

**Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education
Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Sciences
in
Educational Leadership

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

April, 2024

Word Count: 17904

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

Yours sincerely,

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Filiz Polat for her unwavering support and guidance during my thesis journey. Her expertise and encouragement have been invaluable.

I'm deeply thankful for my family's consistent support. Your love and belief in me kept me going.

To my dedicated group mates, thank you for your camaraderie and collaboration. We faced challenges together, making this journey memorable.

ABSTRACT

Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education

Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School

This qualitative case study investigates the principal leadership strategies employed to support school improvement during the execution of inclusive education in a South Kazakhstani inclusive school. The study explores the principal's specific actions, initiatives, and practices to foster a supportive and inclusive school culture, enhance teacher collaboration, and ensure implementing inclusive education practices successfully. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with the principal, teachers, defectologist, parents, and a psychologist, as well as observations conducted over a period of one and a half months and policy analysis. The findings of the study revealed that principal leadership plays a crucial role in fostering an inclusive school environment. If a principal exhibits transformational leadership qualities, such as visionary guidance, effective communication, collaboration, and support, it significantly influences the successful implementation of inclusive practices. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of principal-teacher collaboration, clear communication channels, and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their inclusive teaching strategies.

Keywords: principal leadership, school improvement, inclusive education, inclusive practices, teacher collaboration.

Аңдатпа

Басшы Көшбасшылықтың Инклюзивті Білім Беруді Енгізуге Ықпалын Зерттеу: Оңтүстік Қазақстандағы Бір Инклюзивті Мектептің Жағдайын Зерттеу

Бұл сапалы жағдайлық зерттеу Оңтүстік Қазақстан инклюзивті мектебінде инклюзивті білім беруді енгізу кезінде мектепті жақсартуға қолдау көрсету үшін пайдаланылатын негізгі көшбасшылық стратегияларды зерттейді. Зерттеу мектеп директорының қолдаушы және инклюзивті мектеп мәдениетін қалыптастыру, мұғалімдердің ынтымақтастығын арттыру және инклюзивті білім беру тәжірибесін табысты енгізуді қамтамасыз ету бойынша нақты әрекеттерін, бастамаларын және тәжірибелерін зерттейді. Сапалы кейс-стади әдісін қолдана отырып, деректерді жинау директормен, мұғаліммен, дефектологпен, ата-аналармен және психологпен жартылай құрылымдық сұхбатқа, сондай-ақ бір жарым ай ішінде жүргізілген бақылауларға және құжаттарды қарауға негізделген. Зерттеу нәтижелері инклюзивті мектеп ортасын қалыптастыруда жетекші рөл негізгі басшылыққа тиесілі екенін көрсетті. Егер негізгі қатысушылардың кез келгені көреген көшбасшылық, тиімді қарым-қатынас, ынтымақтастық және қолдау сияқты трансформациялық көшбасшылық дағдыларын көрсетсе, бұл инклюзивті тәжірибелерді сәтті енгізуге айтарлықтай әсер етеді. Бұған қоса, зерттеу мұғалімдер мен мектеп директорлары арасындағы ынтымақтастықтың, нақты байланыс арналарының және мұғалімдердің инклюзивті оқыту стратегияларын жақсарту үшін үздіксіз кәсіби даму мүмкіндіктерінің маңыздылығын көрсетеді.

Кілт сөздер: директорлық көшбасшылық, мектепті жетілдіру, инклюзивті білім беру, инклюзивті тәжірибе, педагогикалық ынтымақтастық.

Аннотация

Изучение Влияния Главного Руководства на Реализацию Инклюзивного Образования: Пример Одной Инклюзивной Школы в Южном Казахстане

В этом качественном тематическом исследовании изучаются основные стратегии руководства, используемые для поддержки совершенствования школ в ходе осуществления инклюзивного образования в Южно-Казахстанской инклюзивной школе. В исследовании рассматриваются конкретные действия, инициативы и практика директора школы, направленные на формирование благоприятной и инклюзивной школьной культуры, расширение сотрудничества учителей и обеспечение успешного внедрения практики инклюзивного образования. С использованием подхода, основанного на качественных тематических исследованиях, сбор данных осуществлялся на основе полуструктурированных интервью с директором, преподавателем, дефектологом, родителями и психологом, а также наблюдений, проводившихся в течение полутора месяцев, и анализа документов. Результаты исследования показали, что ведущая роль в формировании инклюзивной школьной среды принадлежит основному руководству. Если какой-либо из основных участников демонстрирует такие преобразующие лидерские качества, как дальновидное руководство, эффективная коммуникация, сотрудничество и поддержка, это существенно влияет на успешное внедрение инклюзивной практики. Кроме того, в исследовании подчеркивается важность сотрудничества между преподавателями и директорами школ, наличия четких каналов связи и постоянных возможностей для повышения квалификации учителей в целях совершенствования их инклюзивных стратегий обучения.

Ключевые слова: главное лидерство, совершенствование школы, инклюзивное образование, инклюзивные практики, педагогическое сотрудничество.

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(2016)13

Chapter 1. Introduction

Recently, Kazakhstan established a policy on inclusive education. By adjusting existing policies and introducing new ones, the country aims to make the educational system inclusive with the goal of having 70% of all schools enrolled by the end of 2025 (Makoelle, 2020). The most recent developments in Kazakhstan indicate that inclusive education is still associated with special needs students and, as a result, only sometimes accommodates all forms of diversity. According to Zholtayeva et al. (2013, as cited in Makoelle, 2020), inclusive education in the Kazakh context entails integrating all students with special needs into the classroom, placing a focus on the use of a variety of methodologies and learning resources, as well as having school staff choose from a variety of approaches to the learning process.

Several studies (e.g., Ainscow et al., 2004; Angelides, 2005; Carrington & Robinson, 2004) in inclusive education primarily concentrate on reforming schools as the focal point for promoting inclusivity. However, this body of literature raises inquiries concerning the significance of leadership, commonly referred to as 'inclusive leadership' by Ryan (2006). Research on inclusive policies and practices implies that inclusive leadership poses a distinct challenge. In line with Ryan's (2006) perspective, inclusive leadership involves collaborative procedures that broaden the scope of leadership to address matters such as teacher involvement, the presence of administrators at different organizational levels, and engagement with the school community. Therefore, this research aims to explore the following questions:

- What leadership practices does the principal employ to promote inclusive education within the school?
- What obstacles does the principal encounter while fostering and guiding inclusive education initiatives?
- How does the principal support school staff and educators in adopting inclusive education principles in their classrooms?

1.1 Topic and Background Information

In recent decades, inclusion has acquired global prominence as an educational concept to encourage equal access to education for everyone. Nonetheless, as Malinen et al. (2013) point out, various variables impact the meaning and execution of inclusion and the successful strategies for attaining education for all. These elements may be divided into policy and law, cultural and societal attitudes, and resources and infrastructure. The availability and strength of legislative frameworks mandating inclusive education is a critical element. For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) highlights the right of all individuals, including those with disabilities, to inclusive education (United Nations, 2006). Inclusion is shaped by the unique rules and guidelines established by national education ministries or bodies. These rules differ from country to country and can significantly influence inclusive behaviors (Ainscow, 2005).

Furthermore, societal acceptance and attitudes toward diversity and inclusion can significantly impact the effectiveness of inclusive education. Positive attitudes can help to create a welcoming atmosphere for all students, regardless of background or ability (Slee, 2011). Furthermore, educators' ideas and attitudes can encourage or impede inclusive approaches. Teachers ready to adjust their teaching approaches and open to variety are more likely to develop inclusive classrooms (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). The third and most crucial aspect is the availability of financing and resources for inclusive education. Adequate financing ensures that schools have the resources they need to satisfy the different requirements of their pupils (UNESCO, 2009). Teachers and support personnel must receive ongoing training and professional development to adopt effective inclusive practices (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

These variables are interrelated and can change dramatically among areas and educational systems. Effective inclusion necessitates a multifaceted strategy that considers all of these variables. Furthermore, the success of inclusive education is dependent on collaboration

among stakeholders, such as governments, educational institutions, teachers, families, and advocacy organizations, to provide a welcoming and equitable educational environment for all (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). According to UNESCO's (2009) guidelines, children's participation in the school community should be promoted, instruction should be adapted to each person, and universal design for learning principles should be considered. The handling of inclusive education differs depending on cultural background, showing that many difficulties learners encounter may be founded in prevalent attitudes and beliefs (Ainscow, 2005). The UNESCO guidelines (2009) provide the most complete account of the notion of inclusive education's global adoption, definition, and conditions for its implementation. One of the most contentious parts of inclusive education is the viewpoints of school principals and instructors on including kids with special needs in regular schools.

Based on existing research, an educator's or administrator's comprehension of disability, their personal encounters and experiences teaching individuals with disabilities significantly increase the likelihood of a person with a disability gaining access to and thriving in an inclusive educational environment (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Indeed, one of the most essential elements in predicting whether a school leader would actively cultivate an inclusive school atmosphere is his/her own expectations and interactions with persons with disabilities (Lynch, 2012).

Principals aiming to establish inclusive schools must not only be motivated but also possess the confidence and competence to lead inclusively (Rinehart, 2017). Successful inclusion hinges on administrators and the whole school displaying a positive attitude and commitment to inclusivity (Praisner, 2003). However, many principals' lack of formal training in special education make it difficult to understand and effectively implement inclusion, leading to difficulties in promoting inclusivity and improving academic outcomes for students with

disabilities in inclusive settings (Rinehart, 2017). As a result, school-based administrators frequently feel unprepared to lead inclusive schools (Billingsley et al., 2017, 2018; Patterson et al., 2000; Rinehart, 2017), lacking knowledge of how to support effective teaching for students with disabilities (Praisner, 2003) or comprehending the impact of disabilities on student progress (Roberts & Guerra, 2017). Given administrators' substantial effect on school settings, this lack of training creates a knowledge gap that causes issues for principals and, consequently, students with disabilities (Dotger & Coughlin, 2018). Additionally, better diagnosis and service for students with disabilities in inclusive settings, coupled with expectations for improved academic outcomes, underscores the need for principals to effectively lead inclusive schools and meet the specific needs of students with disabilities (DeMatthews, 2021).

According to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), inclusive education entails including all students in all educational settings and employing child-centered pedagogy to accommodate students with specific educational needs. This strategy encourages nondiscrimination and helps both the school community and society. Changes in thinking, creative teaching techniques, and professional development opportunities for educators are also advocated for in the proclamation. According to the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), inclusion is an educational concept requiring tremendous work and attention not only from principals and instructors but from the whole educational institution. They must be patient, sensitive to all kids' peculiarities, and devoted to supporting inclusive education. Inclusion's basic beliefs include recognizing all children as equally deserving and ensuring that they have equal access to education. However, more than simply a set of beliefs is required to guarantee that the concepts are properly applied and accepted by everybody.

The core values of inclusion involve recognizing all children as equally deserving and ensuring that they have the same opportunities to access education. Yet, it takes more than mere

beliefs to ensure effective implementation and universal acceptance of these ideas. Certain administrators successfully lead inclusive schools due to their inclusive consciousness, while others encounter challenges. Existing literature has identified effective leadership practices for achieving academic excellence (Hitt & Tucker, 2016), promoting inclusion of students with disabilities (Billingsley et al., 2014; Carrington & Robinson, 2004), and highlighting the benefits of effective inclusive schools for all students (Gandhi, 2007). However, disseminating this valuable information to its intended audience and its application in practice remains challenging. Many principals need more inclusive consciousness and determination to lead effective and inclusive schools (Cameron, 2016; Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Pazez & Cole, 2013, as cited in McMillan, 2020).

According to research, implementing leadership techniques that promote effective inclusive schools and viewing inclusion as a culture of belonging rather than simply physical integration leads to higher student results, enhanced teacher self-efficacy, and a good school culture. Nonetheless, a considerable study vacuum exists in understanding how principals acquire and show the inclusive consciousness that supports their leadership practices (Billingsley et al., 2014). More research is needed to investigate how principals' awareness and attitude toward inclusion impact their leadership in developing effective inclusive schools (Billingsley et al., 2014). Moreover, it is essential to examine why certain principals excel in leading effective inclusive schools despite lacking formal preparation (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Zaretsky, 2004).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Principals' roles have evolved from focusing only on general education children to achieving high goals and increasing academic achievements for all students, including students with disabilities. Academic standards for kids with disabilities were noticeably low prior to

policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in the United States. This legislation attempted to prioritize academic attainment for this demographic and promote educational fairness and opportunity. However, the drive to produce substantial academic achievements and inclusion objectives poses considerable hurdles for principals. Many educators struggle to balance incorporating children with disabilities in general education courses and meeting academic requirements.

Although inclusive education has been widely adopted in Kazakhstan, additional study on how school leaders actively promote inclusive practices within their educational institutions is required. This knowledge gap prevents school leaders from clearly grasping how inclusive education and leadership techniques may be effectively implemented to promote equal access to excellent education for all students, including those with disabilities.

1.3 Purpose Statement

This research seeks to study the actions of a school leader in Taldykorgan that promotes inclusive education. His views could provide insights into how the school administration, staff, teachers, and parents establish inclusive practices in the school contexts. This study will examine school leader's overall view and understanding of inclusion, specific strategies and the problems the school staff experiences while implementing inclusive education. The conclusions of this study might be helpful to other academics and researchers working on comparable themes. Identifying current issues with inclusive leadership may reduce challenges in implementing inclusive education and enhancing inclusive practices in Kazakhstani secondary schools. Furthermore, the findings have potential to contribute to the national and international literature on inclusive leadership. This, in turn, may aid in determining future measures to guarantee successful inclusion implementation and developing ways to build favorable attitudes among principals.

