

**Intersectionality of Gender and SEN in Inclusive Education: A critical analysis of
Kazakhstan's policy in international contexts**

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Abstract

This thesis critically analyzes Kazakhstan's inclusive education policies through the lens of intersectionality, focusing specifically on the overlapping dimensions of gender and special educational needs (SEN). Grounded in a Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) framework by Fischer et al. (2007), the study examines national legal and policy documents alongside key international guidelines from UNESCO, the OECD, and the United Nations. Drawing on thematic coding of selected policies, the analysis reveals that while Kazakhstan has made notable progress in enshrining inclusive education and gender equality in law, its policies largely treat gender and SEN as separate categories. As a result, the compounded vulnerabilities of girls with SEN remain insufficiently addressed in policy discourse.

The study identifies key policy gaps, such as the lack of intersectional framing, weak monitoring mechanisms, and limited stakeholder involvement. It also highlights emerging progressive practices, including digital accessibility and specialized resource centers.

The findings offer policy recommendations to strengthen intersectional inclusivity and underscore the need for systemic reforms that move beyond formal commitments toward equitable and inclusive educational practices.

Аңдатпа

Бұл тезисте гендерлік және ерекше білім беру қажеттіліктерінің (ЕББҚ) бір-біріне сәйкес келетін өлшемдеріне ерекше назар аудара отырып, Қазақстанның инклюзивті білім беру саясаты қиылысу объектісі арқылы сыни тұрғыдан талданады. Фишер және т.б. (2007) сыни саясатты талдау (СПА) шеңберіне негізделген зерттеу ЮНЕСКО, ЭЫДҰ және Біріккен Ұлттар Ұйымының негізгі халықаралық нұсқауларымен қатар ұлттық құқықтық және саяси құжаттарды зерттейді. Таңдалған саясаттардың тақырыптық кодталуына сүйене отырып, талдау Қазақстан инклюзивті білім беруді және гендерлік теңдікті заңда бекітуде айтарлықтай жетістіктерге жеткенімен, оның саясаты негізінен гендерлік және ЕББҚ бөлек категориялар ретінде қарастыратынын көрсетеді. Нәтижесінде, ЕББҚ бар қыздардың күрделі осалдықтары саяси дискурста жеткіліксіз қарастырылған.

Зерттеу қиылысатын жақтаудың жоқтығы, әлсіз бақылау тетіктері және мүдделі тараптардың шектеулі қатысуы сияқты негізгі саясаттағы кемшіліктерді анықтайды. Ол сонымен қатар цифрлық қолжетімділік пен мамандандырылған ресурстық орталықтарды қоса алғанда, дамып келе жатқан прогрессивті тәжірибелерді көрсетеді.

Нәтижелер қиылыстағы инклюзивтілікті күшейту үшін саяси ұсыныстарды ұсынады және әділ және инклюзивті білім беру тәжірибесіне қарай ресми міндеттемелерден тыс жүретін жүйелі реформалар қажеттілігін атап көрсетеді.

Абстракт

В этой диссертации критически анализируется политика инклюзивного образования Казахстана через призму интерсекциональности, уделяя особое внимание пересекающимся измерениям гендера и особых образовательных потребностей (ООП). Основанное на структуре критического анализа политики (CPA) Фишера и др. (2007), исследование рассматривает национальные правовые и политические документы наряду с ключевыми международными руководящими принципами ЮНЕСКО, ОЭСР и Организации Объединенных Наций. Опираясь на тематическое кодирование выбранных политик, анализ показывает, что, хотя Казахстан добился заметного прогресса в закреплении инклюзивного образования и гендерного равенства в законодательстве, его политика в значительной степени рассматривает гендер и ООП как отдельные категории. В результате, комплексная уязвимость девочек с ООП остается недостаточно учтенной в политическом дискурсе.

Исследование выявляет ключевые пробелы в политике, такие как отсутствие интерсекционального фрейминга, слабые механизмы мониторинга и ограниченное участие заинтересованных сторон. Оно также подчеркивает появляющиеся прогрессивные практики, включая цифровую доступность и специализированные ресурсные центры.

Результаты предлагают рекомендации по политике для укрепления интерсекциональной инклюзивности и подчеркивают необходимость системных реформ, которые выходят за рамки формальных обязательств в сторону равноправных и инклюзивных образовательных практик.

Table of Contents

AUTHOR AGREEMENT	ii
CITI Training Certificate	iv
Abstract	v
Аңдатпа	vi
Абстракт.....	vii
Table of Contents	ii
List of Figures	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Definitions of Inclusive Education	1
1.2 Definitions of Special Educational Needs	3
1.3 Gender in Inclusive Education.....	7
1.4 Intersectionality of Gender and Special Educational Needs in the Context of Inclusive Education	9
1.5 Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan	11
1.6 Intersectionality of Gender and Special Educational Needs in the Context of Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan.....	13
1.7 Problem Statement, Research Purpose, and Research Questions	14
1.8 Significance of the Research.....	16
Summary	16
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	18
2.1 Development of the Scope of Inclusive Education.....	18
2.2 Intersectionality in Inclusive Education.....	21
2.3 Inclusive Education Globally.....	23
2.4 Inclusive Education and Intersectionality in Kazakhstan	26
2.5 Political and Economic Dimensions of Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan	29
2.6 Conceptual Framework.....	31
Summary	33
Chapter 3: Methodology	35
3.1 Research Design.....	36
3.2 Policy Identification and Selection	37
3.2.1 Definition of Policy.....	38
3.3 Establishment of Key Analytical Criteria	38
3.4 Data Collection and Coding.....	41
3.5 Critical Analysis and Interpretation	42
3.6 Ethical Considerations	42
Summary	43

Chapter 4: Findings.....	44
4.1. Document 1: The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002).....	44
4.2. Document 2: The Law on Education (2007).....	46
4.3. Document 3: The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002).....	48
4.4. Document 4: Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005)	50
Summary	52
Chapter 5: Discussion	53
5.1. Criterion 1: Promotion of Equal Access to Education for Girls and Boys with SEN ..	53
5.2. Criterion 2: Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs	55
5.3. Criterion 3: Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms for Gender and SEN Inclusivity	58
Summary.....	60
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	1
6.1. Restating the Purpose and Questions	1
6.2. Key findings.....	3
6.3. Policy implications.....	4
6.4. Limitations of the study	4
6.5. Suggestions for further research	5
6.6. Personal Reflection	5
References.....	7
Appendix A: Completed AI Declaration Form.....	16
Appendix B: Example of first- and second-cycle coding	17

List of Figures

Figure 1 Dimensions of diversity and overarching factors	10
Figure 2 Intersectionality of Gender and Special Educational Needs within Inclusive Education Policy Frameworks.....	33

Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyze a selection of Kazakhstan's policies relevant to inclusive education, with a focus on the intersectionality of gender and special educational needs (SEN), examining the alignment of these policies with international policies and recommendations. Inclusive education is recognized globally as a critical component of equitable education systems, promoting better outcomes for all students by removing barriers to learning and participation (UNESCO, 2017).. However, the intersectionality of gender and SEN within inclusive education policies is a complex and underexplored area, particularly in the context of Kazakhstan. This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the definitions and conceptual frameworks of inclusive education, special educational needs, and intersectionality. It will also examine the international and national legislative frameworks supporting inclusive education in Kazakhstan, highlight key challenges, and outline the research questions guiding this study.

1.1 Definitions of Inclusive Education

This section presents definitions of inclusive education chronologically, illustrating how its understanding and scope have evolved over time. The concept has shifted from a general commitment to equitable access to education to a more nuanced approach emphasizing the integration of marginalized groups and systemic reforms. This progression reflects a growing recognition of diverse needs and the requirement for education systems to adapt accordingly.

According to the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), basic education should be provided to all children, youth, and adults. It clarifies that “for basic education to be equitable, all children, youth and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning” (p.3). This declaration set the framework for actions and shaped the understanding of inclusive education.

In 1994, during the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, another detailed perspective was added to the understanding of inclusive education. This perspective emphasized enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs, concluding that “Special needs education – [is] an issue of equal concern to countries of the North and of the South ...”(UNESCO, 1994, p 2). This conclusion underscored the necessity of integrating special needs education within the broader educational framework and aligning it with new social and economic policies. The Salamanca Conference highlighted that achieving inclusive education requires comprehensive reforms in the general education system to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, can access quality education and support (UNESCO, 1994).

The World Education Forum meeting in Dakar in April 2000 emphasized another perspective with a special focus on girls and women, recognizing the critical role of gender equality in achieving inclusive education for all. This perspective was especially highlighted in the earlier World Declaration on Education for All (1990), Article 3, stating that “the most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated” (UNESCO, 1990).

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) recognizes the right to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities. It asserted that inclusive education is the only approach that can deliver both high-quality education and social development for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, it ensures the universality and non-discrimination of the right to education.

According to UNESCO’s Policy Guidelines on Inclusive Education (2009), inclusive education should be understood as a continuous process of improving the education system’s

ability to accommodate all learners, rather than a fixed outcome that schools achieve once and for all (UNESCO, 2009).

As can be seen in the policies mentioned above, definitions of inclusive education over time have focused on ensuring that all learners, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or gender, are fully integrated into the educational system. However, the intersectionality of gender with other forms of disadvantage - such as disability, socio-economic status, and geographic location - remains a critical yet underexplored area. This gap is particularly evident in the implementation of inclusive education policies, both on a global scale and within Kazakhstan.

1.2 Definitions of Special Educational Needs

The term “special needs education” varies significantly across different countries, reflecting diverse understandings and practices. In some contexts, it refers exclusively to children with physical disabilities, while in others, it encompasses a broader range of students, including those with learning difficulties or socio-economic disadvantages (Florian, 2008; Peters, 2003; UNESCO, 2017). By examining the definitions and approaches of UNESCO and OECD, this section will highlight how these two frameworks shape global and national understandings of inclusive education, emphasizing their role in addressing the varied and evolving needs of learners.

In the context of inclusive education, it is essential to differentiate between the concepts of disability and SEN, as they are distinct but interconnected. Disability is typically covered under international legal frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which aims to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities by ensuring equal access to resources, healthcare, employment, and education (United Nations, 2006). Disability is a broad legal term that encompasses a wide range of physical, mental, and sensory impairments that can affect various aspects of a person’s daily

life (United Nations, 2006). These legal protections aim to reduce discrimination and promote accessibility and inclusion across different sectors of society.

On the other hand, SEN refers specifically to the additional or specialized support required within the educational context for individuals who experience learning difficulties, physical disabilities, or emotional and behavioural challenges (OECD, 2020). SEN is a concept defined within educational policies and frameworks and is designed to ensure that students receive the necessary accommodations and interventions, such as individualized education programs (IEPs), to succeed in school settings. Importantly, not all students with SEN are classified as “disabled” in a broader legal sense, yet they may still require specific educational support to address their unique needs (Gorard, 2023).

This distinction highlights that while disability often encompasses a broad spectrum of life challenges, SEN is more narrowly focused on academic needs and how educational systems can provide tailored support for students to access and participate in education on an equal footing.

The OECD adopts a comprehensive framework based on a supply-side approach to enable policy-relevant international comparisons. According to the OECD, students with special educational needs (SEN) are defined by the additional public or private resources made available to support their education. These “additional resources” are those provided beyond what is generally available to students who are unlikely to face particular difficulties in accessing the regular curriculum (OECD, 2007). Special needs education, as per the OECD, refers to educational interventions and support designed to address these special educational needs, replacing the earlier term “special education” (OECD, 2007).

The OECD framework highlights variability in the classification and support of students with SEN across different education systems. In middle-income countries, fewer students may be identified as having special learning needs due to limited resources for

identification and support. Conversely, in other education systems, students with SEN might be concentrated in specific schools, even if their overall proportion remains similar across the system (OECD, 2023). This inherent inconsistency in the classification and support for SEN students reveals a significant challenge: the definition of SEN itself can perpetuate inequities rather than resolve them. This is why such definitions often reflect systemic limitations and fail to capture the nuanced realities of students' needs across different contexts. Addressing these gaps requires both critical reflection on existing frameworks and efforts to develop more context-sensitive and equitable approaches to SEN classification and support.

