for these results may be that participants recruited for the study work mainly with students with mild impairments. Two defectologists expressed concerns regarding the inclusion of students with more significant disabilities in regular classrooms, which supports the previous research findings that highlight the relationship between the type of disability and attitudes (Mihajlovic, 2020; Pappas et al., 2018; Passeka, 2020).

Furthermore, the results are consistent with the outcomes of the previous research (Agavelyan et al., 2020; Hernandez, et al., 2016; Hofman et al., 2014), stating that teachers with prior work experience with students with SEND are more confident to work in inclusive settings (see Table 1. Participant Profiles). Interestingly, these findings justify the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), which served as a theoretical framework for the present study, assuming that defectologists who are confident in their expertise and possess sufficient experience can ensure successful student academic and social outcomes. On the contrary, the low self-efficacy of specialists can be deduced from the fact that several defectologists hesitated to participate in this study due to their little work experience. However, this research did not detect any evidence of the correlation between the participants' self-efficacy and their attitudes. Nevertheless, the findings confirm the link between the attitudes and behaviors of teachers (Boyle et al., 2020; Clipa et al., 2020;

Curcic, 2009). Similar to the literature (Sharma et al., 2013), defectologists noted the importance of working with the “heart”. These results align with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) because it is evident from the answers that defectologists are willing to acquire knowledge and work towards inclusion.

In contrast to earlier findings (Chrzanowska, 2019; Vaz et al., 2015), participants of the present study with more extensive experience in the field appeared to be more passionate about the future of inclusive education. A possible explanation for this result may be that older defectologists have gained experience over years of work with students with SEND and do not see their work as unmanageable as novice defectologists. Bandura (1997) identifies mastery experiences as the most effective source of self-efficacy gained by individuals. In other words, when one successfully overcomes challenges, they are likely to form positive attitudes toward their abilities to perform similar tasks with ease in the future. However, further research is needed to establish the link between the work experience and attitudes of defectologists.

Chapter Summary

The analysis of the findings demonstrates some progress in the perception of inclusive education as articulated at the international level. The chapter also presented specific issues reported by defectologists that need to be addressed to implement inclusive policies in Kyzylorda properly. In addition, the results support earlier studies regarding the vital role of special education teachers in accommodating learners with SEND in inclusive settings. Overall, the findings indicate that defectologists in Kyzylorda are positive about educating learners with SEND in mainstream schools and willing to work towards inclusive education.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate the experiences of defectologists within the current inclusive reforms in Kazakhstan. The overarching research question in this phenomenological inquiry was: What are the attitudes of defectologists towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda? The study focused on how defectologists understand the concepts of inclusion and inclusive education, to what extent they are aware of the current inclusive reforms, what defectologists consider to be some of the challenges to the implementation of inclusive education and how they view their role within the existing inclusive policies.

Summary of the Study

The main finding of this study confirms previous studies conducted in Kazakhstan to a certain degree, demonstrating that inclusion is perceived by almost half of the participants only in relation to students with disabilities (Makoelle, 2020a; Miles & Singal, 2010; Pons et al., 2015). In contrast to previous research that emphasized the predominance of the medical approach to educating students with SEND in Kazakhstan (Allan & Omarova, 2021; Makoelle, 2020b; Rollan & Somerton, 2019), the findings of the present study indicate some progress in the understanding of inclusive education from the perspective of the social model of disability. Furthermore, the study found the lack of official, authoritative bodies that would regularly inform defectologists about the changes in inclusive policies and explain them accordingly. The main challenges and concerns in sustaining inclusion addressed by defectologists are consistent with the study results in the Kazakhstani and international context (Makhmudayeva, 2016; Mihajlovic, 2020; Pappas et al., 2018; Round et al., 2016; Stepaniuk, 2019). Nevertheless, the findings suggest specific problems pertinent to the research site that should be considered and tackled by

policymakers and other stakeholders within inclusive education reforms. In accordance with earlier studies (Lindacher, 2020; Pavlovic Babic et al., 2018; Passeka, 2020), the present research showed that defectologists recognize their crucial role in putting inclusion into practice; particularly as teachers of students with SEND, consultants to school staff members and parents and activists in promoting inclusion. The present study explored the attitudes of defectologists towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda, and the findings suggest that participants overall hold positive attitudes about accommodating learners with SEND. However, contradictory attitudes in society remain particularly among school leaders, and parents of students without SEND, which was somewhat expected from the literature (Rollan, 2021). The study also revealed several regional problems that need to be taken into account by the policymakers and other stakeholders.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations. The findings of the study cannot be generalized to the greater population of defectologists working in Kazakhstan due to the relatively small sample size of participants and their location in one small city in southern Kazakhstan. This research's phenomenological and qualitative nature also limits a broader interpretation of the results. It should be noted that the study recruited defectologists working in mainstream settings with work experience of mainly 2-3 years; therefore, the results may not necessarily reflect the attitudes of defectologists working in other settings such as correctional centers or special schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this study highlight the need for further research into the attitudes of defectologists working within inclusive settings in Kazakhstan. Moreover, the analysis revealed the gap in the literature, as there are barely any studies investigating the experiences of defectologists since the adoption of inclusive education by mainstream schools. Thus further research with a larger sample size in Kazakhstan and Central Asia is necessary to fill this gap.