1.4 Research Questions

Due to minimal research done on principals in inclusive schools in South Kazakhstan, this study aims to fill this gap by answering the following research questions:

1. What leadership practices does the principal employ to promote inclusive education within the school?
2. What obstacles does the principal encounter while fostering and guiding inclusive education initiatives?
3. How does the principal support school staff and educators in wholeheartedly adopting inclusive education principles in their classrooms?

1.5 Definition of Terms

1. *Inclusive education*— According to UNESCO, inclusive education entails addressing the unique needs of all learners and providing equitable chances to study and engage in communities (UNESCO, 2009, p. 13). It necessitates a change from traditional education and toward a more flexible and responsive system that acknowledges and respects all learners' distinct identities and needs. UNESCO emphasizes inclusive education's need to achieve social cohesion, fairness, and long-term development.
2. *Special educational needs (SEN)* — Related to learning challenges or impairments requiring special educational services for a child or young person to attend school (Department of Education, 2015). Physical disabilities, sensory impairments, speech and language issues, emotional and behavioral illnesses, and specialized learning difficulties such as dyslexia and ADHD are all examples of SEN. Special educational needs provision entails adapting the curriculum, teaching techniques, and learning environments to match the particular requirements of each student, as well as providing additional assistance and resources as needed. The terms "SEN" and "disability" will be used interchangeably in this study.

3. *Inclusive leadership* — Facilitates the successful functioning of various work groups in ways that other leadership styles cannot adequately address. Based on optimal distinctiveness theory and social identity theory, inclusive leadership is defined as a set of leader behaviors aimed at helping group members feel like they belong (belongingness) and retain their sense of individuality (uniqueness) while contributing to group processes and outcomes (Randel et al., 2018).

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study underscores the significance of inclusive education as a crucial factor for school improvement, with school leaders playing a pivotal role in expanding learning opportunities for all students. The research holds importance in multiple ways: Firstly, it advances inclusive education in Kazakhstan by highlighting successful practices that can be adopted by other school leaders to foster more inclusive school cultures, resulting in better student outcomes. Secondly, the study identifies leadership skills and strategies that can facilitate the development of effective leadership practices, benefiting policymakers and school leaders seeking to enhance their leadership capabilities. Lastly, the research offers evidence-based recommendations to inform policy decisions to enhance inclusive education in Kazakhstan, promoting inclusive schools' growth and practical leadership approaches. Given the limited research on leaders' perspectives in this domain, the study substantially contributes to the existing literature on inclusive education.

1.7 Summary

The chapter addresses Kazakhstan's recent progress in establishing an inclusive education policy, with a goal of 70% school attendance by 2025, but it also highlights the continuous link of inclusivity with special needs pupils, which limits its larger impact. It emphasizes the critical role of inclusive leadership in fostering inclusive education while also providing research questions about leadership strategies, faced challenges, and educator support mechanisms. The chapter emphasizes the varied nature of inclusion, which is influenced by

policy, societal attitudes, and resource availability, as well as the importance of stakeholder engagement and cultural context. It addresses the problems faced by principals with no formal training in special education and tries to fill the gap in understanding their role in supporting inclusive education, presenting suggestions for expanding inclusive practices and improving outcomes for all students, including ones with disabilities. The subsequent chapter provides an in-depth examination of literature pertinent to the research topic and inquiry, focusing on the experiences of principals leading inclusive education initiatives in Kazakhstan.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The first chapter introduces the study's goal to investigate leadership in the context of inclusive education within one inclusive school in South Kazakhstan. In chapter two, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature is conducted. This literature review covers several aspects, including challenges related to the implementation of inclusive education from the perspectives of principals, teachers, parents, psychologists, and defectologists. Additionally, it focuses on aspects such as training and support, professional development, and infrastructure.

Inclusive education is an essential aspect of modern educational practices, striving to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. School principals play a pivotal role in creating and sustaining inclusive school environments. The first part of the literature review presents the theoretical framework, which outlines the theory of investigating school leadership in inclusive education. The second part examines existing research and scholarly articles that shed light on the principal's role in promoting inclusive education. It identifies critical strategies effective principals employ to encourage inclusion within their schools. Subsequent sections of the review discuss the roles and perspectives of teachers, parents, defectologists, and psychologists towards inclusive education, as all these stakeholders play essential roles within the school community.

2.1 Leadership Framework

Research on educational leadership has shown that school leaders significantly impact student success through the practices they implement. Several frameworks have been developed to identify effective leadership practices, but they differ in their focus areas. Hitt and Tucker (2016) synthesized existing research and proposed five core domains that school leaders should prioritize based on empirical evidence. These domains aim to provide a unified approach to leadership practices that encourage student achievement and other positive outcomes. Since this

study focuses on principal's practices, these five key dimensions serve as the leadership framework for analysis.

According to the research, five critical categories of effective leadership practices are displayed in Figure 1. These categories include communicating and promoting a clear vision (1), facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students (2), developing the professional capabilities of staff (3), establishing a supportive organization for learning (4) and building connections with external partners (5).

Figure 1

Five Essential Effective Leader Practices: A Unified Framework by Hitt and Tucker (2016)



Establishing and articulating a school's vision goes beyond mere direction-setting; it involves motivating educators to embrace the vision and remain committed to long-term objectives (Davies, 2004). Effective leaders grasp that advancing student success necessitates fostering community, collaboration, and shared decision-making, departing from hierarchical structures (Leithwood, 2021). They actively engage in discussions about the curriculum, utilizing

their comprehension of classroom challenges to drive alignment and enhancement (Davies, 2004).

Leaders must communicate the value of education to all stakeholders and address factors like support and well-being to optimize performance (Grayson & Alvarz, 2008). They prioritize professional growth for themselves and their staff, recognizing the importance of continuous learning (Davies, 2004). Additionally, leaders establish connections with the wider community, including parents and external contributors, to enrich the overall learning experience (Salfi, 2011). Forming meaningful partnerships with families and communities is pivotal for enhancing student achievement (Salfi, 2011).

The literature underscores the critical role of principal leadership in fostering inclusive educational environments for students with disabilities, highlighting the evolution of United States educational policies from segregated to inclusive practices (DeMatthews et al., 2020a). According to DeMatthews et al. (2020a), principals are pivotal in implementing these frameworks, requiring a multifaceted leadership approach that includes establishing a clear inclusive vision, fostering a supportive school culture, ensuring high-quality learning experiences, building professional capacity among staff, and engaging with external partners. Effective principals articulate and sustain a vision of inclusivity, manage curriculum adaptations, support differentiated instruction, and strategically allocate resources to support diverse learners. Moreover, they invest in professional development to equip teachers with necessary skills and foster a collaborative culture. However, challenges such as resistance within the school community, fluctuating policy support, and inadequate professional preparation can hinder the effective implementation of inclusive practices. Successful inclusive education leadership involves not only adhering to policies but also leading cultural shifts towards acceptance and support for diversity within the educational system (DeMatthews et al., 2020a).

2.2 Principal's Function in Promoting Inclusive Education

The success of inclusive education largely depends on the attitudes of school leaders, as they can either support or hinder the implementation of inclusive practices (Bai & Martin, 2015). School leaders' attitudes influence teachers and staff, and studies in various countries have shown that their knowledge and attitudes towards inclusion play a crucial role in determining the success of inclusive education (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Praisner, 2003).

According to Dorji et al. (2022), the study on inclusive education in Bhutan on attitudes of school leaders towards inclusion is marginally positive. There are strategic interventions that can strengthen and reinforce these attitudes, such as training and knowledge. School leaders need to gain the appropriate training and knowledge to effectively address the educational needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) in inclusive settings. Investing in professional learning for school leaders and providing pre-service and in-service teacher education programs that support inclusive practice could bolster their attitudes towards inclusion. Moreover, school leaders feel their schools need more resources to support inclusion (Dorji et al., 2022). Providing schools with adequate human and material resources will equip school leaders to effectively support inclusion and develop more favorable attitudes towards the inclusion of students with SEN. Furthermore, Dorji et al. (2022) state that there is a need for a national policy for inclusion and legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Bhutan. Establishing such policy and legal frameworks can support the inclusive education agenda, enhancing the confidence and positive attitudes of school leaders. Finally, the study reaffirms the benefits of inclusion for students with and without SEN. School leaders acknowledge the positive relationship between inclusive education and Gross National Happiness (GNH). This finding can be used to model and educate the public to further promote inclusive education in Bhutan.

Similarly, Ainscow and Sandill, (2010) argue that leadership practice plays a pivotal role in driving education systems towards embracing inclusive values and facilitating lasting and sustainable transformation. The literature highlights the critical role of school leaders in promoting inclusive education and fostering positive change. Leaders' attitudes and approaches are central to successful inclusion efforts, and their actions can either facilitate or hinder progress in embracing diverse learners. The challenge of student diversity necessitates a shift towards shared leadership and cooperative team building, where school leaders empower staff and create a common purpose around inclusive practices. Additionally, leaders need to strike a balance between concern for individuals and accountability to optimize student achievement. Professional learning and the disruption of traditional schooling paradigms are vital for educational leaders to promote inclusive practices effectively. School leaders must also focus on fostering new meanings about diversity, promoting inclusive practices within schools, and building connections between schools and communities. When combined with a commitment to equity and social justice, these efforts can lead to transformative developments in inclusive education (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

The results of the following case study by Hoppey and McLeskey (2013), where they investigate how one principal, Tom Smith, enacted his role in supporting school improvement during a period of high-stakes accountability, is another proof for the claim that principals play a significant role in implementing inclusion. Tom's leadership is guided by the metaphor of "lubricating the human machinery" to improve the lives of teachers and students, emphasizing nurturing, and caring for his staff while shielding them from external accountability pressures. His focus on building capacity and fostering a collective commitment to inclusive education, particularly for students with disabilities, is driven by his moral purpose of enhancing the lives of

teachers and students. Tom's leadership aligns with the qualities of effective inclusive schools and effective principal leadership for school change, as supported by previous research.

Tom's efforts to "lubricate the human machinery" through caring for teachers, buffering them from external pressure, and promoting their growth have fostered effective inclusive practices and helped teachers and students succeed amid high-stakes accountability. This study highlights the importance of school leaders focusing on building relationships with staff while addressing accountability by providing avenues for professional development in inclusive practices.

The research emphasizes the complexity of serving as a principal in the era of high-stakes accountability and the need for rigorous preparation to ensure principals have the knowledge and skills to drive school change and develop learning communities. Furthermore, the study underscores the principal's critical role in developing successful inclusive programs, carefully selecting, and providing high-quality principals, which are crucial priorities for school districts. With effective leadership, schools can meet the demands of accountability mandates and serve all students effectively.

According to Forlin (2013), the principal plays a crucial role in facilitating the success of inclusive education, and teachers and staff also play a vital part in its implementation and sustainability. It is essential to have well-trained teachers who can provide inclusive practices for students with diverse needs. However, the need for suitably qualified and trained teachers remains a significant concern in many regions, posing challenges for countries adopting inclusive education. Providing appropriate and practical training for teachers before and during the establishment of inclusive practices is crucial to ensure successful inclusion. Thus, teachers may play more critical roles in implementing inclusive education.

2.3 Teachers' Function in Promoting Inclusive Education

According to Ainscow (2007), teachers are critical in putting inclusive education into reality. Even though most teachers support the conceptual foundations of inclusive education, many are cautious and concerned about putting it into practice (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011; Moberg & Savolainen, 2003).

O'Rourke (2015) claimed that the existing status quo in inclusive education may remain for three reasons and gave reasoning for why these issues persist: For starters, classroom teachers who generally work with children who do not have disabilities may be hesitant to include students with disabilities together in their classes due to the challenges and problems that this entails. Second, if some problems associated with their inclusion are adequately handled, typical classroom instructors may feel more competent to manage the needs of children with disabilities. Finally, if the same difficulties persist, inclusive education may necessitate new ways or directions.

According to Forlin, Keen, and Barrett (2008), instructors suffer dual anxiety connected to their proficiency. They begin by questioning the adequacy of their pre-service training. Second, they believe that prioritizing kids with special needs over others in the classroom limits their ability to educate. According to a literature analysis by de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011), many instructors hold unfavorable or ambiguous opinions about inclusive education and do not consider themselves highly competent in educating students with special needs. As a result, instructors must increase their confidence and competence to instruct kids with various special needs (de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert, 2011).

According to Moberg and Savolainen (2003), instructors' views toward inclusive education differ depending on their students' impairment type. Teachers are more concerned about students with emotional and behavioral difficulties and intellectual disabilities than about

students with other types of disabilities. Teachers have shown increased willingness and readiness to incorporate students with physical impairments , specific learning problems, or sensory impairments in their classes.

Other characteristics, such as instructors' experience with inclusive education, impact teachers' views about inclusive education and the types of impairments. Teachers with more significant experience in inclusive education have more favorable opinions regarding it than those with less experience (Kalyva, Gojkovic, and Tsakiris, 2007). It is also vital to highlight that the level of experience is essential. Moberg and Savolainen (2003) discovered that instructors with favorable experiences with inclusive education had more positive views about inclusion than those with negative experiences. However, it is critical to note that teachers' ideas and attitudes have a crucial impact on the effectiveness and practice of inclusive education, as noted by Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012).