UNESCO's definition of special needs education focuses on the educational interventions designed to facilitate learning for individuals requiring additional support and adaptive pedagogical methods. These interventions account for various disadvantages, including physical, behavioral, intellectual, emotional, and social challenges. Educational programs in special needs education may follow similar curricula as regular education systems but tailor to individuals' specific needs by providing specialized resources (e.g., specially trained personnel, equipment, or space) and, if necessary, modified educational content or learning objectives (UNESCO, n.d).

UNESCO also acknowledges that SEN encompasses children with physical or mental disabilities and those with cognitive or educational impairments (UNESCO, 2017a: 7). A critical perspective shared by UNESCO is the notion that children with special educational needs often face exclusion from mainstream schools or general education systems (UNESCO, 2019).

Both the OECD and UNESCO recognize the need for additional resources and tailored support to address the educational needs of students with SEN. However, their approaches and emphases differ. The OECD's definition is grounded in a resource-based framework, focusing on the additional support required over and above standard provisions.

It implies a supply-side approach where the classification of SEN is tied to the availability of these resources (OECD, 2005). On the other hand, UNESCO provides a broader, more inclusive definition, emphasizing the variety of reasons for additional support, including physical, behavioral, intellectual, emotional, and social factors. UNESCO's approach highlights the need for adaptive pedagogical methods and specialized resources to accommodate these diverse needs within educational programs, potentially offering more flexibility in understanding and addressing SEN (UNESCO, 2009)

Additionally, while the OECD notes the variability in identifying and supporting students with SEN across different education systems, UNESCO underscores the risk of exclusion faced by these students from mainstream educational settings. This contrast reflects differing focal points: the OECD's policy-oriented comparison of resource allocation and support, and UNESCO's emphasis on inclusivity and the right to education for all children, regardless of their specific challenges (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2009).

While both organizations aim to support students with SEN, the OECD focuses on resource allocation and international comparability, whereas UNESCO emphasizes inclusive educational practices and the broad spectrum of needs requiring special support.

In academic literature, SEN is often defined in relation to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. According to Florian (2008), SEN refers not only to individual impairments but also to systemic barriers in educational environments that hinder participation and achievement. Norwich (2013) critiques traditional categorizations of SEN, suggesting that they can reinforce exclusionary practices unless critically reexamined through a rights-based approach. Dyson and Millward (2000) also argue that SEN should be understood as a relational concept - the outcome of the interaction between the learner's characteristics and the educational context.

Furthermore, Mittler (2000) emphasizes that definitions of SEN should be dynamic, reflecting changes in societal attitudes toward disability, diversity, and inclusion. Thus, understanding SEN requires moving beyond static labels toward an inclusive framework that recognizes the fluidity of individual needs across time and contexts.

Overall, while international organizations like UNESCO and OECD provide important foundational definitions, academic scholarship further deepens the understanding of SEN by linking it to broader debates around inclusion, equity, and social justice in education.

1.3 Gender in Inclusive Education

Gender plays a critical role in shaping the experiences of students within educational systems, particularly in the context of inclusive education. While inclusive education aims to provide equitable opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or identity, gender-based disparities continue to pose significant challenges. According to UNESCO (2022), girls and boys experience inclusion and exclusion in schools differently, influenced by societal expectations, cultural norms, and gender stereotypes.

For instance, girls with disabilities often face compounded forms of discrimination due to both their gender and their disability. This intersectional disadvantage can lead to lower enrollment rates, higher dropout rates, and reduced access to quality education for girls compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, in some cultural contexts, the education of girls, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN), is not prioritized, further exacerbating gender disparities in access to inclusive education (UNESCO, 2018).

To address these challenges, it is crucial that educational policies and practices incorporate a gender-sensitive approach. This involves not only recognizing the different barriers faced by boys and girls but also actively working to dismantle these barriers through targeted interventions. For example, creating safe and supportive learning environments,

promoting gender equity in teacher training, and ensuring that educational materials are free from gender bias are essential steps towards fostering gender-inclusive education (UNESCO, 2019).

The UNESCO report (2022c) emphasizes the importance of monitoring and evaluating the impact of inclusive education policies on different genders to ensure that progress is being made towards true gender equality in education. Without this focus, the promise of inclusive education risks leaving behind those who are already most marginalized.

Academic literature further complicates the understanding of gender in inclusive education by highlighting the intersectionality of gender with other forms of marginalization, such as disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011). Studies by Slee (2011) argue that gender-blind approaches to inclusive education risk reinforcing existing inequalities by failing to recognize how gender norms shape educational experiences and outcomes for students with SEN.

Francis and Paechter (2015) critique inclusive education policies for often treating gender as an isolated category, rather than as interwoven with other identity markers, leading to insufficient responses to the needs of marginalized learners. Moreover, Skelton (2007) emphasizes that gendered expectations within schools — for instance, assumptions about boys' disruptive behavior or girls' compliance — can influence the identification and support of students with SEN, sometimes resulting in misdiagnosis or neglect.

Hence, integrating gender-sensitive perspectives into inclusive education requires more than numerical equality; it demands transformative practices that challenge discriminatory structures and create learning environments that are responsive to the diverse identities of all learners.

Integrating a gender perspective into inclusive education is vital for ensuring that all students, regardless of gender, can access and benefit from quality education. By addressing

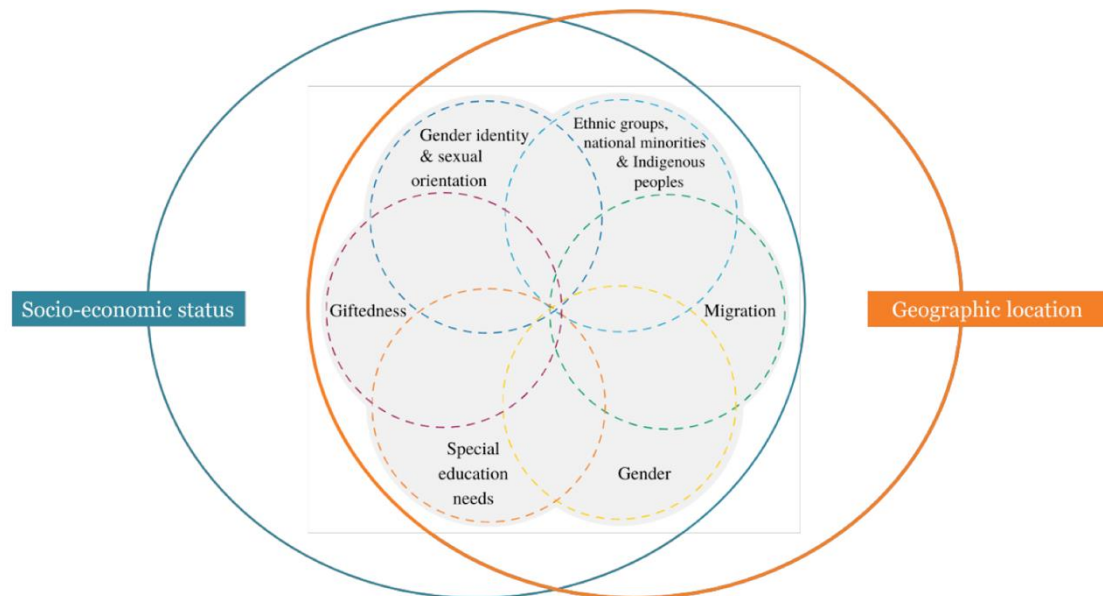
the unique challenges faced by girls and boys, particularly those with disabilities, educational systems can move closer to achieving genuine inclusivity and equity.

1.4 Intersectionality of Gender and Special Educational Needs in the Context of Inclusive Education

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how multiple forms of social inequality - such as race, gender, class, and disability - intersect and interact to produce unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It emphasizes the relational and systemic nature of power and calls for an analysis that accounts for these overlapping identities in the pursuit of social justice (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016). As Liasidou (2012) states, current debates on inclusive education should incorporate the concept of intersectionality, which examines how disability intersects with race, socioeconomic background, and gender. By doing so, it addresses how educational structures and institutions can create and perpetuate inequalities. This intersectional perspective allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences of students, highlighting the need for policies and practices that consider multiple, overlapping identities and their impact on educational outcomes. According to OECD (2023), intersectionality does not create hierarchies between various dimensions of diversity or forms of oppression. At least with respect to education, however, the term is not yet a standard part of policy frameworks. The following diagram illustrates the concept of intersectionality by showing how various social categories and identities overlap and interact with one another within an individual. At the center is the “Individual” representing a person who holds multiple intersecting identities. Surrounding the individual are overlapping circles representing different social categories: Gender, Disability, Race/Ethnicity, Nationality, Giftedness, Special educational needs, and Migration. These circles intersect to show that individuals can belong to multiple social groups simultaneously, which influences their experiences and identities.

Figure 1

Dimensions of diversity and overarching factors



Cerna et al. (2021), Promoting inclusive education for diverse societies: A conceptual framework, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/94ab68c6-en>.

OECD is recommending to develop intersectional policies that can respond to the intersecting needs of and challenges faced by some individuals, while also allowing for more structural changes that will benefit a whole group in the long run (2020). For example, a policy focusing on the interlinkages of gender and special education needs (SEN) can target female students with SEN to address their unique challenges and improve their educational outcomes. Such a policy might implement support systems that consider both the gender-specific barriers and the additional needs related to their disabilities.

Applying an intersectional lens in research and policymaking is challenging due to the lack of integration of the term in many academic disciplines, difficulties in translation, and insufficient relevant data. The available datasets often lack the necessary quantity or quality to effectively analyze the intersection of various dimensions of diversity, such as sexual

orientation and gender identity, thereby hindering comprehensive intersectional analyses (OECD, 2023).

By recognizing the interconnectedness of social categories and identities, intersectionality provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the nuanced and varied experiences of individuals. This perspective is crucial for developing interventions that address the root causes of social inequalities. Integrating intersectionality into discussions on inclusive education enriches the discourse by emphasizing the diverse and interconnected challenges faced by students. This approach supports the development of more equitable educational policies that better serve the needs of all learners. By adopting intersectional policies, educational systems can create more targeted and effective interventions that address the specific needs of diverse student populations. This approach not only supports individual students but also promotes broader systemic changes that advance educational equity. Despite the challenges, the integration of intersectionality into research and policy is essential for a more accurate and inclusive understanding of social issues (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2015).

1.5 Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan

Inclusive education in Kazakhstan is legally grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 and ratified by Kazakhstan in 1994. This convention emphasizes the right of children with mental or physical disabilities to lead a dignified life with access to necessary services, often provided free of charge, to support their full societal participation. Additionally, the UN General Assembly's Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) serve as a methodological foundation for developing inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan.

The legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, aligned with fundamental international documents in the field of human rights, enshrines the principle of equal rights to education

for all children in the country. Guarantees of children's right to education are embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan and several key laws: "On the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (2002), "On Education" (2007), "On Social and Medical-Pedagogical Correctional Support for Children with Disabilities" (2002), "On Social Protection of Disabled People in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (2005), and "On Special Social Services" (2008). This framework underscores Kazakhstan's commitment to ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive the support and resources necessary for their educational and personal development (O provah rebenka, 2008).

While Kazakhstan's key legal foundations for the right to education were established between 2002 and 2008, recent developments - such as the 2022 ministerial order on psychological and pedagogical support and updated methodological guidelines - indicate ongoing efforts to operationalize inclusive education. However, these updates are largely regulatory and instructional in nature, rather than comprehensive new laws (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022). Since 2011, and in pursuit of inclusive education objectives, significant budgetary support has been extended to the State Programmes for the Development of Education. These programmes aim to make education accessible to all children, improve its quality, and thereby promote socio-economic development for all citizens (UNICEF, 2023). These laws advocate for equal educational opportunities across all levels – primary, secondary, and higher education – for individuals with disabilities, integrating their education within the general education system.