It was beyond the scope of the present study to investigate the training pre-service and in-service defectologists receive. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that their professional qualification is one of the significant impediments to successfully implementing inclusion in Kyzylorda. Taking into account that very few studies have discussed the education of defectologists in Kazakhstan and Central Asia (Makoelle & Burmistrova, 2021; Nam, 2019; Nazarqosimov et al., 2020), the research recommends that further studies are necessary to gain insights into defectologists' perspectives of their pre-service and in-service training. Furthermore, the present study explored the perception of inclusion by defectologists. However, the results indicate that despite defectologists' awareness of inclusive education, other stakeholders in the region lack understanding of defectologist's work and inclusion in general. Therefore, research examining the knowledge of specialists in the local department of education, school principals, school community members and parents about inclusive education is needed. The literature stresses the importance of collaboration among parties in achieving inclusion (Lindacher, 2020; Pavlovic Babic et al., 2018).

According to earlier studies (Hernandez et al., 2016; Hofman et al., 2014), there is a link between the level of self-efficacy of special education teachers and their attitudes towards inclusion. However, the present study did not reveal the notable influence of self-

efficacy on defectologists' attitudes as all participants were highly supportive of inclusion except for two defectologists' concerns raised regarding the type of disability accommodated in regular classrooms. In this regard, further large-scale quantitative research that can identify the correlation between attitudes and various factors may be beneficial to better understand Kazakhstani defectologists' opinions towards inclusive education and their daily practice.

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Appendix A. Consent Form (English version)

The Attitudes of Defectologists Towards the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Kyzylorda

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study “The attitudes of defectologists towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda”. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of defectologists in the city of Kyzylorda and their attitudes towards the implementation of the current inclusive education policies. Participation in the research is on a voluntary basis and you have been invited as you are currently working as a defectologist and can share your experiences with the researcher. The interviews will be held face to face at a time and place convenient for you; however, should the epidemiological situation change in Kazakhstan, they can be arranged online. Only the researcher and the research supervisor will have access to the data. The results of the study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: The interview will last approximately 40 min. Your overall participation will take no more than 60 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Participation in the research is perceived to be as minimal risk as it does not involve vulnerable participants nor involve questions that may be personal or extend beyond your everyday work duties. Nevertheless, there is a minimal risk of breaching confidentiality if for example the data is not secured appropriately. To mitigate this risk, protocols have been put in place to secure the data and the identity of participants. The participant’s name and a letter code such as D1, D2, D3 etc. will be stored on a word document in a password protected file on the researcher’s laptop separate to the files containing the interview transcripts. In this way the risks of breaching confidentiality are minimized if the laptop is stolen. Another risk is that under the current COVID-19 circumstances, the researcher and the participants may infect each other. The researcher will ensure that both the participants and the interviewer wear masks, keep social distance and follow all the safety measures such as conducting the interview in a location that is not crowded and well ventilated so as not to contract the virus.

The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study is that it will reveal how the policy of inclusive education is being put into practice in Kyzylorda. Although there is no direct benefit to the participants from participating in this study, the results of the research will inform policymakers and other stakeholders about current issues within the policy. This may consequently help to improve practices of defectologists in the long term. The research will contribute to the literature on the experiences of defectologists because there is a lack of research on their attitudes towards inclusive education in the Kazakhstani context. The study may be useful for other agencies working towards the development of inclusive education in Kazakhstan.

PARTICIPANT’S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be

presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals. However, your identity remains confidential and you will not be identifiable.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the researcher or thesis supervisor:

Researcher

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Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- I understand that I do not have to answer any question that makes me uncomfortable;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date:

I agree for the researcher to audio record the interview

Signature: _____ Date:

Researcher:

Signature: _____ Date:

Appendix B. Interview Protocol (English version)

Date _____ **Participant #** _____ **Location** _____

[introductions]

[thanking the participant for agreeing to meet /take part in the research]

[going over the consent form, explaining confidentiality and anonymity issues as explained on the consent form]

[do you have any questions about the research or your participation?]

[signing and collecting the form]

[recorder test]

[start the interview]

1. To begin with, could you please tell me about your experience and professional qualifications?
2. Please describe your everyday work.
3. Could you explain to me how you understand the term 'inclusion'? (RQ1)
 - 3.1. Could you please describe inclusive education from your perspective?
 - 3.2. What is your opinion towards including students with disabilities into mainstream schools?
4. What do you know about inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan? (RQ2)
 - 4.1. How would you evaluate your awareness of the current inclusive reforms in the country? Where do you usually receive information on this subject?
 - 4.2. In what way do you think these changes in reforms have affected your practice as a defectologist?
5. Do you think the current system of meeting the needs of students with special educational needs and disabilities is effective? (RQ2)

5.1. What can be done to improve the organization of this process?

5.2. How would you define the role of specialized schools and correctional classes in this scheme?

6. What would you name as some of the challenges in implementing inclusive education?

(RQ3)

6.1. In your opinion what do you think needs to be done in order to overcome those challenges?

6.2. How well do you feel that schools in Kyzylorda are prepared to adopt inclusive education?

7. What do you believe is your contribution as a defectologist to the implementation of inclusive education? (RQ4)

7.1. What do you think is your role in supporting learners with disabilities within inclusive education policies?

7.2. Do you believe defectologists should be involved in inclusion initiatives?

Why?

8. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research, is there anything else you would like to add that you think might be useful to this study?

Appendix C. Information Sheet for the Principal

Dear Mr./Mrs. X,

Thank you for taking your time to read this letter.

My name is Alima Abdulatif, and I am a graduate student at Nazarbayev University. I am currently planning research on “The attitudes of defectologists towards the implementation of inclusive education in Kyzylorda”. The purpose of my research is to explore the experiences of defectologists in the city of Kyzylorda and their attitudes towards the implementation of the current inclusive education policies. It will focus on defectologists’ understanding of inclusive education and what challenges they face as they work towards inclusion. The findings of this research will help inform policymakers and other stakeholders about the current issues within inclusive education reforms from the perspectives of defectologists.

I would like to obtain your permission to contact defectologists at your schools to ascertain if they are interested in participating in this research. Participation in the research is confidential, so your name or any other personal details of the school or participants will not be seen by anyone apart from myself and my supervisor. I have attached a copy of the informed consent form with this letter so that you are aware of the measures taken to protect the confidentiality of the school and any of the participants.

My study will include face to face interviews with defectologists. Participation by defectologists is completely voluntary and interviews will be arranged at a time that does not disrupt work duties of defectologists. The interviews can be held on or off school as required by you or the participants. The participants will be invited to a meeting where they will be explained the purpose of the study and the details of participation including any risks and benefits.

If you have any questions at all about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me at alima.abdulatif@nu.edu.kz; tel.: +77053301861.

Appendix D. Sample of Coding

Interview questions	Defectologist #2	Codes
<p>3. Could you explain to me how you understand inclusion/inclusive education?</p>	<p>In my opinion, inclusion is giving individual directions, training of an individual child with SEND. Creating conditions for the child, expanding his worldview with individual education. I understand that this is an introduction to the environment.</p>	<p>individual approach narrow understanding of inclusion integration into the environment</p>
<p>3.2. What is your opinion towards including students with disabilities into mainstream schools?</p>	<p>Inclusive education is educating individually, creating individual plans.</p> <p>Actually, I support it. All children have equal rights. Moreover, all necessary conditions are being provided now.</p>	<p>Positive attitude toward inclusive education the social model of inclusion available resources for inclusion</p>
<p>4. What do you know about inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan? 4.1. How would you evaluate your awareness of the current inclusive reforms in the country? Where do you usually receive information on this subject?</p>	<p>A lot of attention is being paid to inclusion in recent years and the number of defectologists is increasing.</p> <p>When I started this job my colleagues would ask me: "Who is a defectologist?" We have a WhatsApp chat with the defectologists of the city and region. We hear that there is a change in the reform, but we do not know where, how, what changes have been made.</p>	<p>promotion and implementation of inclusive reforms Unawareness of community about the job of a defectologist Collaboration with colleagues Lack of official source of information</p>

**Appendix E. Grouping by Categories and Themes in Relation to Research Questions
and Conceptual Framework**

Overarching research question					
Categories	SQ1 Understanding of IE	SQ2 Defectologists' awareness of new policies	SQ3 Challenges and concerns raised by defectologists	SQ4 Defectologists' role in the current IE practices	Recommendations and suggestions by defectologists
	Individualized approach for children with SEND	Internet and social network chats	Lack of courses, training and olympiads on professional development	Correctional-developmental work with a child	Early intervention for students with SEND
	Integration of children with SEND into society	No official figure/source of information	Lack of educational-methodological and didactic tools for children with SEND	Consultations and recommendations to classroom, subject teachers and parents	Raising awareness on social media
	Broad (international) definition of inclusive education	School inclusive center organizer Webinars from the regional department of education	The deficit of methodological manuals in Kazakh Lack of special education teachers (speech therapists, defectologists) Excessive paperwork Different working hours of defectologists in different schools Uneven number of children per defectologist	Explanatory work for school staff members and parents Promoting inclusive initiatives	Inclusive activities and events Uniforms for tutors Variety of classes for students with SEND

			<p>Defectologists = speech therapists</p> <p>Defectologists = private tutors</p>		
Themes	<p>Transition from the Medical to Social model</p>	<p>Lack of timely updates on new reforms</p> <p>Collaboration with colleagues</p>	<p>Professional competency of defectologists</p> <p>Scarcity of methodological support</p> <p>Attitudes in community</p> <p>More specialists are needed</p> <p>Working conditions of defectologists</p> <p>Lack of clear understanding of a defectologists' job</p>	<p>Defectologists as teachers of students with SEND</p> <p>Defectologists as consultants to general education teachers</p> <p>Defectologists as activists in promoting IE in the region</p>	<p>Promoting inclusion</p> <p>Comfortable dresscode for specialists</p> <p>Differentiating curriculum in IE</p>