In the Kazakhstani context, Ponamareva's (2019) study revealed that teachers in Kazakhstan generally support the concept of inclusive education and recognize its significance for students with special needs. However, they lack confidence in their abilities to implement it effectively due to insufficient knowledge of the most appropriate teaching methods for students with special needs. Teachers are supportive of the concept but indicate a need for more institutional support, including training and resources, to address the diverse needs of their students effectively. They are willing to adapt to inclusive practices but require more guidance and support to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education in their classrooms (Ponamareva, 2019). This underscores a broader need for comprehensive support systems to empower teachers in this critical aspect of education. Therefore, understanding teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education is critical for building successful policies and practices in Kazakhstan. With this understanding, ensuring that all students, regardless of ability or position,

have equal access to education and can attain their full potential becomes simpler. However, the existing research deficit makes determining how to help teachers in inclusive classrooms problematic effectively.

2.4 Parents' Function in Promoting Inclusive Education

Parents play an important role in promoting inclusive education by acting as advocates, collaborators, and facilitators toward a more inclusive educational environment. Their involvement can substantially impact the success of inclusive practices and the overall acceptance of children with disabilities in school communities (de Boer et al., 2010). They advocate for legislation that addresses varied learning needs and ensures that schools are adequately equipped. Parents collaborate with educational institutions to provide insights that aid in the development of instructional methods and personalized programs for their children. They also promote inclusion by creating a welcoming home environment and educating about diversity, which applies to their children's social interactions at school. Furthermore, as mentioned in de Boer et al.'s study, parents demonstrate inclusive behaviors that influence community beliefs, and provide resources and volunteer time to support school activities. Parents' actions are critical to achieving the goal of inclusive education (de Boer et al., 2010).

Vlachou, Karadimou, and Koutsogeorgou (2016) conducted a detailed study on the perspectives of Greek parents of typically developing children about the inclusion of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SENDs) in mainstream classrooms. According to their findings, a significant number of parents did not comprehend the notion of 'inclusion' and frequently confused it with integration. Furthermore, these parents expressed a range of positive to neutral attitudes toward the inclusion of children with SENDs, conditioned by the belief that these children must be able to meet the school's existing academic and behavioral standards. The study emphasizes the need for more comprehensive knowledge and parental involvement in

inclusive education initiatives to develop a more favorable atmosphere for inclusion practices.

This study is critical for understanding the social dynamics that influence the implementation of inclusive education in various cultural contexts, emphasizing the importance of directed educational policies aimed at addressing concerns from parents and informational deficits (Vlachou et al., 2016).

The study by Hanssen and Erina (2021) investigates parental attitudes on inclusive education for children with special educational needs (SEN) in Russia, revealing a diverse and nuanced understanding.

First, the survey expresses parents' wish for a more tolerant and accommodating educational environment for their children with special needs. Many parents express great support for inclusive settings that not only integrate their children into mainstream schools but also provide individualized educational practices that address a variety of requirements. The emphasis is on social integration, which allows children with special needs to interact and study alongside their classmates who do not have disabilities, which is critical for their social development and mental well-being (Hanssen & Erina, 2021).

However, the study reveals considerable barriers to the implementation of a truly inclusive educational system. Parents are particularly concerned about a lack of teacher preparation and training in dealing with children with SEN. Many instructors are thought to be inadequately equipped to address the needs of SEN pupils, resulting in unsatisfactory teaching approaches that do not cater to individual learning needs. This gap in teacher education is viewed as a significant impediment to the successful implementation of inclusive education (Hanssen & Erina, 2021).

Furthermore, parental involvement is emphasized as a critical component in the success of inclusive education. The report adds that while parents are ready to engage with schools to

improve educational outcomes for their children, there is frequently a gap between their desired degree of involvement and the options available to them. Parents report feeling sidelined in educational decision-making processes, indicating the need for more open and effective communication and collaboration between parents and educational institutions (Hanssen & Erina, 2021).

Moreover, societal attitudes and Russia's larger cultural background impede the acceptability of inclusive education. According to the study, social resistance to change and deep-seated biases against people with disabilities can affect school rules and practices, resulting in division rather than true inclusion. This cultural hesitancy is reflected in the sluggish transition to inclusive practices inside schools and the educational system (Hanssen & Erina, 2021).

If we consider parents with typically developing children, Dukmak et al. (2023) conducted a study on the attitudes of parents of typically developing students toward inclusive education in the United Arab Emirates, which revealed some key insights. For starters, it shows a generally positive attitude among parents about the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream schools, implying a community-wide support for inclusion. Furthermore, the study reveals an unusual finding: parents without formal education have more positive attitudes toward inclusion than those with greater educational degrees. This shows that personal experiences and expectations of the educational system may differ greatly depending on educational background. Furthermore, the survey finds no significant differences in sentiments depending on gender, age, area of residence, or family size, demonstrating widespread acceptability of inclusive education among diverse demographic groups. These findings are critical for educational policy and practice because they demonstrate substantial community support for inclusive education and indicate to opportunities for future policy development and educational support systems.

In the context of Kazakhstan, Allan and Omarova's (2022) study found that parent activism has been a pivotal force in advocating for inclusive education, often leading to the establishment of specialized provisions like special classes or schools. While these initiatives may seem exclusionary, they mark progress for parents by ensuring their children have access to education. A significant aspect of parent activism involves shifting societal perceptions of disability, often through media campaigns (Allan & Omarova, 2022). Notably, organizations like Ashyk Alem have been particularly successful, advocating for legislative changes and representing the interests of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Parliament. However, concerns arise regarding the exclusion of children without ASD diagnoses from their advocacy efforts. Additionally, scholars caution against the risk of parent activists, often privileged in terms of class and race, inadvertently excluding others within disability organizations (Allan & Omarova, 2022).

Parents play an important role in promoting inclusive education since their attitudes and engagement have a substantial impact on its success. Their support for inclusive practices promotes a welcoming environment for all students. By pushing for inclusive settings and working with educational institutions, parents may assist in ensuring that inclusive education extends beyond simple integration. It becomes a profoundly fulfilling experience, increasing social acceptability and educational chances. Parents, as major partners in the educational environment, must be proactive in designing a system in which every child, regardless of ability, is recognized and given equal opportunity to develop.

2.5 Defectologists' Function in Promoting Inclusive Education

In the ever-changing world of inclusive education, the work of defectologists—special educators with expertise in addressing specific disabilities—is critical. Defectology, which has its roots in the Soviet educational system, emphasizes a holistic approach to the educational and

developmental requirements of disabled children. As countries such as Kazakhstan negotiate the challenging process of educational reform, defectologists are leading efforts to incorporate children with specific educational needs into regular classes. This transition not only requires defectologists to adjust their methodology but also to reframe their professional identities in the larger context of inclusiveness. They are tasked for both meeting the individual needs of children with disabilities and advocating for systemic changes that encourage inclusivity. This transition highlights a broader discussion about educational systems' ability to meet various learning demands and the critical role defectologists play in creating an environment in which every student can thrive. Their unique skill in integrating medical, psychological, and pedagogical views is critical for implementing effective inclusive practices that enable all children, particularly those with special educational needs, to reach their full potential.

According to Passeka and Somerton (2022), the primary job of special educators in Kazakhstan is to teach children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in their area of specialization. However, these educators understand the need to tackle environmental and cultural attitudinal hurdles that people with special needs experience. Kazakhstan's special educators see disability via a dialectical lens, considering biological and social causes. This deeper understanding enables them to advocate for a more inclusive educational approach, reducing barriers and encouraging educational reform. Despite their specialized positions, they see their work expanding beyond education to encompass advocacy and barrier elimination in social situations to better support inclusive education (Passeka & Somerton, 2022).

Abdulatif's research (2022) investigates the function of defectologists or special educators in inclusive settings in depth. The study found that defectologists play an important role in integrating students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) into mainstream educational environments. They work not only as educators but also as consultants to general

education instructors to improve the application of inclusive practices (Abdulatif, 2022). Despite differing interpretations of what inclusive education includes, defectologists often demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion. They are well-informed on inclusive education policy but encounter problems such as a lack of methodological support, competency concerns, and societal views that can hamper their success.

2.6 Summary

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive assessment of the literature on inclusive education, concentrating on the responsibilities and viewpoints of important stakeholders such as principals, teachers, parents, and defectologists. Principals' attitudes have a significant impact on the achievement of inclusion, with training and resource allocation playing critical roles in improving their support. Teachers confront problems such as inadequate training and prioritizing concerns, whilst parents play critical roles as advocates and collaborators, albeit with varying levels of awareness and engagement. Defectologists who specialize in addressing disabilities advocate for systemic improvements but face problems such as a lack of support. Overall, collaboration among stakeholders is critical for creating inclusive workplaces.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous section provided a comprehensive review of existing literature pertaining to the role of leaders and teachers in fostering inclusive practices and identified the need for further research in this area. In this chapter, we delve into the methodological aspects and procedures employed in the current study. The chapter is structured into several sections, including research design, sampling, data collection techniques, procedures, and ethical considerations. It affirms that the study is qualitative in nature, and the data collection tools chosen are interviews, observations, and policy analysis. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What leadership practices does the principal employ to promote inclusive education within the school?
2. What obstacles does the principal encounter while fostering and guiding inclusive education initiatives?
3. How does the principal support school staff and educators in adopting inclusive education principles in their classrooms?

3.2 Research Design and Rationale

In this study, the research design chosen aligns with the qualitative approach, which encompasses inductive methods to elicit meaning and gather descriptive data (Smith, 2015). As Stake (2010) emphasizes, qualitative research places significance on human values and lived experiences, making it well-suited for the current investigation that aims to delve into school leaders' perspectives on leadership in the context of inclusive education. Creswell and Poth (2016) further assert that the primary objective of qualitative research is to explore the inner world of a specific group, which aligns with the focus of this study.

The research methodology chosen for this study is phenomenology, which aims to

explore the meaning of lived human experiences and the significance of phenomena (Connelly, 2010; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Phenomenological research involves rigorously characterizing the perspectives of diverse participants on a specific phenomenon (Neubauer, 2019). This study focuses on understanding school leaders' practices toward inclusive education and the meanings they attribute to these practices based on their experiences and context.

Moreover, the research design also aligns with the case study. Yin (1984) defines a case study as investigating a specific occurrence within its real-life context. Similarly, Creswell (1998) describes a case study as an in-depth exploration of a bounded system involving extensive data collection. According to Creswell (1998), four key steps characterize a particular case: identifying the case, setting specific boundaries in terms of time or place, utilizing multiple data sources, and providing a detailed report of the content and setting. A case study is a rigorous examination of a particular individual or context, with its central focus being a distinguishing feature from other qualitative methods. The boundaries and parameters of a case study, as highlighted by Creswell (1998), prevent researchers from losing focus and determine which aspects of the research case will be studied and excluded.

3.3 Research Site

The research was conducted in one inclusive school located in Taldykorgan. The selection of this school was based on specific criteria: (1) the principal's prior knowledge of inclusive education, (2) the only school in the region that has inclusive policies and practices, and (3) the school's willingness to participate in the research.

The research selected six eligible and willing participants to take part in the study, including the principal, a teacher, school psychologist and defectologist, and parents of children with and without disabilities.

3.4 Sampling and Sampling Procedures

For the case study aimed at exploring the perspectives of one principal, three teachers, including a defectologist and a psychologist, as well as parents in an inclusive school, a purposive sampling method was utilized. Purposive sampling involves deliberately selecting participants based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives (Creswell, 2013). In this case, the researcher purposefully selects individuals who have direct experience and involvement in inclusive education, which includes one principal, three teachers, and two parents from the inclusive school.

This approach allows the researcher to gather in-depth insights from participants with relevant knowledge and experience with inclusive practices and policies within the school (Patton, 2002). By selecting individuals who are actively engaged in the inclusive education context, the study can provide a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives on the topic. The main reason for choosing this educational institution as a research site is its availability and convenience, particularly as there were previously held studies.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

Creswell (1998) explains that data generation methods refer to the techniques employed to collect data for empirical research. In case studies, it is common to utilize various sources of information to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation.

The semi-structured interviews were performed one-on-one and included open-ended questions, allowing participants to discuss their opinions freely. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), open-ended questions help collect accurate information on the study issue. They are a crucial component of qualitative research, which tries to comprehend participants' subjective experiences using their own words.

Furthermore, naturalistic observations of peer interactions and interactions between school

staff and students in real-life settings (including, such as, indoor and outdoor play settings, hallways and dining room) for one and a half months were conducted as one of the data collection methods. According to Morgan et al. (2017), observation methods offer the advantage of going beyond other techniques that primarily or exclusively rely on self-reported data. Observations involve watching and recording participants' behaviors, interactions, and activities in their natural settings (Creswell, 2013). By observing the participants within the school environment, the researcher can gain valuable insights into how inclusive practices are implemented and experienced on a day-to-day basis. Notes, field observations, and records were taken during the observation process to document the observed behaviors and interactions.

As a means of triangulation, the researcher used document analysis, as organizational and institutional documents have long been a fundamental component of qualitative research. In recent times, there has been a rise in research reports and journal articles that incorporate document analysis as a crucial part of their methodology (Bowen, 2009). The researcher aimed to enhance credibility through triangulation, which involves bringing together multiple sources of evidence (Eisner, 1991, p. 110). By analyzing data obtained through various methods, the researcher can validate findings across different datasets, thereby minimizing the influence of potential biases inherent in a single study. Therefore, the researcher studied documents such as, School Development Plan, school curricula, lesson plans, extra-curricular programs, internal rules, mission, and vision.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Before data collection began, specific steps had to be performed (Creswell, 2012). First, the NUGSE Ethical Review Committee provided ethics approval. Following that, the local City Educational Department, and the school principal authorized access to the research site. The researcher met with the principal to offer a thorough description of the study's objectives and asked for their support in conducting the interviews. Following Ethics Approval, data was

collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis Methods

The goal of data analysis in this study is to extensively explore the replies of inclusive school principals, teachers, and parents and assess their opinions and experiences with inclusive education. Data analysis in this case study of the inclusive school principal's perspectives follows a thematic analysis approach, as advocated by Clark and Braun (2013). Thematic analysis involves identifying and analyzing patterns in qualitative data to derive logical and sequential findings. To begin the analysis, the researcher transcribed the audio recordings of interviews with the participants, considering word emphasis, pauses, and incomplete sentences (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). The six steps of analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Creswell (2009), were applied:

Step 1: Become familiar with the data - the first step in qualitative analysis is to carefully read and re-read the transcripts, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the entire data corpus, which includes interviews and other relevant data. Taking notes and noting initial impressions during this stage can aid in subsequent analysis.