Suleimenova (2015) defines inclusive education as a state policy aimed at removing barriers that segregate children, fully integrating all children into the educational process, and facilitating their social adaptation regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, developmental delays, or economic status. This perspective views inclusive education not

merely as a process or outcome but as a comprehensive policy direction that seeks to ensure every child's full inclusion and participation in education and society.

1.6 Intersectionality of Gender and Special Educational Needs in the Context of Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan

Inclusive education in Kazakhstan has made significant strides in recent years, with the government and various organizations working to create a more equitable educational environment for all students. However, the intersectionality of gender and SEN presents unique challenges that must be addressed to achieve truly inclusive education.

The intersectionality of gender and SEN in Kazakhstan reveals a complex web of challenges that affect the educational experiences of students. Girls with disabilities, for example, often face double discrimination – first, due to their gender, and second, due to their disability. This intersection can lead to a range of barriers, including limited access to quality education, lower enrollment rates, and a higher likelihood of dropping out of school (UNICEF, 2023).

Cultural norms and societal expectations in Kazakhstan often exacerbate these challenges. In some regions, there is a prevailing belief that girls, particularly those with disabilities, are less likely to benefit from education, leading to their marginalization within the educational system. This belief is reflected in lower levels of investment in the education of girls with SEN, which further limits their opportunities for academic and social development (UNICEF, 2023).

The UNICEF report on inclusive education in Kazakhstan provides valuable insights into the intersectionality of gender and SEN. Girls with SEN are significantly underrepresented in mainstream schools compared to their male counterparts. This disparity is more pronounced in rural areas, where access to inclusive educational resources is limited (UNICEF, 2023). The report indicates that girls with SEN tend to have lower educational

outcomes than boys with SEN. This is partly due to the lack of tailored support services that address the specific needs of girls, as well as societal attitudes that devalue the education of girls with disabilities (UNICEF, 2023).

There is a need for policies that explicitly address the intersection of gender and SEN. These policies should focus on creating equal opportunities for girls with disabilities, including access to quality education, appropriate support services, and safe learning environments (OECD, 2023).

The intersectionality of gender and special educational needs in Kazakhstan presents significant challenges to achieving truly inclusive education. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy reform, community engagement, and improved data collection. By focusing on the unique needs of girls with SEN, Kazakhstan can take meaningful steps toward creating an educational system that is inclusive and equitable for all students.

1.7 Problem Statement, Research Purpose, and Research Questions

There are limited studies specifically on the intersectionality of gender and SEN in Kazakhstan. This could lead to a gap in understanding how international standards apply to the unique social, cultural, and political landscape of Kazakhstan. This gap is particularly evident when examining how gender intersects with other forms of disadvantage, such as socio-economic status, disability, and cultural background. Internationally, many countries have made strides in enshrining the right to education without discrimination in their laws, yet only a fraction explicitly address gender as a prohibited ground of discrimination (UNESCO, 2022c). In Kazakhstan, the implementation of inclusive education policies is still evolving, and the intersectional challenges faced by students, particularly in relation to gender, are not fully understood.

The purpose of this research is to analyze Kazakhstan-specific policies on inclusive education in the relevant international context, with a focus on the intersectionality of gender and SEN. Given the growing emphasis on inclusive education in global discourse, a critical policy study is necessary to examine how Kazakhstan's legal and educational frameworks address the intersection of gender and special educational needs (SEN). This study will focus on four key national documents: the Law on the Rights of the Child (2002), the Law on Education (2007), the Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002), and the Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2005). These policies form the foundation of the country's inclusive education agenda and provide a basis for evaluating the extent to which intersectional concerns are recognized and addressed.

A policy study was chosen over an empirical one because the research aims to critically analyze the structural and institutional foundations of inclusive education rather than individual experiences or school-level implementation. By examining the content, language, and framing of key policy documents, the study can uncover systemic gaps and implicit biases that influence practice at all levels of the education system. Furthermore, understanding the alignment, or lack, between Kazakhstan's legislation and international inclusive education standards provides essential groundwork for informing future empirical research and policy reforms.

This research will attempt to answer the following main research question: "To what extent do current inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan address the intersectionality of gender and special educational needs, and how do these policies align with international guidelines and standards?"

To address this overarching question, the following sub-questions will help to shed light to the existing policies in Kazakhstan regarding SEN and gender inclusion:

1. How do Kazakhstan's educational policies integrate the aspects of inclusion and intersectionality of SEN and gender?

2. How do the reviewed policies align with the international recommendations of the OECD, UN, UNICEF and UNESCO?

- Which aspects are fulfilled?
- What are the gaps in the policies?

3. Which aspects of national policies in Kazakhstan are progressive or innovative compared to international experience of OECD, UN, UNICEF and UNESCO?

1.8 Significance of the Research

First, the study findings help to shed light on the complexities that exist in intersectionality in inclusive education. The findings of this study can be beneficial to a wide range of stakeholders in the field of education policy and practice. Ministries of Education may use the findings to analyze existing policies and their gaps.

Insights might be useful to inform policy reforms to ensure gender and intersectionality are adequately addressed in inclusive education strategies. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) may obtain evidence to support advocacy and program design. Study findings might be needed for policy changes and design interventions that address intersectional challenges. The study provides insights that can inform and enhance the work of various stakeholders involved in promoting inclusive education and gender equality. By addressing intersectional challenges, these stakeholders can create more effective, equitable, and inclusive educational environments.

Summary

This chapter outlined the key concepts and context for the study. It traced the evolution of inclusive education definitions, highlighting the shift from access to systemic transformation as reflected in UNESCO, OECD, and CRPD frameworks. It differentiated Special

Educational Needs (SEN) from broader disability concepts, emphasizing both international and academic perspectives that stress systemic barriers. The role of gender in inclusive education was discussed, showing that gender-based disparities, particularly for girls with SEN, remain a critical but often overlooked issue. Intersectionality was introduced as a necessary framework for understanding how multiple identities interact to affect educational experiences. The chapter also reviewed Kazakhstan's policies on inclusive education, noting progress but highlighting the lack of attention to gender and SEN intersectionality. The research purpose, questions, and significance were defined, aiming to critically analyze Kazakhstan's policies against international standards to inform more inclusive and equitable practices.

To provide a structured analysis, the thesis is organized into six main chapters. The literature review chapter examines the intersectionality of gender and Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the broader discourse of inclusive education. In the methodology chapter, a critical analysis approach is presented to examine the intersection of gender and SEN in inclusive education policies. The findings chapter presents key insights from policy analysis. It highlights how gender and SEN impact students' access to inclusive education and identifies policy barriers. The discussion chapter discusses the findings in relation to international policies and recommendations. The final chapter summarizes key insights from the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter traces the conceptual evolution of inclusive education and establishes the theoretical and policy foundations for the study. It begins by outlining the historical progression from segregation to inclusion, highlighting the influence of global movements and policy shifts. It then turns to the concept of intersectionality, explaining how overlapping identities - particularly gender and special educational needs (SEN) - create compounded barriers within education systems. The third section reviews key international frameworks that define and guide inclusive education globally, including those from UNESCO, UNICEF, the UN, and the OECD. Following this, the chapter examines how inclusive education and intersectionality have been conceptualized and implemented in Kazakhstan, emphasizing gaps between policy and practice. The penultimate section explores the political and economic dimensions that influence inclusive education reforms in the Kazakhstani context. Finally, the chapter presents the conceptual framework underpinning this study, which draws on international policy documents and scholarly literature to define the three analytical criteria used in the analysis: equal access, resourcing for intersectional needs, and monitoring and evaluation.

2.1 Development of the Scope of Inclusive Education

The journey towards inclusive education began with a focus on segregated schooling for children with disabilities, particularly those with physical impairments. In the early 20th century, children with disabilities were often excluded from mainstream education and placed in specialized institutions or schools designed solely for their needs (Tomlinson, 2017). These institutions were primarily concerned with physical disabilities, operating on the belief that children with such impairments could not be educated alongside their non-disabled peers (Slee, 2011).

The post-World War II era marked a significant shift in thinking, driven by the broader human rights movement and increased advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities. The principle of normalization, which advocated for the integration of people with disabilities into mainstream society, gained traction during this period (Wolfensberger, 1972). This principle laid the groundwork for the movement towards educational integration, where children with disabilities began to be gradually included in mainstream schools.

The integration phase, particularly prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, was characterized by the placement of children with disabilities into regular schools, often with little modification to the curriculum or teaching methods to accommodate their needs (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011). Although this represented progress from complete segregation, it was criticized for merely placing students with special educational needs in mainstream settings without ensuring they had the necessary support to succeed (Ainscow, 1999).

The shift from integration to inclusion marked a fundamental change in how education systems approached diversity. Unlike integration, which often involves fitting students with disabilities into existing structures, inclusion requires restructuring schools to accommodate the diverse needs of all students (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). This paradigm shift was influenced by several key international declarations and frameworks, including the 1994 Salamanca Statement, which called for inclusive education systems that recognize and accommodate the diversity of learners (UNESCO, 1994).

Inclusive education, as conceptualized in the Salamanca Statement, goes beyond the mere physical presence of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. It emphasizes the need for curricular adaptations, teacher training, and a school culture that values diversity (Booth & Ainscow, 2016). This broader understanding of inclusion also began to encompass other forms of diversity, such as neurodivergence, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic

status, recognizing that barriers to education are not limited to physical disabilities (Florian, 2008).

In recent years, the definition of inclusive education has expanded to include a wide range of identities and experiences. Neurodivergence, which refers to variations in neurological functioning, such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, has become a key area of focus within inclusive education (Armstrong, 2017). The shift towards recognizing neurodiversity reflects a growing awareness that educational systems must accommodate a broad spectrum of cognitive and learning styles, rather than adhering to a one-size-fits-all approach.

Ethnicity and cultural diversity have also become central to discussions on inclusive education. The recognition that students from different ethnic backgrounds may face unique challenges, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and systemic racism, has led to calls for more culturally responsive pedagogy and policies (Banks & Banks, 2010). Inclusive education now increasingly includes strategies for addressing these challenges, ensuring that schools are welcoming and supportive of students from all cultural backgrounds.

Gender is another critical dimension of inclusive education. The intersection of gender with other aspects of identity, such as disability and ethnicity, creates unique barriers to education that must be addressed (Liasidou, 2012). For example, girls with disabilities often face compounded discrimination, both in terms of their gender and their disability, which can limit their access to education and opportunities for academic success. Inclusive education practices are increasingly recognizing the need to address these intersectional challenges to create truly equitable educational environments.

The current literature on inclusive education highlights several emerging trends and future directions. One key trend is the increasing emphasis on intersectionality, which recognizes that students' experiences of exclusion are often shaped by multiple overlapping

identities, such as gender, ethnicity, and disability (Crenshaw, 2013). This perspective is pushing educators and policymakers to develop more nuanced approaches to inclusion that account for the complexity of students' identities and experiences.

2.2 Intersectionality in Inclusive Education

Intersectionality is a critical framework for understanding how different aspects of a person's identity – such as gender, disability, race, and socio-economic status – interact to create unique experiences of oppression or privilege. In the context of inclusive education, intersectionality is essential for addressing the complex needs of students who belong to multiple marginalized groups.

The concept of intersectionality was first articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (2013) to describe the overlapping and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by Black women. Since then, intersectionality has become a widely used framework in social sciences to analyse how various dimensions of identity interact in complex ways (Collins & Bilge, 2016). In education, intersectionality provides a lens for examining how factors such as gender, disability, race, and socio-economic status influence students' educational experiences and outcomes.