Step 2: Generate initial codes - during this stage, the researcher begins to arrange the data in a purposeful and structured manner.

Step 3: Search for themes - During the data analysis process, themes are identified based on patterns that are significant or interesting in relation to the research question. The significance of a theme is determined by its relevance to the data. In some cases, themes may emerge directly from the codes and are organized to form broader descriptive patterns. Some codes may be associated with multiple themes, and in such cases, a separate "miscellaneous" theme can be used to manage these codes.

Step 4: Review themes - In this stage, we critically assess, adjust, and refine the initial themes identified in Step 3. We carefully examine the data related to each theme to determine if

they are well-supported and truly align with the data.

Step 5: Define themes - This represents the ultimate fine-tuning of the themes with the goal of identifying the 'essence' of what each theme is about'. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92).

Step 6: Writing-up – analyzing and concluding data.

3.8 Ethical Concerns and Risks of Research

In the research plan, ethical considerations were given utmost importance to ensure the protection and well-being of the participants (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000). Before commencing the study, the necessary approvals were obtained from the relevant Ethics Committee, the Department of Education, and the school principal. In addition, informed consent was sought from the participants for interviews, and they were assured of the confidentiality and voluntary nature of their participation (Creswell, 2013).

To foster a comfortable and trusting environment for the participants, appointments and interview sessions were scheduled in advance to accommodate their availability. The research used pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity of the participants, and all data, including transcriptions, is stored securely to maintain strict confidentiality.

Throughout the interviews, the privacy of the participants was respected, and every effort was made to ensure that they felt at ease during the interviews. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcriptions to ensure their comfort with the information shared, and any modifications or deletions requested by them were accommodated. In addition, participants had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time if they desired to do so.

Regarding the observation method, the researcher decided to use non-participant observation which is a valuable research method that offers unique advantages to researchers across various fields. By observing behaviors in real-world settings without direct interference, researchers can capture naturalistic behaviors as they naturally occur, providing insights into the social, cultural, and environmental contexts in which behaviors manifest. This approach

minimizes the risk of participants altering their behavior due to researcher presence, thus yielding more genuine and unbiased data. Additionally, non-participant observation enables researchers to collect rich and detailed data, including verbal and non-verbal cues, environmental factors, and situational dynamics. It is particularly valuable for case study research, allowing for comparisons across interviews and different situational contexts. Moreover, non-participant observation is ethically preferable in situations where obtaining informed consent would be impractical as it is impossible due to the indefinite number of participants. Overall, non-participant observation provides researchers with a comprehensive understanding of phenomena under study, making it a valuable tool for advancing knowledge and addressing research questions (Cooper et al., 2004).

By adhering to ethical principles and maintaining a participant-centric approach, the research plan created a conducive and respectful environment for exploring the perspectives of the inclusive school's principal and teachers (Orb et al., 2000; Creswell, 2013).

3.9 Summary

The methodology chapter outlines the qualitative approach used to study inclusive education leadership. It employs interviews, observations, and policy analysis to address three research questions on leadership practices, obstacles faced by principals, and support for staff in adopting inclusive education principles. The research design aligns with qualitative methods, emphasizing human values and lived experiences. Phenomenology is employed to understand the meaning of lived experiences related to inclusive education practices. A case study approach focuses on a specific inclusive school in Taldykorgan, chosen based on criteria including prior knowledge in inclusive education and willingness to participate. Purposive sampling selects participants directly involved in inclusive education, including the principal, teachers, and parents. Data collection methods include semi-structured interviews, naturalistic observations,

and document analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Ethical considerations prioritize participant confidentiality and privacy. Thematic analysis guides data interpretation, involving familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining themes, and writing-up the analysis. Ethical concerns are addressed throughout the process to ensure participant well-being and comfort.

Chapter 4. Findings

This research focused on exploring the strategies utilized by a school leader to advance inclusive education in Taldykorgan school. The study aimed to examine the methods used by the principal and other stakeholders to cultivate inclusive practices within their specific environments. The chapter presents analyses of semi-structured interviews conducted with 6 participants: a school leader holding various leadership positions, teachers, a psychologist, a defectologist, and parents. It also includes observations and document analysis aiming to triangulate the data and discusses the study findings, categorized across the five dimensions of the theoretical framework by Hitt and Tucker (2016).

The research questions of this study were:

1. What leadership practices does the principal employ to promote inclusive education within the school?
2. What obstacles does the principal encounter while fostering and guiding inclusive education initiatives?
3. How does the principal support school staff and educators in wholeheartedly adopting inclusive education principles in their classrooms?

4.1 Research Setting

The study was conducted in an inclusive school in southeastern Kazakhstan, recognized among 30 schools nationwide for providing inclusive education.

The inclusive school under study has a rich history, originally established as a special education school two decades ago. However, a significant transformation occurred five years ago when it transitioned from a special school to an inclusive education institution. This transformation marked a fundamental shift in the school's approach to education, emphasizing inclusivity and catering to the diverse needs of all students, including those with disabilities. They receive

education either in regular classrooms or special classes within the same school, depending on disability severity. The school follows the state curriculum with no specific enrollment criteria. The transformation likely included a shift in the school's philosophy towards inclusivity, leading to a reevaluation of policies, practices, and curriculum. Unfortunately, the staff did not fully undergo professional development to implement inclusive practices effectively. Additional resources, such as hiring specialized staff and purchasing adaptive technology are only considered as part of the plan. However, recently, it underwent reconstruction to improve facilities for students with special needs. The school's transition from a special education setting to an inclusive one stemmed from misinterpreting the concept of inclusion. It is seen from the way the school staff explains the definition of inclusion.

Six participants were interviewed for this study, chosen through the purposive sampling method because they possess characteristics or experiences relevant to the research topic. Below is a table presenting pertinent background details of the participants, coded for ethical purposes and consistency throughout the chapters.

Participants have varying levels of experience, spanning from 10 to 18 years. All of them have been working there since the school switched from special to inclusive. A parent of a child with SEN (vision impairment) has a grade 7 student in the same grade who attends a typically developing child.

4.2 Analysis of Interview Responses, Observations and Document Analysis

After analyzing the interview transcripts, five main categories were identified, each containing themes. These categories were established using Hitt and Tucker's (2016) leadership principles as the framework for this study. Hitt and Tucker (2016) synthesized findings from three established leadership frameworks and 56 empirical studies to outline five overarching leadership domains: articulating and communicating the vision, facilitating high-quality learning

experiences for students, enhancing professional capacity, fostering a supportive organizational culture for learning, and collaborating with external partners. The "vision" theme involves communicating shared missions and visions among stakeholders and exhibiting desired behaviors by the organization's leader. The theme "vision" involves communicating shared missions and visions to stakeholders and exhibiting desired behaviors demonstrated by the organization's leader. The "professional capacity" topic involves providing learning opportunities and fostering a community of practices. The "supportive organizations" dimension pertains to leaders showing concern for members' well-being and promoting distributed leadership. The "learning experiences" dimension includes leaders actively participating in curriculum review and assessment. The "external partners" theme entails collaborating with parents and other external stakeholders to enrich learning experiences. These five fundamental categories were used to rationalize and structure codes developed during the analysis. The analysis findings are summarized in Table 1, presenting the results based on these categories and themes.

Table 1

Aligning Data Analysis Themes with Leadership Principles

#	Effective Leadership principles and themes
1	<p style="text-align: center;">Establishing and conveying the vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding inclusion • Influence of the principal • Co-planning • Emphasis on value-based learning
2	<p style="text-align: center;">Building professional capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training programs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent Professional Development seminars
3	<p style="text-align: center;">Creating a supportive organization for learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a supportive team • Students' voices
4	<p style="text-align: center;">Facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of special needs • NIS-Program and curriculum • Collaboration • Challenges
5	<p style="text-align: center;">Connecting with external partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular parent-teacher interactions • Parent involvement in events • Networking with schools

4.2.1 Establishing and Conveying the Vision

Recognizing how participants in this study understand the notion of “inclusion” is vital, as it offers valuable insights into their motivations and dedication to work in inclusive settings. Each participant was asked about their initial thoughts on what inclusion is and its profound impact on their lives.

The primary objective of the formal face-to-face interviews was to prompt participants to articulate their understanding of inclusion. In their responses, they shared their practices and experiences. A subject teacher described inclusive education as a model where all children, including those with special educational needs, learn together in the same classroom. As an observer, the researcher noticed that the answer sounded like a learned definition. Moreover,

while analysing documents, the school mission contained the same words and phrases as the teacher used to define the term.

Despite the challenges involved, the teachers, including the psychologist and the defectologist, maintain positive views towards inclusion. They recognize its importance in promoting rights and overall well-being for all students. The psychologist claimed, “Inclusive education aligns with the human rights movement, highlighting the significance of access and well-being within the classroom”. However, when the researcher asked follow-up questions to clarify the final thoughts about ‘inclusion’, the psychologist added that “everything seems to be good in theory or on papers only and that their school is only struggling to become truly inclusive”.

Parents of children with disabilities see education as a model where students with special needs (SEN) spend most of their school time alongside their typically developing peers. They view inclusion as an opportunity for their children to learn and grow together, promoting acceptance and understanding. Parent of a typically developing child shared that studying in inclusive environment makes their child more patient and empathetic, which is seen from the response:

I see how my child is becoming a person who is always ready to help in any situation. His stories about classmates with disabilities and the way he supports them inspire us as adults to be more tolerant and respectful. I am even considering my daughter to study in an inclusive classroom.

The positive attitudes from the answers are especially prevalent among typically developed children’s parents when it comes to including students with disabilities. They believe that inclusion can develop academic performance, provide students with opportunities for independence enable them to make friends and facilitate learning from their typically developing

peers. Therefore, having typically developing children as role models positively influences students with SEN.

Similarly, the principal shared his experience in inclusive education sphere. He has been teaching children in special school for 15 years. However, the school has now transitioned from special education to an inclusive education approach. Principal mentioned that at the beginning, he was skeptical about the inclusion. After some seminars and workshops on inclusive education, he was convinced and dedicated to promoting inclusion. In one of principal's answers, he emphasized the importance and role of a principal in creating a positive atmosphere while implementing an inclusive school community. Principal is aware of distributive leadership and claims his response to individual needs could be a positive example for other school members. He stated that being an inclusive setting leader requires considering various factors, such as race, gender, language, family income, disability, and interests. However, from the defectologists answer, I noticed that sometimes the leadership style can be far from what the principal named 'distribute' and that, in most cases, the leadership style is 'top-down'.

Observing principal in various situations led to the belief that he is highly motivated not only to advocate inclusive education strategies among school staff but also to serve as a role model for the entire school community. This also aligns with the School Development Plan for a year, which contains educational and extra-curricular events on raising and celebrating diversity. Furthermore, in his interview, the principal discussed:

I never thought I would be the first principal to work at an inclusive school. I was confident that children with any kind of disabilities should be separated since I managed the special education school before. Nevertheless, time passed, and after all my studies and insights I realized that I was wrong for most of my life. I decided to start from myself. If I believe in the bright future of inclusive education, I should control my actions

and even the language I use. I need to work hard to successfully lead my staff.

The fact that the school was recognized as special education institution for many years was evident from the conversations with support staff members who appeared to lack understanding the concept of inclusion. Through casual conversations with them, the researcher discovered that, for them, nothing has changed.

Participants underscored the significance of co-planning as a formal strategy for establishing a unified vision and mission. This method entails collective deliberations where the perspectives of teachers, tutors, parents, and students are valued during policy development. For instance, defectologist stressed the importance of collaborative decision-making, recommending policies to be crafted collectively despite leadership appointments to ensure diverse viewpoints are considered. Moreover, the principal and the teacher highlighted the importance of collaborative discussions in assessing student needs and crafting policies like the Inclusive Policy. They described how such policies were developed through multiple meetings involving teachers. Additionally, participants such as the teacher and the psychologist mentioned using digital platforms like One Drive to collaborate on official documents such as the Inclusion Policy and students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), which could later be shared with parents.

When addressing the dissemination of the vision to the entire school community, the principal and the defectologist cited their desire to engage in a project aimed at introducing value-based learning across state schools in Kazakhstan. The principal clarified:

Value-based learning is an educational approach that integrates the teaching of values, ethics, and moral principles alongside academic content. It aims to develop students' character, integrity, and social responsibility, fostering critical thinking about ethical dilemmas and promoting empathy and respect for diversity. This approach empowers

students to make ethical decisions and contribute positively to their communities.

Since the project is new and was not tested, the school psychologist explains that they emphasize moral values in the school community. These values can be seen through numerous activities, lessons, discussions, and meetings.