This concept has since been adapted by educational theorists such as Artiles, Kozleski, and Waitoller (2011) to critically examine equity in education. Their work highlights the limitations of traditional policy approaches that treat student characteristics (e.g., gender or disability) in isolation. Instead, they argue that effective inclusive education requires policies and practices that recognize how these characteristics intersect, often compounding disadvantages. For instance, a girl with a disability may face more significant barriers than a boy with the same disability due to gendered social expectations and reduced access to support services.

Intersectionality challenges the notion that social identities operate in isolation from one another. Instead, it posits that identities are interconnected and that the experiences of individuals cannot be fully understood by considering each identity separately (Liasidou, 2012). For example, the intersection of identities creates a unique set of challenges and barriers that must be addressed in an inclusive education framework.

The intersection of gender and SEN is particularly relevant in the field of inclusive education. Girls with disabilities often face compounded forms of discrimination that affect their access to education and their experiences within the educational system (Liasidou, 2012). This intersectionality can result in lower enrollment rates, higher dropout rates, and poorer educational outcomes for girls with SEN compared to their male counterparts and non-disabled peers (UNESCO, 2022).

Empirical studies have highlighted the challenges faced by girls with disabilities in accessing inclusive education. For example, a study by Mutua and Dimitrov (2001) in Kenya found that girls with disabilities were less likely to attend school and more likely to drop out than boys with disabilities. The study attributed this disparity to cultural attitudes that devalue the education of girls, particularly those with disabilities, as well as to the lack of gender-sensitive educational policies and practices.

In addition to gender and disability, other factors such as ethnicity and socio-economic status can further compound the challenges faced by students with SEN. For instance, research in the United States has shown that minority girls with disabilities face multiple layers of discrimination, which can result in exclusion from educational opportunities (Artiles et al., 2010). These findings underscore the importance of adopting an intersectional approach in inclusive education policies and practices.

Empirical research on intersectionality in inclusive education has grown in recent years, reflecting a broader recognition of the need to address multiple forms of

marginalization within educational systems. A study by Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) in the UK examined how the intersection of gender, disability, and socio-economic status influenced students' experiences in mainstream schools. The study found that girls from low-income backgrounds with SEN were particularly vulnerable to exclusion, both academically and socially, and that schools often lacked the resources and training needed to support these students effectively.

Another study by Singh (2016) explored the experiences of girls with disabilities in India's inclusive education system. The study highlighted the role of cultural norms and societal attitudes in shaping the educational experiences of these girls, noting that gender-based discrimination often intersected with disability to create significant barriers to inclusion. The findings emphasized the need for culturally responsive and gender-sensitive approaches to inclusive education.

Theoretical insights are echoed by international policy documents. The OECD's Strength through Diversity project (2023) recommends adopting intersectional frameworks to better understand and address educational inequality. UNESCO (2022) similarly emphasizes that failing to consider intersectionality in policy design can lead to partial solutions that benefit some but exclude others.

2.3 Inclusive Education Globally

International organizations play a crucial role in shaping the global agenda for inclusive education. Through conventions, frameworks, and technical assistance, organizations such as the UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the OECD have been instrumental in promoting inclusive education as a fundamental human right and a core component of equitable development (UNESCO, 1994; UN, 2006; OECD, 2020; UNICEF, 2012). Their policy documents not only articulate principles of non-discrimination and access but also

provide explicit and implicit evaluative criteria - such as teacher preparedness, resource allocation, and monitoring systems- that inform national reforms.

The United Nations has served as a foundational actor in the international recognition of inclusive education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989, was among the first to affirm the right of every child to education, regardless of ability. Article 23 of the CRC specifically highlights the need for “special care” and support for children with disabilities (United Nations, 1989). This foundational principle was expanded upon in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006), which marked a paradigm shift from integration to inclusion. Article 24 of the CRPD calls for inclusive education systems at all levels, explicitly rejecting the segregation of learners based on disability (United Nations, 2006).

UNESCO has been a central driver in operationalizing these commitments into education policy frameworks. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) advocates for the development of inclusive schools that accommodate all learners, particularly those with special educational needs. It emphasizes systemic reform, teacher training, and community engagement as prerequisites for inclusive practice. Further, the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015), aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4, sets out a global commitment to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” It highlights the need for effective monitoring systems, increased investment in disadvantaged learners, and disaggregated data to support evidence-based policymaking (UNESCO, 2015).

UNICEF complements these efforts with targeted initiatives aimed at implementation in national contexts. Rooted in the principle that all children deserve equal access to quality education, UNICEF supports countries in building inclusive systems, especially for the most marginalized groups - including girls, children with disabilities, and those in conflict-affected

regions (UNICEF, 2023). Its Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children exemplifies this work by identifying barriers to access and designing policy interventions that reach excluded learners (UNICEF, 2015). Through technical assistance and advocacy, UNICEF helps governments institutionalize inclusive practices and measure progress toward equity goals.

The OECD has also made significant contributions, particularly through its evidence-based research. The OECD's Education at a Glance reports and its 2023 Working Papers on Intersectionality in Education provide a conceptual framework for addressing the educational needs of students with multiple, overlapping identities. These documents emphasize the importance of policy strategies that target students experiencing compounded disadvantages and advocate for the provision of differentiated and adequately resourced interventions (OECD, 2023).

These international frameworks influence national education systems in both normative and practical ways. Firstly, they offer a shared language and legal foundation upon which governments can build their own inclusive policies. For example, many countries have revised their education laws following their ratification of the CRPD (Sharma et al., 2013). Secondly, they provide financial and technical resources that support policy implementation - especially in low- and middle-income countries with limited domestic capacity. Studies show that in regions such as Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, inclusive education reforms have often been catalyzed by UNESCO's and UNICEF's sustained engagement (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Howgego et al., 2014).

Importantly, these frameworks do not only prescribe values - they also offer analytical benchmarks that can be used to evaluate national policy. Across documents such as the Salamanca Statement, the Incheon Framework, and the CRPD, key evaluative themes emerge: ensuring equal access, investing in teacher training, providing adequate and targeted resources, implementing monitoring mechanisms, and embedding intersectional perspectives

in policy discourse. These themes directly inform the conceptual framework and analytical criteria used in this study to evaluate Kazakhstan's inclusive education policies.

2.4 Inclusive Education and Intersectionality in Kazakhstan

Inclusive education is fundamentally supported by international legal frameworks, including declarations and conventions under the aegis of the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which advocate for the right to education and the inadmissibility of discrimination. Key international instruments include (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009):

- The Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), Kazakhstan ratified this convention on 15 April 2016,
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ratification on 16 February 1994,
- The World Declaration on Education for All (1990),
- The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994),
- The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), ratified by Kazakhstan in February 2015,
- UNESCO Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2005).

In Kazakhstan, the development of inclusive education is supported by the Constitution and national laws, including:

- The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002),
- The Law on Education (2007),
- The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002),

- The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005).

Despite shared policy intentions derived from international frameworks, legislative and provisional outcomes at the national level vary significantly due to differing sociocultural, political, historical, and economic contexts (Smyth et al., 2014). Each country's journey towards compliance with international conventions is unique, influenced by the potential for different interpretations of the same texts.

While Kazakhstan has taken significant steps toward inclusive education by aligning national legislation with international standards, research consistently reveals a disconnection between policy and practice. For instance, Vodopyanova (2022) found that although inclusive education has become a key focus in Kazakhstan, many teachers still do not have a clear understanding of its principles or how to effectively support students with SEN. This suggests that current policies may lack specific definitions and practical implementation guidelines, thereby complicating efforts to address intersectionality in inclusive education.

This policy-practice gap is further emphasized in Agavelyan et al.'s (2022) study, which surveyed 416 teachers in Pavlodar and revealed that factors such as school location, teacher gender, and confidence in teaching children with SEN significantly influenced attitudes toward inclusion. Interestingly, while international studies often find that female teachers tend to hold more positive attitudes toward inclusive education, this study found a slightly more positive attitude among male teachers. Moreover, rural school teachers demonstrated a greater openness to inclusion than their urban counterparts. These findings reflect that inclusive education policy may not sufficiently account for how intersecting factors like gender, geography, and professional training influence teacher perspectives, ultimately affecting implementation on the ground.

One of the core areas highlighted in recent research is teacher preparation. Abdulatif's (2022) study identified various region-specific challenges that policymakers and stakeholders must consider when designing inclusive systems. A central concern was the inadequacy of teacher education in preparing professionals for inclusive practices. In alignment with this, Makoelle and Burmistrova (2021) found that teacher training institutions in Kazakhstan lack systematic strategies and specialized coursework dedicated to inclusive education. This deficiency in foundational training further widens the implementation gap, especially in rural and underserved areas where access to professional development is often limited.

Compounding these challenges is the persistence of outdated terminology. Makoelle (2020) argued that Kazakhstan's continued use of Soviet-era concepts such as defectology or correctional pedagogy reinforces deficit-oriented views of disability. These linguistic frameworks, embedded in policy and institutional discourse, shape how teachers and administrators conceptualize inclusion - often limiting it to physical or cognitive impairments. As a result, broader dimensions of diversity, including gender or socio-economic background, are frequently overlooked. From an intersectional perspective, this narrow understanding may result in double marginalization.

While inclusive education is strongly supported in Kazakhstan's legislation, its enactment in schools is impeded by weak conceptual frameworks, insufficient teacher preparation, and entrenched linguistic legacies. As Maulsharif et al. (2022) observed, Kazakhstan has made commendable legislative progress, but the practical implementation of inclusive education continues to lag behind. The authors emphasize that the country's transition from policy to practice is still in progress, and the alignment of laws with actionable, context-responsive strategies remains incomplete.

Together, these studies demonstrate that inclusive education in Kazakhstan is not only hindered by implementation gaps but by deeper systemic issues rooted in policy discourse,

teacher preparation, and the failure to address intersecting dimensions of identity. Therefore, a policy-focused study is essential to examine how legislative texts conceptualize inclusion and whether they offer adequate guidance for practice - particularly in addressing overlapping forms of marginalization.

2.5 Political and Economic Dimensions of Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan

Political ideologies and policy decisions greatly influence the scope of inclusive education. According to Ball (2008), educational policies are often aligned with political ideologies that shape the allocation of resources for SEN students. In Kazakhstan, although legislative frameworks like the “Law on Education” (amended in 2019) demonstrate a commitment to inclusive education, the implementation is hindered by inconsistent financial and political support (Tomlinson, 2017). Ozga (2000) similarly argues that education policy-making is a complex web, with multiple stakeholders influencing the direction and effectiveness of these policies. In contrast, Slee (2011) critiques political decisions that lead to exclusion within schooling systems, noting that a lack of coordinated effort among governmental departments often worsen inequalities, as in Kazakhstan’s education system, particularly for students with SEN and those from marginalized gender groups.

While Ball (2008) and Tomlinson (2017) agree on the significant influence of political ideologies, they differ in their focus; Ball emphasizes overarching political ideologies, whereas Tomlinson highlights specific constraints, such as budget limitations, that are deeply rooted in regional disparities. Slee (2011) extends these critiques by illustrating how these political obstacles can create exclusionary practices within schools, a view that supports the need for stronger inter-ministerial collaboration in Kazakhstan.

Insufficient inter-ministerial collaboration weakens the holistic approach needed for successful inclusive education. The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) provides a framework advocating inclusive education for all,

including those with disabilities. However, in Kazakhstan, fragmented efforts among various governmental bodies hinder the consistent application of this framework, leading to disparities in educational quality and accessibility for marginalized groups (OECD, 2012). This lack of coordinated policy application indicates a need for more comprehensive inter-ministerial collaboration to achieve equitable education outcomes.

The economic dimension of inclusive education is equally vital. Becker's (2009) human capital theory suggests that investing in education is essential for national economic growth, underscoring the need for resource allocation that accommodates the diverse needs of SEN students. However, as pointed out by the OECD (2004), economic investment in SEN initiatives remains limited in many countries, including Kazakhstan, where general education improvements often take priority over specialized support. Similarly, Pijl, Meijer, and Hegarty (1997) indicate that financial limitations are a universal barrier to inclusive education, limiting access to resources like trained staff and adaptive materials.