4.2.2 Building Professional Capacity

The principal highlighted the organization of training sessions conducted by external experts and partner schools to improve teachers' competencies in inclusive education. The principal particularly emphasized that their school is piloted by one inclusive school from Almaty. This academic year, one seminar was held by expert teachers from there. The seminar lasted the whole day. Having attended the following seminar led by an inclusive education expert from Almaty, a teacher details the experience as follows:

Of course, these types of seminars are important for teachers. We were discussing the general understanding of inclusive education. I gained a lot from this seminar, although I thought I understand everything. One thing I would like to mention is that it lacked practical activities. Yes, I understand what inclusion is now, but what should I do with 5 students with vision impairments in my classroom? How is it possible for me to help them without doing harm for others?

Furthermore, the teacher added that when addressing these questions to school leaders, they kindly recommend taking online courses independently and that the school cannot support them financially, as it has more crucial problems, such as new furniture and repair work. Having looked at the School's Methodological Plan for a year, where all educational seminars are included, the researcher noticed the shortage of events regarding the development of inclusive practices. According to the program, there are two seminars in two terms only. This issue was

explained by the principal as follow:

The region we live in lacks professionals in the sphere of inclusive education. Once, I tried to organize a meeting with an expert in defectology from Almaty. I even spent my own budget. How was I surprised when she came and started convincing teachers that inclusive education does not have a future in our country, especially in a small town like ours. Of course, the teaching staff partially agreed with her. After that, it took me almost two months to motivate teachers again and to believe in success of inclusion.

During observations, the researcher noticed that defectologist was doing a great job. The defectologist works beyond her responsibilities, trying to assist not only students but also teachers and parents. Teacher also highlighted defectologist's efforts in guiding for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

4.2.3 Creating a Supportive Organization for Learning

Concerning building a supportive environment at school, all participants were asked to evaluate this process and identify their level of satisfaction. Most of the answers were positive, indicating that a school leader plays an important role in creating supportive conditions. As the principal states:

I try to prioritize building a supportive team through cultivating a culture of collaboration among staff, providing ongoing professional development focused on inclusive teaching practices, prioritizing staff well-being with initiatives like wellness programs, encouraging staff through distributed leadership, and promoting student voice in decision-making processes.

In the effort to cultivate a supportive culture within the school, the principal and the defectologist highlighted the need for an Inclusive support team with specialized roles. As it is planned by the principal, this team will be known as the Psychological and Pedagogical Support

(PPS) team. It is proposed to comprise key professionals such as an inclusive coordinator, a psychologist, a speech therapist, teachers, and occasionally parents. The structured collaboration within the PPS team will systematically identify students' unique needs and strategically devise Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) designed to support their educational journey. Based on observations, the researcher may conclude that the creation of PPS school experiences highlights shortage of motivated specialists. This is also evident in school statistics, which show that merely every subject needs at least one more vacant teacher.

In this regard, parents pointed out that general education teachers must take class tutoring, serving as curators. Unfortunately, it doubles their work making it challenging to manage their subject lessons along with organizing or managing the whole class. Parents of a SEN child concerns:

Our class tutor is a teacher of Maths. If I am not mistaken, she has about 32 lessons a week, which is, on average, 6-7 lessons a day. I always wonder how it is possible for her to support my child throughout the day if she is responsible for holding lessons.

Moreover, I am aware of the process of preparing for the lessons and how much time it requires. In such situations, I would like to have a similar structure as NIS does, where the curators are capable of versatile support for the students.

As it is seen from the responses, the school is actively raising the question of strengthening support. However, psychologist stated that support should be provided not only for students but also for the school teaching team and parents too. So the result could be more effective and visible.

Accordingly, the defectologist recommended to include a representative from the students to PPS to have their voices heard. Observations revealed that there is an anonymous box on the first floor of the school. It shows that students are free to write their ideas, advice, or

complaints there. However, the psychologist, in his interview, mentioned that sometimes the paper in the box remains untouched and there is a necessity to consider the efficacy of this project. Similarly, a teacher shared the information about Harmony Club, that was created in collaboration with high school students and a school psychologist. Unfortunately, the researcher did not witness any meetings of the abovementioned club in real life. Though, the Extracurricular Plan included these meetings to be held once a week.

4.2.4 Facilitating a High-Quality Learning Experience for Students

When asked about ensuring effective learning experiences, participants underscored the importance of acknowledging students' individual needs. The principal, teacher, and defectologist noted that some students arrive with medical certificates from PMPC centers, which are valuable resources for the teachers, the defectologist, and the psychologist as they offer appropriate guidelines and methodologies. However, the principal mentioned that not all students with special needs have such documentation, indicating the presence of “invisible diagnoses”.

When certificates are unavailable, special needs are often identified through observations of academic struggles, prompting discussions among teachers and curators to determine necessary interventions. However, the effectiveness of this method remains uncertain. Defectologist and a parent of a child with disabilities emphasized the importance of early intervention and assessments prior to the academic year.

Interview analysis revealed various types of special needs in schools, including at-risk students, gifted/talented students, and those with various barriers. Teacher highlighted that the number of SEN students per class is 5 on average if there are 28 students in general. It is said that:

We are challenged to diagnose some students with special needs. Sometimes, the absence

of a certificate from PMPC may be evident through the student's academic performance.

You may understand that if the student is underachieving, we need to exclude the possibility of a certain difficulty. That is why we start working with parents, eliminating any factors that can be defined as disability.

Teacher and psychologist shared their strategies for supporting gifted students. Teacher noted that although gifted students often move to selective schools, such as NIS or lyceums for gifted pupils, the school endeavors to offer them high-quality education by implementing NIS-Program. In this regard, a parent of a child with SEN is concerned about the focus of the lesson. He says:

I understand that for teachers, it is easier to work with gifted students. I worry that my child will stay behind the curriculum, as the NIS-Program is designed for more able students. For example, my child is required to have extra lessons after all classes just because he did not cover the lesson objectives. All is well, but the diagnosis of my child requires more physical activities. It is prescribed by the specialist and is highly recommended to follow.

The document analysis proves that there is an order to adapt the NIS-Program in curricula. The principal is also worried about this issue. He is considering writing a complaint letter to the Education Department asking for help in solving this overarching issue.

In conversations regarding student learning experiences, almost all participants emphasized the critical role of collaboration. Whether it was conducting assessments (teacher), crafting and executing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) (principal), conducting annual curriculum programs (principal), or facilitating therapy sessions for students, parents, and teachers (defectologist), collaborative efforts among school members were consistently emphasized. The collaborative approach ensures that the entire school community works

together to create an inclusive and accommodating atmosphere conducive to the universal development of all students.

Alongside the practices listed above, almost all the participants mentioned challenges that have a great impact on the whole process of inclusion. Teachers have some concerns about parents' neutral attitudes. Different types of disabilities can lead to varying attitudes. When it comes to disorders or mental disabilities, parents tend to have a neutral stance. Concerns may arise specifically regarding the students facing mental and physical challenges. Teachers encounter challenges in education settings. These challenges include managing diverse student needs in the classroom, adapting the curriculum to cater to learning styles and providing support and attention. The teacher discussed that:

The school management team, following the Development plan, observed the lessons in order to analyze the teaching process the last time I was given a recommendation to use differentiation method. As a response for that I asked if the school could provide SEN students with necessary equipment. For example, one of my students has vision impairment, she hardly sees 10% of the whole picture, she says that everything is blurred. I tried to raise this matter from the parent's side as well, but because they are defined as a low-income family, where father has alcohol addiction, there is a lack of budget to provide the child with extra equipment. I even contacted the local volunteering center addressing this issue. I am still waiting for their response.

These challenges can influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Interestingly parents also perceive no differences in resources between their inclusive classes and regular school classes. This may suggest that resource allocation is a concern of the setting.

Another obstacle which is connected to previous one is parents' readiness to support inclusion. The School Development Plan has a big part related to work with parents. Analyzing

the document made me think that working with parents is done properly at this school. However, principal truly states that this part of their plan is one of the most challenging. Principal also informs that parents usually skip the meetings, justifying themselves with different reasons. Their teachers designed a new model of parental meetings, where every parent can talk to any subject teacher. This project worked successfully only the first two terms. Afterwards, aiming to strengthen the teacher - children – parent relationships, “Morning exercises” were integrated during the week. The activity was popular among students. However, parents’ concerns were that there was a need to wake up and come to school earlier, which was a problem for them. While having natural observations, the researcher witnessed one of these activities in the morning. The atmosphere was positive, and everybody danced or exercised. Some parents participated, devoting at least five minutes to entertaining their children. When the researcher asked one of the students who was standing still about the reason for not being active, he replied:

I think the idea is great, but we need some time to get used for it. I would also change some songs if they asked me. Sometimes I even ignore this activity as it requires a big effort from me to repeat the movements, not because I cannot do that, but it is too quick for me.

Other observations showed that teachers were not engaged in this activity. This may mean that they are lack some extra time, so even if they desire to support students during dancing time, they need to be prepared for the next lesson or simply have breakfast.

4.2.5 Connecting with External Partners

The principal added that school enhances their students’ learning experiences by actively engaging with external partners through various avenues. This includes hosting regular parent meetings, as stated earlier, providing opportunities for parents to participate in school events, and fostering connections with other schools. These collaborative efforts aim to promote open

communication between school staff and parents, ensuring a supportive environment for students' growth and development. Additionally, the teacher highlighted the importance of networking with other educational institutions that facilitate the exchange of valuable resources, expertise, and best practices in inclusive education, ultimately enriching the school community's collective efforts towards fostering inclusivity and diversity. These strategies underscore the school's commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and supported. The psychologist suggested the idea to recommend parents of children with disabilities to be informed about different inclusive programs held in Almaty, as the schools they are piloted by are always open to help any child. Perhaps, NGOs could also support these children and parents. Defectologist, in her interview, suggested that in addition to the previously mentioned strategies, the school can further enhance their engagement with external partners by collaborating with local businesses and organizations. This kind of partnership may open doors for students to gain real-world experiences, internships, and vocational training tailored to their interests and abilities. Moreover, involving community members as guest speakers or mentors can broaden students' perspectives, expose them to diverse career pathways, and promote empathy and inclusivity. Principal has also mentioned that participating in community service projects would empower students to contribute positively to their communities, strengthening social responsibility and connections with individuals from various backgrounds. Lastly, parents of typically developing child added that seeking funding and grants from charitable institutions or government agencies can support inclusive initiatives, providing resources, programs, and professional development opportunities for staff to promote the school's commitment to inclusivity further. These collaborative efforts highlight the school's dedication to creating an inclusive learning environment that nurtures the universal development of all students. In this regard, the researcher felt that the interviewees mostly referred to future improvements.

However, the present situation remains full of difficulties.

4.3 Additional Aspects

In the realm of inclusive education, language can present a notable hurdle, particularly because many people may not be well-versed in appropriate terminology. For example, the teacher, while the interview, used outdated terms like “handicapped”, “mentally retarded”, “invalid student”, which are now viewed as offensive. Moreover, when discussing the positive sides of inclusive education, parents used the words: “Comparing to my child who is “normal” ... Yet, the researcher found that not everyone is informed about these preferred expressions, resulting in the inadvertent use of outdated or insensitive language. This unawareness can impede effective communication and undermine efforts to promote an inclusive atmosphere.

In addition, the principal wished that early introduction to inclusive education principles and practices during bachelor's degree programs would influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding diversity and inclusion. Principal: “When aspiring teachers encounter inclusive education concepts at the beginning of their careers, they are more inclined to adopt inclusive teaching methods and champion the rights of every student as they progress in their professional path.”

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the strategies employed by a school leader to promote inclusive education in a Taldykorgan school, drawing from interviews with six participants, including the school leader, teachers, psychologists, defectologists, and parents, alongside observations and document analysis. The research explored leadership practices, obstacles encountered, support mechanisms, and overall experiences in promoting inclusive education. Participants varied in experience, with roles ranging from principal to teachers and parents of children with and without special educational needs (SEN). Analysis revealed five main categories aligned with

effective leadership principles: establishing the vision, building professional capacity, creating a supportive organization, facilitating learning experiences, and connecting with external partners.

Under establishing the vision, participants emphasized the importance of co-planning and collaboration in crafting a unified vision and mission and building professional capacity involved organizing training sessions and professional development seminars despite challenges such as resource constraints and a lack of specialized training. Creating a supportive organization emphasized fostering collaboration and student voice, with challenges including workload issues and limited resources. Facilitating learning experiences focused on identifying special needs and curriculum adaptation while connecting with external partners involved and engaging with parents, other schools, and organizations to enrich learning experiences.

Additional aspects highlighted challenges in language use and the need for early exposure to inclusive education principles in teacher education programs. Overall, the findings underscored the multifaceted nature of advancing inclusive education, with a focus on collaborative leadership, professional development, supportive environments, high-quality learning experiences, and external partnerships while identifying challenges such as resource constraints, workload issues, and language barriers that indicate areas for improvement.

Chapter 5. Discussion

This chapter offers a comprehensive review and discourse on the discoveries narrated in the prior chapter. It seeks to address the research questions concerning how leaders promote inclusive education, the challenges they confront, and how they aid staff in this pursuit. Guided by Hitt and Tucker's (2016) analysis of effective leadership dimensions as a conceptual framework, the data are analyzed and interpreted across the research questions. The chapter culminates with an outline of the importance of this study within the wider body of literature on school leadership and inclusive education, presenting reflections on the practical issues and contributions of the research outcomes.

5.1 RQ1. Principal's Inclusive Leadership Practices

The first thing the researcher wanted to examine was what schools are doing to be more inclusive. The data analysis, incorporating interviews, observation notes and document analysis, yielded significant findings that aligned with Hitt and Tucker's (2016) leadership framework. This included establishing a shared vision, building professional capacity, creating a supportive environment, facilitating high-quality learning, and connecting with external partners.