While the OECD (2004) advocates for targeted funding to address SEN needs, Reindal (2008) proposes a social-relational model that highlights the need for integrated support, which can be more costly but beneficial for long-term inclusion. Kazakhstan's current reliance on a medical model of disability reflects a more restrictive approach, contrasting with the more resource-intensive social-relational model suggested by Reindal (2008). UNESCO (2009) further argues for sustained investment in inclusive education, emphasizing that teacher training and support services are critical for success.

Economic constraints heavily impact the resources available for inclusive education in Kazakhstan. According to Becker's (2009) human capital theory, investing in inclusive education is a strategic move that yields long-term economic benefits, particularly as it develops a skilled and inclusive workforce. However, funding limitations often restrict the scope and effectiveness of Kazakhstan's inclusive education initiatives. For instance,

resources for teacher training, adaptive materials, and facilities specifically designed for SEN and gender-sensitive needs remain limited, especially in rural areas.

Slee (2011) notes that countries with strong centralized governance structures, such as Kazakhstan, often face difficulties in adopting flexible, inclusive practices. This critique supports the argument that Kazakhstan's education policy would benefit from decentralization to accommodate regional needs and disparities.

Addressing the political and economic dimensions of inclusive education is critical for Kazakhstan's progress toward equitable education. Political challenges, including insufficient accountability and collaboration across government bodies, hinder effective policy implementation, while economic constraints restrict funding for essential resources (OECD, 2019).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is underpinned by the theory of intersectionality (as discussed in Section 1.4), which emphasizes how overlapping identities, particularly gender and special educational needs (SEN), create unique experiences of disadvantage in educational contexts. Importantly, this study adopts a conceptual framework grounded in international policy documents and scholarly literature to guide the development of analytical criteria. The framework integrates principles from:

The World Declaration on Education for All (1990) – emphasizes inclusive, equitable education for all and the need for robust monitoring systems.

The Salamanca Statement (1994) – advocates for inclusive schools to accommodate all children, particularly those with special educational needs.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) – promotes the full participation of individuals with disabilities in inclusive education systems.

OECD Working Papers on Intersectionality in Education (2023) – provides a framework for addressing intersecting identities and the provision of targeted resources.

Artiles, Kozleski, and Waitoller (2011) – offer a critical perspective on equity and inclusive education, emphasizing the sociocultural and systemic dimensions of exclusion.

The Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015) - articulates global commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, emphasizing accountability, financing, and data monitoring.

UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2022) - examines progress and gaps in inclusive education implementation worldwide and highlights the importance of intersectionality, disaggregated data, and policy responsiveness to diverse learner needs.

UNICEF. (2015). Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All – identifies barriers to access for marginalized learners and emphasizes policy interventions needed to reach children excluded from education, including those with disabilities and girls.

Together, these sources underscore the importance of addressing overlapping barriers (gender and SEN) and provide evidence-based recommendations for inclusive education systems.

This framework supports the identification of three analytical criteria used in this study:

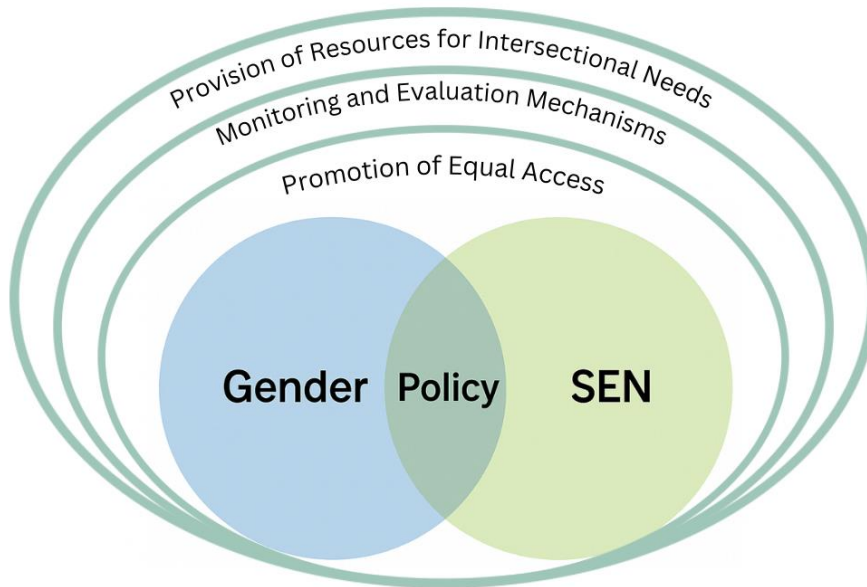
Promotion of Equal Access

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs

Figure 2

Intersectionality of Gender and Special Educational Needs within Inclusive Education Policy Frameworks



This model visually communicates that effective inclusive education policy must not only address gender and SEN separately, but also should:

- recognize their intersection,
- be supported by layered systems of access, training, accountability, and resourcing,
- be responsive to the complexity of overlapping identities and barriers.

Summary

This chapter has explored a role of inclusive education, a critical factor for achieving social equity, economic growth, and sustainable development. In Kazakhstan, while the government has committed to inclusive education policies, implementing these policies remains challenging. Existing literature supports the economic and social benefits of inclusive education, but political and economic challenges continue to hinder progress. This chapter also emphasized the role of international organizations in promoting inclusive education, particularly through UN conventions, UNESCO policies, and UNICEF's advocacy efforts and OECD's working papers.. These organizations have significantly influenced national education policies by providing frameworks and support for implementing inclusive

practices that ensure the participation of all learners, including those with disabilities.

However, as the literature review shows, the success of these policies depends not only on their adoption but also on their alignment with local contexts and sustained commitment at the national level.

The chapter has also delved into the importance of intersectionality in inclusive education, particularly in addressing the needs of students who face multiple layers of marginalization due to factors such as gender and SEN.

The concept of intersectionality is particularly relevant in the context of Kazakhstan, where educational policies are increasingly being inspected for their inclusivity and responsiveness to the diverse needs of students. Kazakhstan has made significant progress in developing legal frameworks that support inclusive education, yet the intersection of gender and SEN remains a critical area that requires further attention.

To guide the analysis, a conceptual framework was developed by synthesizing key international policy documents (e.g., the Salamanca Statement, CRPD, Incheon Declaration) and academic literature on intersectionality and inclusive education (e.g., Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011). This framework serves as the foundation for developing analytical criteria used in the subsequent policy evaluation.

The next chapter will outline the research methodology used to examine how Kazakhstan's inclusive education policies address the intersectionality of gender and SEN, and how they align with international guidelines. The methodology chapter will detail the research design, data collection methods, and analytical framework employed in this study to assess the effectiveness and alignment of national policies with global standards.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the research design and methodological approach used to examine how Kazakhstan's inclusive education policies address the intersection of gender and special educational needs (SEN). It begins by justifying the choice of a qualitative policy analysis research design, which is selected to explore the complex social, historical, and institutional dimensions shaping educational policies in Kazakhstan. The chapter then introduces critical policy analysis (CPA) as the guiding analytical framework, emphasizing its capacity to reveal underlying discourses, power dynamics, and value systems embedded in national policy texts.

The chapter proceeds to describe the policy identification and selection process, outlining the four key legal documents that form the basis of the analysis. This is followed by a clarification of what constitutes "policy" within the scope of this research. The next section details the establishment of analytical criteria, which are derived from international frameworks (e.g., UNESCO, UNICEF, OECD, CRPD) and academic literature on intersectionality and inclusive education.

Subsequently, the data collection and coding procedures are explained, including the application of Saldaña's (2016) two-cycle coding method - combining descriptive and values coding to identify both explicit content and implicit assumptions within the texts. The chapter then describes how the critical analysis and interpretation phase is conducted using Fischer et al.'s (2007) CPA model to assess policy alignment with global standards.

Finally, the chapter outlines the ethical considerations of the study and concludes by summarizing the key methodological choices. These steps establish the foundation for the policy analysis and findings discussed in Chapter 4.

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative policy analysis research design was chosen due to the complexity of educational policies regarding gender and special educational needs (SEN) inclusion in Kazakhstan. These policies are shaped by historical, cultural, and institutional factors, requiring deep analysis to understand the motivations, processes, and contexts behind their formation. Qualitative inquiry is particularly suited for examining how meaning is constructed and interpreted within specific socio political contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This research therefore seeks to explore the underlying assumptions, values, and discursive patterns embedded in policy texts and the broader contexts in which these policies were developed - especially as they relate to the intersection of gender and SEN inclusion.

Critical policy analysis (CPA) is the chosen approach for this research, as it allows for an in-depth examination of how Kazakhstan's inclusive education policies align with or diverge from international standards. CPA is a well-established method in policy studies that examines policies within their broader socio-political and economic contexts (Taylor, 1997). It focuses on understanding the power dynamics, interests, and discourses that shape policy decisions and implementation. Critical policy analysis has emerged as a prominent tradition in educational research, examining discourses and power relations that influence policy construction and implementation (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023).

Unlike traditional approaches that treat policy problems as given, CPA interrogates how discourse, language, and text set the context for how policy problems and solutions are conceptualized (O'Connor & Rudolph, 2023). CPA bridges the gap between global and local levels, integrating theory and empirical studies by examining how policies are localized and adapted within national contexts (Rata, 2014).

The following subsections will be aligned to the Fischer et al. (2007) critical policy analysis approach, involving policy identification and selection, establishing key analytical

criteria, data collection and coding, critical analysis and interpretation, comparative evaluation with the international frameworks, and discussion and reflection.

3.2 Policy Identification and Selection

Policies selected for analysis were the following:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995). The Constitution serves as the fundamental legal framework, guaranteeing the right to education for all citizens, including those with special educational needs (SEN), and ensuring gender equality. It provides a legal basis for analyzing Kazakhstan's commitment to inclusive education and its alignment with international human rights standards (United Nations, 2016).

2. The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002). This law establishes the rights of children to protection, education, and development, and affirms the state's responsibility to safeguard these rights without discrimination. It serves as a foundation for assessing how child-focused policies address the needs of learners with intersecting vulnerabilities.

3. The Law on Education (2007). This is the primary legislative document governing Kazakhstan's education system. It outlines principles of accessibility and inclusiveness and includes provisions related to children with SEN. The law is central to understanding how inclusion is operationalized within the national education structure.

4. The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002). This law specifies the mechanisms for providing educational, psychological, and social support to children with disabilities. It is essential for evaluating how state support services contribute to the realization of inclusive education.

5. The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005). This law defines the rights of persons with disabilities and the state's

obligations to create barrier-free environments, including access to education. It helps assess how inclusive education is supported through broader social policy.

These documents were chosen due to their significance in shaping the national education system and their direct relevance to inclusive education.

3.2.1 Definition of Policy

For the purposes of this study, policy is defined as any formal national document that outlines the legal, strategic, or procedural framework for inclusive education in Kazakhstan. This includes laws, state programs, ministerial decrees, and strategic policy documents issued by governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Education and Science (Ministry of Education). These documents are considered primary sources, as they reflect the state's formal commitments and provide insight into how inclusive education - particularly with regard to gender and special educational needs (SEN) - is framed, implemented, and monitored. This definition aligns with Ball's (1993) view of policy as both a text and a discourse that constructs meaning and guides practice.

3.3 Establishment of Key Analytical Criteria

These criteria are derived directly from the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2, which synthesizes international policy frameworks and academic scholarship, particularly the works of Artiles, Kozleski, and Waitoller (2011). Rather than arbitrarily selecting indicators, this study constructs a coherent set of criteria based on globally recognized standards, scholarly discourse, and intersectional equity principles.

The international documents that guided the development of the analytical criteria include: the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), the Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015), UNICEF's Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All (2015), and OECD's Working

papers on intersectionality (OECD, 2023). These documents consistently identify key themes such as access, availability of support resources, and accountability mechanisms.

In parallel, Artiles et al. (2011) argue that policies should account for the sociocultural construction of difference and consider how power and identity intersect in educational spaces. They emphasize the importance of policy discourses that actively acknowledge intersectionality and systemically marginalized identities. This scholarly foundation enhances the analytical rigor of the selected criteria and ensures they are aligned with equity-oriented policy research.

The three analytical criteria, as derived from the conceptual framework, are:

1. Promotion of Equal Access to Education for Girls and Boys with SEN

Based on UNESCO, the CRPD (2006), and the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) commitments to nondiscrimination and inclusion.

Reflects OECD (2023) and UNICEF (2015) emphasis on reducing enrollment gaps.

Key questions:

1.1 Does the policy explicitly address gender equality in access to education for children with SEN?

1.2 Is gender a recognized ground for non-discrimination in national laws or education policies?

2. Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs

Informed by the Salamanca Statement's emphasis on providing specialized equipment, support staff, and accessible infrastructure.

Reinforced by OECD (2023), UNICEF, and the GEM Report (2022), which highlight the importance of funding mechanisms that respond to multiple disadvantages.

Key questions:

2.1 Does the policy allocate specific resources (funding, personnel, infrastructure) for learners with overlapping disadvantages?

2.2 Are intersectional needs (gender + SEN) explicitly mentioned in resource planning?

3. Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms for Gender and SEN Inclusivity

Grounded in UNESCO (2015), the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), and GEM Report (2022) guidance for results-based implementation.

Responds to calls for accountability by Waitoller and Kozleski (2011).

Key questions:

3.1 Does the policy include tools for monitoring gender- and SEN-inclusive education?

3.2 Are indicators disaggregated by gender and disability to enable intersectional analysis?

These three criteria were selected due to their consistent recurrence across global frameworks and their alignment with the intersectional perspective adopted in this research. While other dimensions of inclusive education are acknowledged, this study deliberately centers on the intersection of gender and special educational needs (SEN), prioritizing criteria that are directly relevant to these concerns.

The criteria are also directly aligned with the study's main research question: To what extent do current inclusive education policies in Kazakhstan address the intersectionality of gender and special educational needs, and how do these policies align with international guidelines and standards? As articulated in the conceptual framework, each criterion functions as a lens for evaluating the inclusivity, equity, and responsiveness embedded within Kazakhstan's national policy landscape.

3.4 Data Collection and Coding

The analysis of documents followed a systematic and interpretive approach grounded in critical policy analysis (CPA) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their content and relevance to the research objectives. CPA views policy as a product of power relations, discourse, and ideology, rather than as neutral or technical texts (Bacchi, 2009; Taylor, 1997). The process consisted of three main stages: initial reading and familiarization, first-cycle coding and second-cycle coding.

In the first stage, all documents were carefully reviewed to gain a broad understanding of their content, tone, and structure. This step involved identifying key terms related to inclusion, gender equality, and special educational needs (SEN).

Following familiarization, qualitative document analysis using Saldaña's (2016) two-cycle coding method was conducted. While the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education (2007, as amended) served as one illustrative example for detailed coding, the broader analysis draws on all national policy documents identified in this study to support thematic interpretation.

First-Cycle Coding

In the first cycle, combination of descriptive coding and values coding, as recommended by Saldaña (2016) was used (Appendix 1). Descriptive codes were assigned to capture the basic topic of text excerpts (e.g., gender omission, universalist language), while values codes were applied to reflect participants' or institutional beliefs, attitudes, or values embedded in the policy (e.g., ignoring intersectionality, masking gendered experiences).

For example, Article 5(2-1) of the law defines inclusive education as ensuring equal access for "children with special educational needs," but it makes no reference to gender-differentiated needs. This was coded as gender neutrality (descriptive) and lack of differentiated needs (values). Another excerpt from Article 3 outlines general education

principles, including gender equality, but does not connect this principle to inclusive education, leading to the codes general gender discourse and superficial commitment to gender inclusion.

Second-Cycle Analysis

In the second cycle, the first-cycle codes were organized into pattern codes and grouped to form three major themes, aligning with Saldaña's (2016) strategy of synthesizing and abstracting categories.

This dual-method strategy supports a nuanced, layered interpretation of the data and aligns with Saldaña's (2016) recommendation that combining coding methods enhances analytic depth, particularly in research examining both the explicit content and the implicit meanings of texts.

3.5 Critical Analysis and Interpretation

Following Fischer et al. (2007), the next step was to critically analyse and interpret the obtained data from the policies. A critical evaluation of Kazakhstan's policies was conducted to determine their alignment with or divergence from international guidelines. This analysis was guided by the main and supporting research questions. The conceptual framework and the three analytical criteria developed in this study were used as guiding tools for the analysis. Through this critical lens, the study aimed to identify strengths and weaknesses in the existing policies and assess their practical applicability in the Kazakhstani context (Fischer, Miller, & Sidney, 2007).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study did not involve human participants and relied solely on the analysis of publicly available policy documents. As such, it did not require ethical approval. All sources used in the analysis are publicly accessible and appropriately cited to ensure academic integrity.

Summary

In summary, this chapter presented the research design and methodological approach used to explore the intersectionality of gender and special educational needs within Kazakhstan's inclusive education policies. A qualitative, interpretive strategy grounded in critical policy analysis was chosen to uncover the ideological, discursive, and structural dimensions embedded in national policy texts. Four legal documents were selected based on their relevance to inclusive education and social protection.

Analytical criteria were derived from a synthesis of international policy frameworks (e.g., UNESCO, UN CRPD, OECD) and academic theories of intersectionality and inclusive policy (e.g., Artiles et al., 2011), leading to four key evaluation dimensions. Document analysis employed Saldaña's (2016) two-cycle coding method, using both descriptive and values coding to capture surface content and deeper assumptions within the texts. The final section presented the ethical considerations of this document-based study, affirming the transparency and integrity of the research process.

Together, the methodological steps outlined in this chapter establish a foundation for the subsequent policy analysis presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the results of analyzing 4 policies according to Fischer's critical policy analysis criteria. Namely, policies selected for analysis were the following:

1. The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002).
2. The Law on Education (2007).
3. The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002).
4. The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005).

These documents were analyzed according to the three analytical criteria, as derived from the conceptual framework, namely: 1. Promotion of Equal Access to Education for Girls and Boys with SEN; 2. Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs; and 3. Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms for Gender and SEN Inclusivity.

Finally, within the four national policies, pattern codes were highlighted and organized in the second cycle coding into three dominant themes: (1) Formal Commitments Without Intersectional Specificity, (2) Absence of Institutional and Professional Support, and (3) Invisibility of Multiple Vulnerabilities in Monitoring and Resource Planning.

4.1. Document 1: The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002)

4.1.1. Criterion 1. The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002) affirms children's rights to education and non-discrimination but does not explicitly address gender equality in the context of children with special educational needs (SEN). Article 10(1) states, "Every child has the right to education. The state shall ensure the availability and free provision of preschool, basic general and secondary education" (The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2002). This clause guarantees

access but remains gender-neutral and does not differentiate between girls and boys with disabilities. Furthermore, Article 8(1) declares that “All children shall be equal in their rights,” and prohibits discrimination on grounds such as origin, social status, or health conditions — yet sex or gender is not included as an explicit ground of protection (The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2002). This gap was coded descriptively as gender omission and universalist equality, and in values coding as lack of differentiated needs. Consequently, the law reflects a commitment to general equality without advancing targeted inclusion for girls and boys with SEN.

4.1.2. Criterion 2. The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002) acknowledges the need for state support to vulnerable children but lacks any reference to specific resources for children with intersectional disadvantages, such as gender and disability combined. For instance, Article 9(2) provides that “The State shall provide special support to orphans and children left without parental care, as well as children with disabilities and children in difficult life situations,” but it does not elaborate on the type or scope of support (The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2002). There is no mention of specialized equipment, inclusive infrastructure, or personnel trained to meet complex and overlapping needs. The law also fails to incorporate gender as a factor in resource planning, thereby missing the intersectional lens required to meet the differentiated needs of girls and boys with SEN. These gaps were coded descriptively as nonspecific resource guarantees and lack of operational detail, and in values coding as resource neutrality and ignoring intersectionality. The law’s abstract provisions do not ensure tangible support mechanisms for intersectionality marginalized children.

4.1.3. Criterion 3. The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002) does not establish any monitoring or evaluation systems for assessing gender and SEN inclusivity in education or other child-related services. While the law emphasizes state

responsibility to protect children's rights, it remains silent on how the implementation of these rights will be tracked or assessed. For instance, Article 4(2) states that "The authorized bodies shall monitor the observance of the rights of the child and take measures to restore violated rights," but the provision does not mention any indicators, let alone disaggregated data by gender and disability (The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2002). This was coded descriptively as absence of disaggregated indicators and vague monitoring obligations, and in values coding as lack of transparency and absence of accountability mechanisms. Therefore, the law lacks the evaluative tools needed to support evidence-based, intersectional policy adjustments.

4.2. Document 2: The Law on Education (2007)

4.2.1. Criterion 1. The Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2007) establishes general principles of equal access to education, including for persons with disabilities, but it fails to address the intersection of gender and special educational needs (SEN). Article 3(1-1) states, "The state policy in the field of education is based on the principles of equal rights of every citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan to quality education," and promotes "accessibility of all levels of education" (Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007). However, this right is framed through universalist language, without specific mention of girls and boys with disabilities. Article 8(2) mentions that "Children with special educational needs shall be provided with special conditions for education," which is a positive recognition of disability-specific support, yet gender is absent from this provision (Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007). This was coded descriptively as universalist equality and gender omission, and in values coding as lack of differentiated needs. As a result, the law does not adequately promote equal access to education for learners at the intersection of gender and SEN.

4.2.2. Criterion 2. The Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2007)

makes several references to the provision of resources for learners with special educational needs (SEN), but it does not incorporate an intersectional lens that considers how gender and disability interact in shaping educational access and outcomes. Article 8(2) outlines that “children with special educational needs shall be provided with special conditions for education,” including “adapted educational programs, special teaching methods, technical means, and services” (Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007). This reflects a commitment to disability-specific support and was coded as recognition of specialized resources. However, there is no mention of gender as a factor in resource allocation or differentiated planning, nor any indication that overlapping vulnerabilities (e.g., being both a girl and a child with SEN) are considered. This absence was coded descriptively as no intersectional planning and gender-blind resourcing, and in values coding as resource neutrality and ignoring intersectionality. Without intersectional resource strategies, equity remains incomplete.

4.2.3. Criterion 3. The Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2007)

includes general references to state control and evaluation, but it does not specify any monitoring tools or indicators that track gender- and SEN-inclusive education. For instance, Article 5(4) states that one of the principles of education policy is “state control over the quality of education,” and Article 56 empowers the authorized body to “monitor compliance with legislation in the field of education” (Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007). However, these provisions are framed in broad administrative terms, and the law does not provide mechanisms for data collection disaggregated by gender and disability. The absence of specific tools or indicators to assess inclusivity was coded descriptively as lack of disaggregated data and vague monitoring processes, and in values coding as absence of

accountability mechanisms and invisibility of intersectional outcomes. As such, efforts to assess and improve equity in the system remain structurally unsupported.

4.3. Document 3: The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002)

4.3.1. Criterion 1. The Law on Social and Medical Pedagogical Correctional Assistance for Children with Disabilities provides a focused legal basis for supporting children with disabilities in Kazakhstan, yet it does not integrate gender considerations into its framing of inclusive education. Article 5(1) states that “Children with disabilities are provided with special pedagogical and psychological-pedagogical assistance based on the principle of respect for the dignity of the child and the need to create conditions for their adaptation and integration into society” (Law on Social and Medical Pedagogical Correctional Assistance for Children with Disabilities, 2002). While this provision affirms support for children with SEN, it remains gender-neutral and does not acknowledge how gender may shape access to such assistance. Article 4(2) emphasizes the “equal rights of all children with disabilities to receive social and educational assistance,” yet again does not specify whether both girls and boys face different challenges in accessing such support (Law on Social and Medical Pedagogical Correctional Assistance for Children with Disabilities, 2002). These provisions were coded descriptively as gender omission and universalist SEN framing, and in values coding as lack of differentiated needs.