5.1.1 *Establishing and Conveying the Vision*

The findings from the study shed light on the perceptions and experiences of various stakeholders involved in the transition to inclusive education in the Taldykorgan school. This discussion chapter will examine the implications of these findings in relation to existing literature on establishing and conveying the vision of inclusion, collaborative decision-making, and value-based learning.

The study revealed that participants had varied understandings of inclusion, ranging from a mere coexistence of students with and without disabilities in the same classroom to a broader commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and belonging. This finding aligns with the

literature on inclusive education, which emphasizes the importance of clarifying and operationalizing the concept of inclusion within the school community (Florian, 2014). While some participants demonstrated a surface-level understanding of inclusion, others articulated a more nuanced perspective that encompassed the social, emotional, and academic dimensions of inclusive education.

The diverse understandings of inclusion among stakeholders highlight the need for ongoing dialogue and professional development to foster a shared vision of inclusion within the school community. As noted by Florian (2015), effective implementation of inclusive education requires not only a clear understanding of its principles but also a commitment to addressing the diverse needs and experiences of all students. Therefore, school leaders must prioritize communication, collaboration, and capacity-building initiatives to ensure that all stakeholders are equipped to contribute meaningfully to the inclusive education process.

Participants emphasized the importance of collaborative decision-making processes in establishing a unified vision and mission for inclusive education. This approach aligns with research highlighting the benefits of inclusive leadership practices that promote shared decision-making, distributed leadership, and participatory governance (Harris & Muijs, 2004). By involving teachers, parents, students, and support staff in policy development and planning, schools can leverage diverse perspectives and expertise to create more responsive and inclusive learning environments.

The emphasis on co-planning and collaborative decision-making underscores the need for schools to adopt inclusive leadership practices that prioritize transparency, trust, and collective ownership of goals and objectives (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). School leaders should create structures and processes that facilitate meaningful participation and engagement from all stakeholders, including regular meetings, feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for shared decision-making. By fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusivity, schools can build

consensus around shared values and goals, leading to more effective implementation of inclusive education initiatives.

Participants expressed a commitment to promoting value-based learning as part of their efforts to disseminate the vision of inclusion within the school community. This approach aligns with research emphasizing the importance of holistic education that integrates academic content with ethical, social, and emotional learning (Noddings, 2005). By explicitly teaching values, ethics, and moral principles alongside academic content, schools can cultivate students' character, integrity, and social responsibility, fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and inclusivity.

The integration of value-based learning into the school curriculum requires intentional planning, professional development, and collaboration among educators, administrators, and community stakeholders (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Schools should prioritize the development of comprehensive values education programs that address the needs and experiences of diverse student populations. This could involve curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and extracurricular activities that promote critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and civic engagement. By embedding values education into the fabric of the school community, schools can nurture students' moral development and contribute to the creation of more inclusive and equitable societies.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the significance of a clear vision, collaborative decision-making, and value-based learning in fostering inclusive education. By promoting understanding, involving stakeholders, and integrating values into the curriculum, schools can create equitable and supportive environments. Yet, successful implementation demands ongoing commitment and collaboration. Through strategic leadership and collective action, schools can drive positive change and advocate for inclusive education.

5.1.2 Building Professional Capacity

The experiences described by the teachers and principal in the context of organizing training sessions and encountering challenges in implementing inclusive education initiatives reflect common themes found in the literature.

Firstly, the importance of professional development for educators in inclusive education cannot be overstated. Research suggests that providing teachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to effectively support diverse learners is essential for the success of inclusive practices (Forlin, 2013). Training sessions, such as the seminars organized by external experts and partner schools, offer valuable opportunities for teachers to enhance their competencies in inclusive education (Soodak & Podell, 1996). However, as highlighted by the teacher's experience, the effectiveness of these sessions may be limited if they lack practical activities and fail to address specific challenges faced by educators in their classrooms (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Furthermore, the findings illustrate the financial constraints and resource limitations that schools often face when attempting to implement inclusive education initiatives. While professional development opportunities are crucial for supporting teachers in their efforts to create inclusive learning environments, inadequate funding may hinder schools' ability to provide comprehensive training and support (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). As evidenced by the principal's struggle to secure resources for training sessions and the scarcity of events in the School's Methodological Plan, financial constraints can pose significant barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive education practices (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

Moreover, the resistance and skepticism encountered by the principal from external experts highlight the challenges of promoting inclusive education in contexts where there may be limited understanding or acceptance of its principles. Research indicates that resistance to

inclusive education can stem from various factors, including misconceptions about the capabilities of students with disabilities, concerns about increased workload for teachers, and fear of negative consequences for typically developing students (Ainscow et al., 2012).

Overcoming such resistance requires strong leadership, effective communication, and ongoing efforts to promote understanding and buy-in from all stakeholders (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

On a positive note, the efforts of the defectologist in providing support and guidance for the successful implementation of inclusive education demonstrate the importance of dedicated professionals in fostering inclusive practices within schools. Research suggests that the role of support staff, such as defectologists, can be instrumental in promoting collaboration, addressing individual student needs, and building inclusive school communities (Ruijs et al., 2010).

5.1.3 Creating a Supportive Organization for Learning

The efforts described by the principal and defectologist in creating a supportive organizational structure within the school align with existing literature on the importance of fostering a positive school climate and providing comprehensive support for all stakeholders involved in the educational process.

Firstly, the emphasis on building a supportive team culture through collaboration and ongoing professional development resonates with research highlighting the role of school leaders in shaping the organizational climate (Leithwood et al., 2006). Studies have shown that principals who prioritize collaboration, provide opportunities for professional growth, and promote staff well-being contribute to the development of a positive and supportive work environment (Louis et al., 2010).

Additionally, the proposal to establish a Psychological and Pedagogical Support (PPS) team reflects best practices in inclusive education, which emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary teams in meeting the diverse needs of students. Research suggests that

collaborative teams comprising professionals with diverse expertise, such as psychologists, speech therapists, and teachers, can effectively identify and address individual student needs through personalized support plans (Friend & Bursuck, 2012).

However, the challenges highlighted by parents regarding the workload and capacity of general education teachers to provide comprehensive support raise important considerations. While it is essential for teachers to serve as mentors and advocates for their students, the added responsibilities of class tutoring may strain their capacity to effectively fulfill their teaching duties (Farmer-Hinton & Schiller, 2017). This challenge underscores the need for adequate staffing and resource allocation to ensure that teachers have the support they need to meet the diverse needs of their students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the recommendation to include student representatives in the PPS team and provide opportunities for student voice and feedback aligns with research emphasizing the importance of student involvement in decision-making processes (Cook-Sather, 2006). Studies have shown that empowering students to participate in school governance and decision-making can foster a sense of ownership and belonging, leading to improved academic and social outcomes (Mitra & Gross, 2009).

However, the concerns raised by the psychologist regarding the efficacy of existing student feedback mechanisms, such as the anonymous suggestion box, highlight the importance of critically evaluating the effectiveness of such initiatives. While providing avenues for student input is essential, it is equally important to ensure that these mechanisms are meaningful and accessible to all students and that their feedback is considered in decision-making processes (Hart, 1992).

5.1.4 Facilitating a High-Quality Learning Experience for Students

The emphasis on acknowledging and addressing students' individual needs highlighted by the participants aligns with research emphasizing the importance of personalized and

inclusive education practices (Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 2005). By recognizing the diverse needs of students, schools can better tailor their support and interventions to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities for all learners.

The reliance on medical certificates from PMPC centers to guide interventions for students with special needs is consistent with existing literature advocating for a multidisciplinary approach to assessment and support. Medical certificates provide valuable insights into students' conditions and offer guidelines for educators and support staff to effectively meet their needs (McLeskey & Waldron, 2011). However, the recognition of "invisible diagnoses" highlights the need for schools to adopt proactive strategies for identifying and supporting students who may not have formal documentation of their special needs.

The concerns raised by teachers and parents regarding the adequacy of support for students with special needs resonate with research highlighting the importance of early intervention and comprehensive assessments in addressing learning difficulties (Al Otaiba & Hosp, 2004). Studies have shown that early identification and targeted interventions can significantly improve academic outcomes for students with special needs. However, the challenges associated with diagnosing and supporting students without formal documentation underscore the need for schools to implement robust assessment and intervention protocols (Shinn, 2007).

The efforts to support gifted students through the implementation of specialized programs, such as the NIS-Program, align with research emphasizing the importance of catering to the unique learning needs of high-achieving students (Renzulli & Reis, 2018). However, the concerns raised by parents regarding the focus of the curriculum and the need for more personalized support highlight the tension between providing challenging academic experiences and ensuring equitable access to learning for all students (VanTassel-Baska, 2008). Schools must strike a balance between supporting gifted students and providing inclusive learning

environments that meet the needs of all learners (Ford et al., 2018).

The challenges faced by teachers in managing diverse student needs and adapting the curriculum to cater to individual learning styles reflect broader systemic issues related to resource allocation and support for inclusive education. While collaborative efforts among school members are essential for creating inclusive learning environments, addressing systemic challenges requires comprehensive policy changes and resource allocation strategies (Harry & Klingner, 2007).

The obstacles related to parental engagement and support for inclusion highlight the importance of building strong partnerships between schools and families (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). While efforts to involve parents in school activities and decision-making processes are commendable, addressing barriers to participation, such as scheduling conflicts and communication gaps, requires ongoing collaboration and dialogue (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

5.1.5 Connecting with External Partners

The emphasis on building connections with external partners to enhance students' learning experiences aligns with research highlighting the importance of community engagement in promoting inclusive education. By collaborating with parents, other schools, NGOs, and local businesses, schools can leverage external resources and expertise to create more supportive and inclusive learning environments (Harry & Klingner, 2007).

The suggestion to recommend parents of children with disabilities to participate in inclusive programs held in Almaty reflects a proactive approach to supporting families and connecting them with valuable resources (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Research suggests that parental involvement in school activities and programs is associated with improved academic outcomes and greater school satisfaction among students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

The proposal to collaborate with local businesses and organizations to provide real-

world experiences, internships, and vocational training aligns with research highlighting the importance of preparing students for life beyond the classroom. By offering opportunities for hands-on learning and exposure to diverse career pathways, schools can better equip students with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in the workforce (Nash, 2015).

Involving community members as guest speakers or mentors can enrich students' learning experiences by providing them with diverse perspectives and role models. Research suggests that mentorship programs can positively impact students' academic motivation, self-esteem, and career aspirations (DuBois et al., 2002).

Participating in community service projects can foster students' sense of social responsibility and civic engagement, while also strengthening connections with individuals from diverse backgrounds. By engaging in meaningful service activities, students can develop empathy, compassion, and a deeper understanding of social issues (Rosenberger, 2014).

However, while the proposed strategies demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive learning environment, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges and limitations associated with implementing these initiatives. Research suggests that securing funding and resources for inclusive programs can be challenging, particularly for schools serving disadvantaged communities (Guralnick, 2005). Additionally, coordinating partnerships with external organizations and businesses requires time, effort, and effective communication to ensure alignment with the school's goals and priorities (Harry & Klingner, 2007).

In conclusion, fostering inclusive education requires collaborative efforts and engagement with external partners to create supportive learning environments. Research supports the importance of community involvement in promoting inclusivity. Strategies such as collaborating with parents, other schools, and local businesses align with best practices in inclusive education. However, challenges such as securing funding and coordinating partnerships need to be addressed for successful implementation. By leveraging external

resources and expertise, schools can enhance their capacity to meet the diverse needs of all students and cultivate a culture of inclusivity and belonging.

5.2 RQ2. Obstacles in Fostering Inclusive Education Initiatives

The second research question aimed to identify challenges that the principal encounters while fostering and guiding inclusive education initiatives. When examining the obstacles encountered in advancing inclusive education within the Taldykorgan school, several key challenges emerge, shedding light on the complex realities of implementing inclusive practices. These obstacles not only contradict some aspects of the literature review but also underscore the systemic barriers that hinder the realization of inclusive education goals.

One significant obstacle identified in the study is the lack of comprehensive professional development opportunities for teachers. While the literature emphasizes the importance of ongoing training and support for educators to effectively implement inclusive practices, the study reveals a gap in the provision of such training. This discrepancy poses a significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive education initiatives, as teachers may lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support students with diverse needs (Thomas & Loxley, 2001; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007). Without adequate training and support, educators may struggle to address the diverse learning needs present in inclusive classrooms, leading to inequitable outcomes for students.

Another obstacle highlighted in the study is the challenge of resource constraints, particularly concerning the allocation of support staff and adaptive technology. Despite the school's recognition of the need for additional resources, such as hiring specialized staff and purchasing adaptive technology, these initiatives remain largely aspirational. This lack of resources poses a significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive practices, as educators may be unable to provide the necessary support and accommodations to meet students'

diverse needs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2011). Additionally, resource constraints may exacerbate existing inequalities, particularly for students from marginalized backgrounds who may require additional support to access inclusive education opportunities.

Furthermore, the study identifies challenges related to parental engagement and support for inclusive education initiatives. While the school's efforts to engage parents in the inclusive education process are commendable, the study reveals concerns about parental readiness to support inclusion. This lack of parental engagement poses a significant barrier to the successful implementation of inclusive practices, as parents play a crucial role in supporting students' learning and advocating for their needs (Allan & Omarova, 2022). Without meaningful collaboration between schools and parents, efforts to promote inclusive education may be hindered, leading to limited opportunities for students with diverse needs.