4.3.2. Criterion 2. The Law on Social and Medical Pedagogical Correctional Assistance for Children with Disabilities outlines the types of services and institutional infrastructure available for children with SEN, yet it does not incorporate an intersectional approach that accounts for both gender and disability in resource planning. Article 6 specifies that “Children with disabilities are provided with special pedagogical assistance in special organizations, as well as in general educational institutions with special conditions,”

including psychological-medical-pedagogical consultations and rehabilitation centers (Law on Social and Medical Pedagogical Correctional Assistance for Children with Disabilities, 2002). While this signals commitment to specialized infrastructure and personnel, there is no indication that resource provision is differentiated by gender. Moreover, Article 10(2) notes that correctional assistance is financed from “state and local budgets,” but it does not include targeted funding or mechanisms to address the compounded barriers faced by girls with disabilities. These aspects were coded descriptively as recognition of SEN-specific resources and lack of gender-specific planning, and in values coding as resource neutrality and ignoring intersectionality. As a result, while disability is well-accounted for, gender remains absent from resource strategy.

4.3.4. Criterion 3. The Law on Social and Medical Pedagogical Correctional Assistance for Children with Disabilities includes organizational structures for identifying and supporting children with SEN but lacks any monitoring or evaluation mechanisms that incorporate gender-disaggregated data or intersectional analysis. Article 8 outlines the roles of psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions (PMPCs), stating that they are responsible for “assessment and recommendations for the educational development of children with disabilities” (Law on Social and Medical Pedagogical Correctional Assistance for Children with Disabilities, 2002). However, these commissions function primarily as diagnostic and support bodies rather than entities tasked with systematic monitoring or accountability. The law does not mention any indicators or require that data be collected on the basis of both gender and disability, nor does it describe any procedures for evaluating the outcomes of inclusion policies. This was coded descriptively as diagnostic infrastructure without outcome tracking and no disaggregated data requirements, and in values coding as lack of accountability mechanisms and invisibility of intersectional outcomes.

4.4. Document 4: Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005)

4.4.1. Criterion 1. The Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005) affirms the rights of people with disabilities to education and social participation, but it does not address gender-specific barriers or promote equal access to education for girls and boys with special educational needs (SEN). Article 14 states that “Disabled persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan shall have all of social, economic and individual rights and freedoms, vested by the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan,” including the right to “education, free choice of form of activity, as well as labour” (Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons, 2005). However, while this provision recognizes general rights for disabled persons, it does not differentiate these rights by gender or age group (e.g., girls and boys with disabilities). Article 29(1) guarantees free primary, basic secondary, and general secondary education for disabled persons but again lacks any reference to gendered differences in access, retention, or outcomes (Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons, 2005). This was coded descriptively as gender omission and disability-specific universalism, and in values coding as lack of differentiated needs and formal equality without intersectionality. This law fails to acknowledge that gender can compound disability-based exclusion, particularly in schooling contexts. The legal language promotes a uniform approach to disability rights, which inadvertently obscures the lived realities of girls and boys with SEN.

4.4.2. Criterion 2. The Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005) outlines a wide range of resources and support mechanisms for persons with disabilities, including medical, social, and professional rehabilitation, but it lacks an intersectional perspective that addresses how gender and disability may interact to shape resource needs. Article 21 provides that “Social rehabilitation of disabled persons shall

include... provision of special social services at home... and social services of a specialist of sign language... sixty hours per year,” as well as legal assistance and technical support (Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons, 2005). Similarly, Article 22 mandates the provision of “prosthetic and orthopedic aid, technical auxiliary (compensatory) assets and special means of transport” in accordance with individual rehabilitation programs. These reflect a strong commitment to disability-specific resources, and were coded descriptively as recognition of SEN-specific resources. However, nowhere in the law is gender mentioned as a factor in how resources are allocated, planned, or adapted. This was coded as gender-blind resourcing and no intersectional planning, and in values coding as resource neutrality and ignoring intersectionality. Thus, resource distribution is comprehensive but non-differentiated, which risks reinforcing hidden inequities.

4.4.3. Criterion 3. The Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005) includes provisions for state control and oversight, but it does not establish specific monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that assess inclusivity in education through a gender and disability lens. Article 37 states that “The state control in the field of social protection of invalids is carried out by the authorized body... in the form of check and preventive control with visiting of the subject (object) of control” (Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons, 2005). While this indicates a general system of oversight, the law provides no tools, indicators, or requirements for data disaggregation by gender or special educational needs. Moreover, Article 7(7) allows authorities to monitor “causes, structure and state of disablement,” yet this is framed in biomedical rather than educational or intersectional terms. These were coded descriptively as general administrative monitoring and absence of inclusive evaluation tools, and in values coding as lack of intersectional accountability and invisibility of gendered outcomes. The absence of intersectional disaggregated indicators limits the effectiveness of inclusive policy implementation.

Summary

This chapter critically analyzed four key policy documents in Kazakhstan through the lens of three analytical criteria derived from international frameworks on inclusive education: (1) Promotion of Equal Access to Education for Girls and Boys with SEN, (2) Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs, and (3) Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms for Gender and SEN Inclusivity. Using Saldaña's (2016) two-cycle coding method, the first-cycle coding revealed consistent patterns of gender omission, universalist legal framing, and absence of intersectional language, while values coding identified lack of differentiated needs, resource neutrality, and lack of accountability mechanisms.

These codes were organized in the second cycle into three dominant themes: (1) Formal Commitments Without Intersectional Specificity, (2) Absence of Institutional and Professional Support, and (3) Invisibility of Multiple Vulnerabilities in Monitoring and Resource Planning. Although several documents, particularly the Laws on Education and Social Protection, demonstrated a legal commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities, none explicitly addressed how gender may intersect with disability to compound educational disadvantage. Teacher preparation was largely absent across all texts, and monitoring mechanisms failed to incorporate disaggregated data or intersectional indicators.

As a result, Kazakhstan's current legislative framework supports the concept of inclusive education in principle but lacks the intersectional framing, resource planning, and accountability systems necessary to realize equitable access and outcomes for girls and boys with special educational needs.

In the next chapter 'Discussion', the alignment of the findings to the international regulatory policies will be provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will look at the similarities and differences between the findings derived from analyzing 4 policies in Kazakhstan and the international policies, briefly reviewed in the literature review and methodology sections. The chapter will be organized by analytical criteria, particularly (1) Promotion of Equal Access to Education for Girls and Boys with SEN; (2) Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs; and (3) Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms for Gender and SEN Inclusivity; and their alignment to the international policies, namely: (1) OECD Working Paper No. 302 (2023); (2) UNESCO & UNICEF (2015) – “Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All”; (3) Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2016); (4) UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and (5) The Salamanca Statement (1994).

5.1. Criterion 1: Promotion of Equal Access to Education for Girls and Boys with SEN

All four policy documents analyzed (“The Law on the Rights of the Child (2002)”, “The Law on Education (2007)”, “The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002)”, and “The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2005)”) confirm the right to education using universalist language. However, they fail to acknowledge gender as a distinct axis of educational inequality when intersecting with special educational needs (SEN). The “OECD Working Paper No. 302 (2023)” emphasizes that an intersectional approach “questions the common classification of individuals into groups (male vs. female, immigrant vs. native etc.),” and urges policymakers to “account for how gender interacts with SEN to shape access and outcomes” (Varsik & Gorochovskij, 2023, p. 4). In contrast to this, Kazakhstani documents do not incorporate such an analytical lens, suggesting a divergence from OECD recommendations. This lack of intersectional framing contrasts with OECD recommendations that call for recognizing multiple barriers in education (OECD, 2023).

Similarly, the UNESCO and UNICEF report “Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All” clearly asserts that “girls with disabilities face compounded disadvantages” and warns that “gender-neutral policies fail to address their unique barriers to access” (UNESCO Institute for Statistics & UNICEF, 2015, p. 56). This highlights a direct contrast with Kazakhstan’s current legislative framing, which omits gender-specific provisions.

The “Incheon Declaration” commits signatories to “addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalization... especially those with disabilities” and “supporting gender-sensitive policies” (UNESCO, 2016, paras. 7–8). While Kazakhstan’s laws emphasize disability inclusion in general, they lack the gender-sensitive perspective emphasized in this international framework.

Further, the “UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)” explicitly mandates that “persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability and gender” (United Nations, 2006, Article 24). This dual reference is absent in Kazakhstan’s national legislation, which limits its alignment with international human rights obligations.

Finally, the “Salamanca Statement” promotes inclusive education for “all children regardless of individual differences,” reinforcing the idea of inclusive schools as the most effective mechanism to counter discrimination (UNESCO, 1994, §2). Although Salamanca affirms inclusion in principle, it lacks explicit references to gender as an intersecting category, rendering it more closely aligned with Kazakhstan’s universalist framing. According to Bešić, “Inclusive education cannot be truly inclusive if it fails to recognize how gender and disability intersect to shape unequal educational experiences” (2020, p. 6), the universalist framing shows that Kazakhstan’s policies rely on general equality discourses while neglecting the specific experiences of girls and boys with SEN. If this continues, this

can lead to negative consequences, as argued by Bešić: “If scholars and practitioners fail to see within-group differences in each of these groups, the children facing intersectional discrimination will be rendered invisible or will be underserved concerning the specific needs they have” (2020, p. 118).

In sum, while Kazakhstan’s Law on Education (2007) promotes the right to education through universalist language, it fails to recognize gender as a relevant dimension in the context of special educational needs. This approach diverges from the OECD Working Paper No. 302 (2023), which explicitly calls for policy frameworks to address how gender and disability interact to shape access and outcomes. By omitting this intersectional lens, the national legislation does not align with the gender-sensitive and equity-focused standards outlined in the OECD, CRPD (2006), and Incheon Declaration (2016).

5.2. Criterion 2: Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs

The analysis of Kazakhstani legislation reveals that while several documents provide general commitments to supporting learners with special educational needs (SEN), none incorporate an intersectional approach that accounts for the differentiated resource needs of girls and boys with disabilities. As stated by Collins & Bilge (2013): “Our failure to attend to intersectionality’s movement has limited our ability to see the theory in places in which it is already doing work and to imagine other places to which the theory might be taken” (p. 219). Specifically, the Law on the Rights of the Child (2002) references support for vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, yet lacks details on the type, scope, or targeting of such support, and does not consider gender as a relevant factor. Similarly, the Law on Education (2007) and the Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002) recognize the need for specialized services and adapted learning environments for students with SEN.

However, these laws remain gender-neutral and do not address how overlapping disadvantages might influence the provision or design of support mechanisms. The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2005) outlines a comprehensive set of disability-specific services, such as rehabilitation and assistive technologies, but does not disaggregate needs or resource allocation strategies by gender. Descriptive codes applied included terms such as no intersectional planning and gender-blind resourcing, while values coding captured a consistent theme of resource neutrality and ignoring intersectionality.

In contrast, international policy frameworks emphasize the importance of designing inclusive education systems that respond to intersecting vulnerabilities. The OECD (2023) stresses that “resourcing approaches must be sensitive to the interactions between dimensions of disadvantage, including gender and disability,” arguing that effective inclusion cannot be achieved through one-size-fits-all strategies. The report recommends multi-dimensional planning and funding mechanisms that account for how multiple identities interact to affect students’ experiences and outcomes.

The joint UNESCO and UNICEF (2015) report similarly critiques systems that provide general disability support while ignoring gender. It notes that “girls with disabilities are often the last to access assistive devices, support services, or inclusive learning environments,” and urges policymakers to collect disaggregated data to guide targeted interventions. The report frames intersectional resource allocation as an equity imperative.