Additionally, the study highlights challenges related to workload management and capacity building for teachers. Teachers may face difficulties managing diverse student needs in the classroom, particularly without adequate support and resources. This challenge is compounded by the lack of capacity building opportunities for teachers, as they may struggle to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support students with diverse needs (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Florian, 2008). Without sufficient support and capacity building opportunities, teachers may experience burnout and frustration, further hindering efforts to promote inclusive education.

Furthermore, the use of outdated or insensitive language in discussions surrounding inclusive education underscores the importance of promoting awareness and sensitivity to appropriate terminology. Research by Slee and Allan (2001) emphasizes the need for educators to use respectful language that reflects dignity and equality for all students. Additionally, the inadvertent use of offensive terms can perpetuate stereotypes and hinder efforts to create an

inclusive environment (Gabel, 2005). However, educating stakeholders about preferred language and terminology is essential for fostering effective communication and promoting inclusivity (Mittler, 2012).

Moreover, integrating inclusive education principles into teacher education programs can play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Literature suggests early exposure to inclusive practices during pre-service teacher training can positively influence teachers' perceptions and readiness to embrace diversity (Salend & Whittaker, 2017). By equipping future educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively support diverse learners, teacher preparation programs contribute to cultivating inclusive learning environments (Ainscow, 2005).

5.3 RQ3. Supporting Educators in Adopting Inclusive Education Principles

Supporting educators in adopting inclusive education principles is paramount for creating an environment where all students, regardless of their abilities, can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Inclusive education aims to provide equitable opportunities for learning and development to every student, recognizing and valuing their diverse strengths and needs. The literature underscores the importance of ongoing professional development for educators to effectively implement inclusive practices (Thomas & Loxley, 2001; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007). This includes training programs, workshops, and seminars aimed at enhancing educators' knowledge and skills in catering to the diverse needs of students with disabilities and other learning differences. Similarly, the findings from the study highlight the need for comprehensive teacher training programs and consistent professional development seminars to support educators in adopting inclusive education principles. By equipping educators with the necessary knowledge, strategies, and resources, schools can foster a culture of inclusivity where every student feels valued and supported.

Collaborative decision-making is another essential aspect of promoting inclusive education, as emphasized in both the literature and the study findings (Booth et al., 2000;

Hodkinson et al., 2009). Inclusive education requires the involvement of all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, administrators, and community members, in decision-making processes to ensure diverse perspectives are considered and valued. The study identifies collaborative discussions and co-planning sessions involving teachers, parents, and other stakeholders as essential for establishing a unified vision and mission for inclusive education within the school community. By fostering collaboration and shared decision-making, schools can create a sense of ownership and commitment among stakeholders, leading to more effective implementation of inclusive practices and better outcomes for all students.

However, despite the importance of professional development and collaborative decision-making, there are challenges and contradictions that need to be addressed. One such challenge is resource constraints, as highlighted in both the literature and the study findings (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2011). While the literature emphasizes the importance of adequate resources, such as specialized staff and adaptive technology, to support inclusive education, the study reveals a contradiction in the availability of these resources within the school setting. Limited resources can hinder efforts to support educators in adopting inclusive education principles, leading to barriers in providing equitable opportunities for all students. Addressing resource constraints requires strategic planning, advocacy, and collaboration with stakeholders to secure the necessary resources and support for inclusive education initiatives.

Another contradiction arises in the context of parental engagement and support. The literature emphasizes the importance of parental involvement in promoting inclusive education (Booth et al., 2000; Hodkinson et al., 2009). However, while the study acknowledges the importance of parental involvement, it also identifies challenges related to parental readiness to support inclusion. Parental attitudes, circumstances, and perceptions of inclusive education can vary, posing barriers to effective collaboration between parents and educators. Overcoming these challenges requires proactive communication, outreach efforts, and partnership-building

initiatives to engage parents as valued partners in the inclusive education process.

Furthermore, workload management and capacity building emerge as significant challenges for educators in both the literature and the study findings (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Florian, 2008). Educators often face the daunting task of managing diverse student needs within limited time and resources, leading to feelings of overwhelm and burnout. Capacity building initiatives, such as targeted training programs and ongoing support mechanisms, are essential for equipping educators with the skills, strategies, and resources needed to address the diverse needs of students effectively. However, while the literature emphasizes the need for comprehensive support strategies, the study reveals a gap in the availability of such support mechanisms within the school setting. Addressing workload management and capacity building challenges requires a multifaceted approach prioritizing educator well-being, professional development, and resource allocation.

In conclusion, supporting educators in adopting inclusive education principles requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including educators, administrators, parents, and community members. By prioritizing ongoing professional development, collaborative decision-making, resource allocation, parental engagement, and workload management, schools can create an inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential. Addressing the challenges and contradictions highlighted in the literature and the study findings is essential for advancing inclusive education and promoting equitable opportunities for all students.

5.4 Summary

The discussion chapter explores promoting inclusive education within a school in southeastern Kazakhstan, addressing leadership practices, professional development, collaborative decision-making, resource constraints, parental engagement, and workload

management. It emphasizes the need for ongoing professional development and collaborative decision-making, despite challenges such as resource constraints, parental readiness, and workload management. Proactive strategies and collaborative efforts are vital to overcoming these barriers. By fostering inclusivity and collaboration, schools can create an environment where every student feels valued and supported. Overall, the chapter stresses the importance of reflection and adaptation in achieving equitable opportunities for all students.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the strategies employed by school leaders to promote inclusive education within a specific school in Taldykorgan. It explored the efforts of principals, teachers, psychologists, defectologists, and parents in promoting inclusive practices. The findings are summarized based on the research questions, and the chapter also discusses the limitations of the study, as well as its implications and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Summary of the Major Findings

The first research question was about the leadership practices the principal employs. There are several leadership practices that promote inclusive education within the school. Drawing from the literature review and findings, it is evident that the principal plays a crucial role in establishing and conveying the vision of inclusive education (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). This involves understanding the concept of inclusion and effectively communicating it to stakeholders, including teachers, psychologists, defectologists, and parents. The principal's commitment to inclusivity is exemplified by their personal journey from skepticism to advocacy, as highlighted in the study findings. Additionally, the principal fosters a collaborative environment by involving various stakeholders in co-planning and decision-making processes, aligning with the principles of distributed leadership (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Through initiatives such as value-based learning and the establishment of an inclusive support team, the principal creates a supportive organizational culture for learning (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Furthermore, the principal facilitates high-quality learning experiences for students by prioritizing individual needs, collaborating with external partners, and addressing challenges such as resource allocation and parental engagement. Overall, the principal's leadership practices are instrumental in driving the school towards a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

The second question of the following research addressed obstacles the principal

encounters while promoting and guiding inclusive education initiatives. Despite their efforts, challenges arise that hinder the effective implementation of inclusive practices. One significant obstacle is the lack of comprehensive professional development for staff members, particularly in adapting teaching methods to accommodate diverse student needs (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

While the principal organizes training sessions and seminars, the availability of resources and expertise in inclusive education remains limited, especially in regions like southeastern Kazakhstan. Additionally, the transition from special education to an inclusive education institution presents its own set of challenges, including resistance from staff members who may not fully understand or embrace the concept of inclusion (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). The principal must navigate this resistance and work towards changing mindsets and attitudes among school staff. Furthermore, resource constraints, such as limited funding for specialized equipment and support services, pose significant barriers to providing adequate support for students with disabilities (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). This challenge is compounded by the need for early intervention and assessments, which are often delayed or inaccessible, impacting the timely identification and support of students with special needs. Moreover, parental engagement and support for inclusive education initiatives remain inconsistent, with some parents expressing concerns or reservations about the effectiveness of inclusion for their children (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Overcoming these obstacles requires strategic planning, collaboration with external partners, and ongoing advocacy for inclusive practices within the school community.

The last question concludes that supporting educators in adopting inclusive education principles is crucial for creating an environment where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This aligns with the broader literature on inclusive education, which emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development, collaborative decision-making, adequate resources, parental involvement, and workload management in promoting inclusivity

within schools (Thomas & Loxley, 2001; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Booth et al., 2000; Hodkinson et al., 2009; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2011; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Florian, 2008).

The findings from the study underscore the significance of comprehensive teacher training programs, consistent professional development seminars, and collaborative decision-making processes involving all stakeholders. These initiatives help equip educators with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively support students with diverse needs. However, the study also highlights challenges and contradictions, such as resource constraints, parental engagement barriers, and workload management issues, which can hinder efforts to promote inclusive education.

Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, advocacy, and partnership-building efforts to secure adequate resources, engage parents as valued partners, and support educators in managing their workload effectively. By prioritizing educator well-being, professional development, and resource allocation, schools can create a culture of inclusivity where every student feels valued and supported in their learning journey.

Considering the insights from the study, it is essential to highlight the strategies employed by leaders to foster inclusion within their specific contexts. While the main inquiry centered on identifying singular leadership practices that promote inclusive education, the research did not yield a definitive answer. Instead, the findings indicate that effective leadership in advancing inclusive schools relies on a multifaceted approach involving several interconnected dimensions. These dimensions include establishing a shared vision, enhancing educators' skills and knowledge, fostering a supportive culture, ensuring optimal learning experiences, and collaborating with external stakeholders. This underscores the notion that promoting inclusion requires a collaborative effort across various fronts rather than relying on a

single leadership practice.

6.2 Limitations

Limitations inherent in this study stem from its sample size and scope. By focusing on a single school leader in a specific city in Kazakhstan, the research may not capture the diversity of regional contexts and practices. Additionally, the participants consisted of former teachers from a special education school, potentially limiting the insights gained. Exploring mainstream schools with a broader range of experienced leaders and educators could offer a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive education practices.

6.3 Implications

The outcomes of the study carry considerable implications for both future research endeavors and practical applications. These findings offer valuable insights for school leaders aspiring to promote inclusive environments, providing actionable strategies they can adopt. Moreover, the study's conclusions highlight recommendations for improving inclusive education practices in Kazakhstan, backed by empirical evidence, which policymakers can utilize to inform the development of legislation and initiatives pertaining to leadership and inclusion.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

To advance research and practice in inclusive education, several recommendations emerge from the findings and discussions. First, longitudinal studies are warranted to assess the sustained impact of principal leadership on the effectiveness and longevity of inclusive education initiatives. Tracking the progress and outcomes of these initiatives over time can provide valuable insights into the enduring effects of leadership practices. Second, employing mixed-methods research designs can offer a comprehensive understanding of principal leadership in implementing inclusive education by triangulating data from diverse sources. This approach allows for the integration of qualitative insights with quantitative data, enhancing the depth and

breadth of analysis. Lastly, comparative studies across different school settings can shed light on contextual factors influencing leadership approaches. By comparing principals' strategies in various contexts, tailored strategies can be developed to address the unique challenges and opportunities in urban versus rural or public versus private school environments. These recommendations aim to inform future research endeavors and guide policymakers and practitioners in fostering inclusive education practices effectively.

6.5 Personal Reflection

The journey of writing a thesis dissertation on principal leadership practices in inclusive education has been a profoundly enriching experience for me. Throughout this process, I have deeply examined the literature, engaged in rigorous research, and critically analyzed findings to contribute meaningfully to the field. This trial has not only expanded my knowledge and understanding of inclusive education but has also improved my research skills and analytical abilities. It has been a journey of self-discovery, challenging me to think critically, synthesize complex information, and articulate my thoughts effectively. Moreover, the opportunity to explore the nuanced dynamics of principal leadership and its impact on creating inclusive school environments has been both rewarding and enlightening. As I reflect on this journey, I am grateful for the support and guidance of my supervisor, whose expertise and encouragement have been invaluable. Moving forward, I carry with me a newfound appreciation for the importance of inclusive leadership in promoting equitable opportunities for all students. I am inspired to continue exploring ways to encourage inclusive practices in educational settings.

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Thesis Title: **Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education**

Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School

Appendix A – Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of AI and composed this work independently (please check one):

- with the use of artificial intelligence tools, or
- without the use of artificial intelligence tools.

(If you have used AI tools as defined in the GSE policy document, please complete the rest of this form.)

During the preparation of this thesis/examination, I used Chat GPT and Grammarly to paraphrase, generate the ideas, and edit the text for clarity and grammar.

I also declare that I

- am aware of the capabilities and limitations of AI tool(s),
- have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,

- am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,

have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of AI tools in this work, and

acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding AI appropriate use.

Name: Assel Menlibayeva

Signature:



Date: 22.04.2024

Appendix B. Written Recruitment Script

Dear _____,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. My name is Assel Menlibayeva, and I am a Master's degree student at Nazarbayev University. I am writing to seek your permission and support for my research study, which focuses on the “Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School.”

I have chosen your esteemed institution as the focus of my research due to its reputation for excellence in inclusive education practices. I am deeply interested in understanding the role of principal leadership in fostering inclusive education and its impact on the overall learning experience of students with diverse needs.

The purpose of my study is to gain insights into the strategies employed by principals to promote inclusive education within the school, the challenges faced, and the outcomes achieved. I am interested in conducting interviews and making field notes to gather firsthand information, with the utmost respect for the confidentiality and privacy of the school community.

I assure you that this research will be conducted ethically, respecting the privacy of all individuals involved. The findings of my study aim to contribute to the existing knowledge in the field of inclusive education and may provide valuable insights that could benefit not only the academic community but also your institution.

I kindly request your permission to conduct this research at your school. Your cooperation and support in granting access to the necessary resources, as well as facilitating communication with staff and parents, would be invaluable to the success of my study. I am more than willing to adhere to any guidelines or protocols established by the school to ensure minimal disruption to the daily activities.

I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to work closely with you and your school community to explore this important aspect of education. I believe that the insights gained from this study can foster a greater understanding of inclusive education practices and contribute positively to the academic discourse.

Thank you for considering my request. I am more than willing to discuss the details of my research proposal further and address any concerns you may have. Please feel free to contact me at assel.menlibayeva@nu.edu.kz or +7 7017011085 at your earliest convenience.

I appreciate your time and consideration. I look forward to the possibility of working together and contributing to the advancement of inclusive education in our country.

Warm regards,

Assel Menlibayeva

Master's student

Nazarbayev University

Graduate School of Education

Appendix C. Informed Consent Form

Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education

Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School

Description: You are cordially invited to participate in a research study focusing on investigating the influence of principal leadership on the implementation of inclusive education in a specific inclusive school in South Kazakhstan. Your participation will involve a face-to-face interview session lasting approximately one hour and recorded for accuracy. Your identity will be anonymized through coding, ensuring confidentiality. Rest assured, all the information and interview responses provided by you will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be associated with your name in the final research report. The interview will comprise 10-15 general inquiries, as well as some additional follow-up questions, conducted in a language of your preference: Kazakh, Russian, or English, whichever you are most comfortable speaking.

Duration: Your participation is expected to last approximately 1 hour.

Benefits and Risks: The study poses minimal risks to participants. Engaging in this research will not influence your current employment status in any way. Additionally, there are no other associated risks. The collection of personal information is strictly limited to what is necessary for the research. The study is focused on a school where inclusive education is being implemented, aiming to provide a detailed description for wider dissemination of experiences. Your opinion holds significant value to us. Importantly, your decision to participate or not will not impact your employment situation.

Confidentiality: The research will ensure strict confidentiality for all collected data, including interview recordings, notes, and personal observations. This information will be securely stored on a password-protected personal computer. Personal details will be encoded, and access to the data will be restricted to the researcher alone.

Participants' rights: If you have reviewed this document and choose to engage in this project, please be aware that your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the freedom to withdraw your consent or cease participation at any point without facing any penalties or loss of entitled benefits. Alternatively, you can choose not to participate at all. You also have the right to decline answering specific questions. The findings from this research will be included in my Master's Thesis and might be presented at scientific or professional conferences or published in scientific journals.

Contact information: If you have any inquiries, worries, or grievances regarding this research, including its methods, potential risks, and advantages, please feel free to get in touch with Assel Menlibayeva, the Master's thesis student, or her supervisor Filiz Polat, via their respective email addresses: Assel.Menlibayeva@nu.edu.kz, Filiz.Polat@nu.edu.kz

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education Research Ethics Committee
gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign in the Consent Form if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have thoroughly reviewed the provided information.
- I have received comprehensive details about the study's objectives and methods.
- I comprehend the utilization of the collected data and the assurance of confidentiality, with only the researchers having access.
- I acknowledge my right to withdraw from the study at any point without providing an explanation.
- With complete understanding of the above, I voluntarily consent to participate in this research study.

Signature

Date

You should retain this additional signed and dated consent form for your records.

In accordance with the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan, any individual below the age of 18 is classified as a child. Participants falling within this age group must be provided with the Parental Consent Form, which should be signed by at least one of their parents or guardians.

Appendix D. Interview protocol

Project title: Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education

Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School

Interviewee:

Date:

Time:

Place: Secondary school in South Kazakhstan

Preliminary procedures: introducing self, the purpose of the study, and anonymity protection; getting permission to audio record; signing the consent form.

Dear Participant,

I appreciate your willingness to be part of this interview, an integral component of my master's thesis program. The questions I will ask aim to gain insights into your perspective on the influence of principal leadership on the implementation of inclusive education in South Kazakhstan and how it is being implemented in your school. Throughout the interview, there might be additional questions to further understand your responses. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Interview Questions for the principal:

1. How long and in what capacity(ies) have you been in education?
2. Can you provide an overview of the inclusive school you lead, including its mission, vision, and core values?
3. How long have you been serving as the principal of this inclusive school, and what motivated the school to adopt inclusive education practices?
4. How do you define inclusive education, and what does it mean to you within the context of your school?
5. Can you share specific examples of leadership practices you employ to promote inclusive education within the school community?
6. What initiatives or programs have you implemented to ensure that students of all abilities and backgrounds are included and supported in the learning environment?
7. How do you encourage and facilitate collaboration among teachers, staff, and parents to create an inclusive school culture?

8. Can you provide examples of how you have effectively advocated for inclusive education policies and practices at the administrative level?
9. How do you monitor and assess the effectiveness of inclusive education initiatives, and what measures do you take to continuously improve them?
10. Can you share success stories or positive outcomes resulting from your leadership in promoting inclusive education?
11. Can you identify specific challenges you have faced while fostering inclusive education initiatives within the school?
12. Have you encountered resistance or scepticism from parents, community members, or stakeholders regarding inclusive education? If yes, how have you addressed this?
13. Are there cultural or societal challenges in the community that affect the acceptance and implementation of inclusive education, and how do you navigate them?
14. Are there recognition programs or events that highlight teachers' achievements in promoting inclusivity in their classrooms?
15. Are there initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of inclusive education among parents, and how does the school ensure their cooperation?
16. Is there anything else related to the topic of inclusive education or the impact of principal leadership that you believe is important for us to know, but that we haven't discussed in this interview? Please feel free to share any additional thoughts, experiences, or perspectives that you believe could contribute to our understanding of this subject.

Thank the participant for the interview. Assure them again about the confidentiality of the received information.

Appendix E. Interview protocol

Project title: Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education

Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School

Interviewee:

Date:

Time:

Place: Secondary school in South Kazakhstan

Preliminary procedures: introducing self, the purpose of the study, and anonymity protection; getting permission to audio record; signing the consent form.

Dear Participant,

I appreciate your willingness to be part of this interview, an integral component of my master's thesis program. The questions I will ask aim to gain insights into perspective on the influence of principal leadership on the implementation of inclusive education in South Kazakhstan and how it is being implemented in your school. Throughout the interview, there might be additional questions to further understand your responses. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Interview Questions for the teacher:

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have, and in what grade levels or subjects have you taught?
2. Can you briefly describe your teaching philosophy or approach to education?
3. What kinds of students with diverse learning needs have you had experience teaching?
4. How would you describe the principal's role in promoting inclusive education within the school?
5. Can you provide specific examples of how the principal has supported and guided teachers in implementing inclusive education practices in their classrooms?
6. What professional development opportunities or training sessions related to inclusive education have been provided to teachers by the school administration?
7. How effective do you find these training sessions in enhancing your skills and understanding of inclusive education methods?

8. In your experience, how does the school allocate resources (such as assistive technologies, specialized teaching materials) to support inclusive education?
9. Have there been any challenges in accessing necessary resources for inclusive teaching, and if so, how were they addressed?
10. How does the school promote collaboration among teachers, especially between regular and special education teachers, to create an inclusive learning environment?
11. Can you share examples of effective communication strategies used by the principal to ensure that everyone is informed and engaged in inclusive education initiatives?
12. How does the principal gather feedback from teachers about their experiences and challenges in implementing inclusive education?
13. Can you share stories of students who have significantly benefited from the inclusive education practices encouraged by the Senior Management Team (SMT)?
14. What challenges have you faced as a teacher in implementing inclusive education methods, and how have these challenges been addressed?
15. How does the SMT recognize and appreciate the efforts of teachers who excel in inclusive teaching methods?
16. From your perspective, how crucial is the role of principal and SMT leadership in the successful implementation of inclusive education?
17. What are some key qualities or strategies you believe an effective principal should possess to promote inclusive education effectively?
18. Is there anything else related to the topic of inclusive education or the impact of principal leadership that you believe is important for us to know, but that we haven't discussed in this interview? Please feel free to share any additional thoughts, experiences, or perspectives that you believe could contribute to our understanding of this subject.

Thank the participant for the interview. Assure them again about the confidentiality of the received information.

Appendix F. Interview protocol

Project title: Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education

Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School

Interviewee:

Date:

Time:

Place: Secondary school in South Kazakhstan

Preliminary procedures: introducing self, the purpose of the study, and anonymity protection; getting permission to audio record; signing the consent form.

Dear Participant,

I appreciate your willingness to be part of this interview, an integral component of my master's thesis program. The questions I will ask aim to gain insights into perspective on the influence of principal leadership on the implementation of inclusive education in South Kazakhstan and how it is being implemented in your school. Throughout the interview, there might be additional questions to further understand your responses. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Interview Questions for the parents:

1. Can you introduce yourself and briefly describe your child, including any specific learning needs they may have?
2. How would you define inclusive education, and what does it mean for your child?
3. How are you involved in your child's school activities and events?
4. How does your child feel about attending an inclusive school? Are there noticeable changes in their confidence or social interactions?
5. What is your perception of the classroom environment and its inclusivity for diverse learners?
6. How do you typically communicate with your child's teachers, and how responsive do you find the school in addressing your concerns?
7. What support systems and resources provided by the school have been particularly beneficial for your child's learning needs?

8. Can you share your observations regarding the relationship between your child and their teachers, especially concerning teaching methods that engage diverse learners?
9. What challenges have you faced, and what concerns do you have regarding your child's education in an inclusive setting?
10. How do you perceive the collaboration between parents and teachers, and how valuable do you feel your input is in your child's education?
11. Are there specific achievements or progress your child has made due to the inclusive education environment?
12. How satisfied are you with the school's inclusive education practices, and do you have any feedback to provide?
13. What are your hopes and expectations for your child's academic and social development within an inclusive framework?
14. How do you plan to support your child's education in the future, and how would you like to engage with the school?
15. Do you have any specific suggestions for enhancing the school's inclusive education initiatives?
16. Is there anything else related to the topic of inclusive education or the impact of principal leadership that you believe is important for us to know, but that we haven't discussed in this interview? Please feel free to share any additional thoughts, experiences, or perspectives that you believe could contribute to our understanding of this subject.

Thank the participant for the interview. Assure them again about the confidentiality of the received information.

Appendix G. Interview protocol

Project title: Examining the Impact of Principal Leadership on Inclusive Education

Implementation: A Case Study of One South Kazakhstani Inclusive School

Interviewee:

Date:

Time:

Place: Secondary school in South Kazakhstan

Preliminary procedures: introducing self, the purpose of the study, and anonymity protection; getting permission to audio record; signing the consent form.

Dear Participant,

I appreciate your willingness to be part of this interview, an integral component of my master's thesis program. The questions I will ask aim to gain insights into perspective on the influence of principal leadership on the implementation of inclusive education in South Kazakhstan and how it is being implemented in your school. Throughout the interview, there might be additional questions to further understand your responses. Please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Interview Questions for the defectologist:

1. How would you describe the role of a defectologist in inclusive education settings, especially concerning the support provided to students with diverse needs?
2. Can you share specific examples of how inclusive education practices have positively impacted the learning experiences of students you work with?
3. In your opinion, what are the key qualities or strategies that an effective principal employs to promote inclusive education within the school?
4. How does the leadership style of the principal influence the collaboration between defectologists and other educators in fostering an inclusive learning environment?
5. Are there challenges faced by defectologists when implementing inclusive education, and how can strong principal leadership help address these challenges?
6. What kind of professional development opportunities or training do defectologists need to effectively support inclusive education, and how can principals facilitate these opportunities?

7. How do defectologists collaborate with teachers and other specialists to develop individualized plans for students with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms?
8. Can you share insights on how a supportive principal fosters a positive and inclusive school culture, ensuring that students with disabilities are included and valued?
9. From your experience, what impact does the principal's advocacy for inclusive education policies have on the overall school environment?
10. How do defectologists communicate with parents and guardians of students with diverse needs, and how can principal leadership enhance these communication channels?
11. Are there specific inclusive education initiatives or programs within the school that you believe have been successful, and how has principal leadership contributed to their success?
12. In your opinion, what role does the principal play in ensuring that necessary resources and accommodations are provided to students with disabilities?
13. Can you discuss any instances where the principal's support and leadership directly influenced the professional growth and effectiveness of defectologists in your school?
14. How do defectologists measure the progress and success of students with diverse needs, and how can principal leadership support these assessment processes within an inclusive framework?
15. From your perspective, what recommendations would you give to principals to enhance their support for defectologists and ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education practices in schools?
16. Is there anything else related to the topic of inclusive education or the impact of principal leadership that you believe is important for us to know, but that we haven't discussed in this interview? Please feel free to share any additional thoughts, experiences, or perspectives that you believe could contribute to our understanding of this subject.

Thank the participant for the interview. Assure them again about the confidentiality of the received information.

Appendix H. Sample of Coding

Participant P1	Coding
<p>How do you define inclusive education, and what does it mean to you within the context of your school?</p> <p><i>Well, inclusive education, to me, entails developing a culture of belonging in which every student, regardless of ability or background, is completely integrated into all elements of school life. It entails not just offering accommodations and assistance, but also instilling a sense of belonging and acceptance among students, teachers, and families.</i></p> <p>Can you share specific examples of leadership practices you employ to promote inclusive education within the school community?</p> <p><i>As a leader, I prioritize modeling inclusive practices and values, starting with our staff. I lead by example, demonstrating respect and empathy in all interactions and promoting collaboration and teamwork. I also provide ongoing professional development opportunities focused on inclusive teaching strategies and cultural competence. For example, recently our school organized workshops on inclusive education topics. Especially, it was useful for teachers who teach students with ADHD.</i></p>	<p>Definition of inclusive education within the school context.</p> <p>Attitude: seems as a learned definition.</p> <p>Knowledge: awareness of definition of inclusion.</p> <p>Leadership practices</p> <p>Attitude: open and flexible for new experiences</p>