The Incheon Declaration (2016) further affirms the need for inclusive and equitable education by committing states to develop policies that address “all forms of exclusion and marginalization.” It explicitly calls for “gender-sensitive planning” and highlights the need for adequate, well-targeted financing to support disadvantaged populations, including those with multiple vulnerabilities, and according to OECD, “Policy responses must be

disaggregated by intersecting identity markers – such as gender, disability, and socio-economic status – to ensure equity in the allocation of support” (2023, p. 12).

Kazakhstan’s policies do not reflect this principle, as resource provision is not tailored to the layered needs of marginalized groups. As argued by Paris & Alim (2018), “Implementing intersectionality in educational research and practice requires a commitment to examining and challenging power structures that perpetuate inequities”, which shows that once the policies are renewed in light of addressing those needs, the country can bridge this gap in resource provision. While general support measures exist, they do not reflect UNESCO’s (2017) call for tailoring resources to intersectional needs.

The CRPD (2006) reinforces the requirement for “reasonable accommodation” and mandates that support measures must be tailored to ensure the full realization of rights by persons with disabilities “on an equal basis with others.” The Convention also highlights that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, implying a need for intersectionally responsive services and supports.

Although the Salamanca Statement (1994) does not explicitly use the term “intersectionality,” it emphasizes that education systems must be restructured to serve “all children” and should prioritize the development of inclusive practices that respond to the “diversity of needs.” It calls for sufficient investment in inclusive infrastructure, personnel, and resources, but does not address gender-based differentiation in these provisions.

In summary, while Kazakhstan’s Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2005) outlines general disability-related services, it does not disaggregate provisions by gender or other identity factors. This contrasts with the OECD (2023) recommendation that resourcing approaches must be sensitive to intersections such as gender and disability, and with the CRPD (2006), which emphasizes the compounded discrimination experienced by women and girls with disabilities. As such, Kazakhstan’s current framework

remains misaligned with international expectations for intersectionally targeted resource allocation in inclusive education.

5.3. Criterion 3: Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms for Gender and SEN

Inclusivity

The analysis of Kazakhstan’s legal framework reveals that none of the four examined policy documents establish comprehensive monitoring or evaluation mechanisms that incorporate both gender and special educational needs (SEN). While some documents reference state responsibility for oversight and general monitoring, these references are typically vague and lack the specificity necessary for ensuring accountability in inclusive education.

To begin with, the Law on the Rights of the Child (2002) states that authorized bodies shall monitor the observance of children’s rights but provides no mention of disaggregated indicators or gender- and disability-sensitive metrics. Similarly, the Law on Education (2007) includes provisions for state control over education quality and compliance but omits any requirement to collect or report data disaggregated by gender or SEN status. The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002) outlines diagnostic functions through psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions but lacks mechanisms for systemic tracking of inclusive outcomes. Finally, the Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities (2005) discusses administrative monitoring related to rehabilitation services, yet frames this in biomedical rather than educational or intersectional terms. Across all documents, descriptive codes such as “absence of disaggregated indicators,” “vague monitoring obligations,” and “diagnostic infrastructure without outcome tracking” were used, while values coding identified “lack of transparency,” “absence of accountability mechanisms,” and “invisibility of intersectional outcomes.” This can lead to negative implications of the gender inclusion, as stated by Crenshaw (1991): “Identity politics ignore

or suppress differences within groups, and thus contribute to the marginalization of those who are multiply burdened.”

By contrast, international frameworks place a strong emphasis on the importance of robust, disaggregated monitoring and evaluation systems. The OECD (2023) paper calls for education systems to “develop indicators that capture the intersection of gender and other dimensions of diversity,” and stresses that data collection and reporting should inform equity-driven interventions. It also provides practical tools such as the Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA) framework to guide governments in developing more precise evaluation criteria.

The UNESCO and UNICEF (2015) report highlights that one of the main barriers to reaching out-of-school children with multiple vulnerabilities is the absence of disaggregated data. It recommends that governments “develop comprehensive monitoring systems that identify not only who is out of school, but why – with attention to intersecting factors such as gender and disability.” Without this level of detail, policy efforts remain blind to layered exclusion. This corresponds with Baez et. al. (2016): “An intersectional approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how multiple forms of oppression and privilege operate simultaneously within educational contexts.”

The Incheon Declaration (2016) underscores the need for education systems to be “accountable and transparent,” calling for “sound data collection, analysis and reporting systems” that include all learners, especially those with intersecting disadvantages. It recognizes that without tracking how different groups are served, equity in education remains an aspiration rather than a measurable goal.

The CRPD (2006) mandates that States Parties must collect “appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the Convention.” Article 31 explicitly states that data should be disaggregated,

including by gender and disability, and used to assess implementation effectiveness. This aligns directly with the kind of evaluative infrastructure currently absent from Kazakhstani policy.

While the Salamanca Statement (1994) advocates for participatory planning and evaluation mechanisms, including the involvement of parents and communities, it does not propose specific intersectional indicators or emphasize gender-disaggregated monitoring. Nonetheless, it encourages the development of decentralized, inclusive evaluation systems as part of a broader inclusive education reform. According to Special Needs Jungle, “Families of children with both SEN and minority racial or gender identities report being routinely excluded from school decisions, highlighting a systemic gap in inclusion efforts” (2022, p. 7). This mirror concerns that Kazakhstan’s inclusive frameworks fail to consider how multiple disadvantages affect families’ engagement and student support. However, the lack of disaggregated monitoring indicators contradicts UNICEF’s (2015) emphasis on tracking intersectional progress.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan’s Law on the Rights of the Child (2002) and Law on Education (2007) mention state oversight but lack disaggregated indicators or intersectional evaluation mechanisms. This stands in contrast to Article 31 of the CRPD (2006), which mandates the collection of gender- and disability-disaggregated data, and to the OECD (2023), which urges systems to develop indicators capturing intersections of disadvantage. Without such tools, Kazakhstan’s monitoring framework diverges significantly from international standards designed to ensure transparency and equity in inclusive education.

Summary.

The critical analysis of four key Kazakhstani policy documents reveals a consistent gap between national legislation and international frameworks concerning the intersection of gender and special educational needs (SEN) in inclusive education. While the national

documents formally endorse principles of equality and support for learners with disabilities, they fall short of integrating an intersectional lens that recognizes and addresses the compounded disadvantages faced by girls and boys with SEN.

Under Criterion 1, the policies demonstrate a universalist approach to the right to education, omitting gender as a relevant axis of inequality in the context of disability. This omission neglects international recommendations, particularly from the OECD (2023), CRPD (2006), and Incheon Declaration (2016), which underscore the necessity of gender-sensitive and intersectional strategies for equitable educational access.

For Criterion 2, although national laws allocate resources for children with disabilities, they do so in a gender-neutral manner. There is no evidence of planning or implementation that accounts for the differentiated needs of learners at the intersection of gender and SEN. This contradicts the targeted resource frameworks promoted by international bodies, which emphasize that equity cannot be achieved through general disability support alone.

Regarding Criterion 3, the lack of disaggregated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms severely limits the state's ability to assess the inclusivity and effectiveness of its educational policies. Kazakhstan's current legislative framework does not mandate the collection of data that captures the experiences of learners at the intersection of gender and disability, despite clear guidance in international standards such as the CRPD and UNESCO-UNICEF reports.

Across the analysis of all three criteria, three dominant themes emerged that shaped the interpretation of Kazakhstan's policy documents in comparison with international frameworks: (1) Lack of intersectional recognition, (2) Persistence of universalist discourse, and (3) Insufficient intersectional monitoring and accountability. These themes reflected deeper structural issues identified across all four national laws. The absence of gender-

specific provisions for students with special educational needs (SEN) demonstrated a broader failure to recognize multiple, intersecting forms of disadvantage. The frequent use of generic terms such as “every child” or “all learners” highlighted the persistence of universalist discourse that masks the differentiated needs of diverse groups. Furthermore, the lack of outcome-based tracking mechanisms disaggregated by gender and SEN illustrated systemic weaknesses in monitoring and accountability processes. Together, these themes underscore the structural gaps in Kazakhstan’s inclusive education policies when measured against international standards advocating for intersectional equity, targeted resourcing, and rigorous evaluation.

It is also important to recognize that while the international frameworks advocating for intersectional and inclusive education – such as the Salamanca Statement (1994), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and the Incheon Declaration (2016) – have been in place for many years, Kazakhstan ratified several of these agreements only recently. For example, Kazakhstan ratified the CRPD in 2015, nearly a decade after its adoption by the United Nations. This delayed ratification may partially explain why the principles of intersectionality and gender-sensitive inclusion have not yet been fully integrated into national education legislation. As UNESCO (2023) highlights, countries often face significant delays in policy adaptation following the formal ratification of global frameworks, especially when institutional capacity and localized implementation strategies are underdeveloped.

To sum up, Kazakhstan’s policy commitments to inclusive education remain formal and fragmented. The absence of intersectional specificity, the lack of institutional and professional capacity, and the invisibility of multiple vulnerabilities in planning and monitoring systems highlight a significant misalignment with globally recognized frameworks. Bridging this gap requires not only revising legal texts but also rethinking

implementation strategies to center intersectionality as a fundamental principle of inclusive and equitable education. The analysis demonstrates that formal commitments in Kazakhstan's policies are not sufficiently operationalized, thus falling short of the actionable measures urged by the Incheon Declaration (2016).

The next chapter will provide a conclusion regarding the critical analysis of the national policies regarding SEN and gender in education.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how Kazakhstan's educational policies address the intersectionality of gender and special educational needs (SEN) within inclusive education frameworks. Four ground-laying Kazakhstan national policies (namely, (1) The Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2002); (2) The Law on Education (2007); (3) The Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Support for Children with Disabilities (2002); and (4) The Law on Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in the Republic of Kazakhstan (2005)) were critically analyzed to examine the intersectionality of gender and SEN in schools.

6.1. Restating the Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this research was to critically analyze Kazakhstan-specific policies on inclusive education in the relevant international context, with a focus on the intersectionality of gender and SEN. The research was guided by three main questions, namely:

1. How do Kazakhstan's educational policies integrate the aspects of inclusion and intersectionality of SEN and gender?
2. How do the current educational policies on gender and SEN align with the international recommendations of the OECD, UN, UNICEF and UNESCO?
 - Which aspects are fulfilled?
 - What are the gaps in the policies?
3. Which aspects of national policies in Kazakhstan are progressive or innovative compared to international experience of OECD, UN, UNICEF and UNESCO?

Based on the research questions, the three analytical criteria were developed, namely (1) Promotion of Equal Access to Education for Girls and Boys with SEN; (2) Provision of Resources for Intersectional Needs; and (3) Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms for Gender and SEN Inclusivity.

Finally, the national policies were analyzed in subject of their alignment to the international policies, namely: (1) OECD Working Paper No. 302 (2023); (2) UNESCO & UNICEF (2015) – “Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All”; (3) Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2016); (4) UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and (5) The Salamanca Statement (1994).

The research questions were answered in the following manner:

1. How do Kazakhstan’s educational policies address inclusion and intersectionality concerning SEN and gender?

Kazakhstan’s education policies use broad rights-based language to promote inclusion but fail to incorporate intersectionality explicitly. Gender and SEN are treated as isolated issues, ignoring how they intersect and amplify disadvantages. As a result, students with overlapping vulnerabilities are overlooked in policy frameworks. Without an intersectional approach, policies remain vague and fail to address complex, layered barriers.

2. How do Kazakhstan’s gender and SEN policies compare to international standards (OECD, UN, UNICEF, UNESCO)?

Strengths:

- Guarantees education rights for children with disabilities (consistent with the CRPD and Salamanca Statement).
- Includes provisions for adapted learning environments and SEN support services.
- Commits to general principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Shortcomings:

- Gender considerations are missing in inclusive education strategies.
- No tools track intersectional outcomes (e.g., disparities for girls/boys with SEN).

- Resources are not allocated based on intersecting needs and policies ignore gendered barriers in planning.

3. What aspects of Kazakhstan's policies are advanced or innovative relative to global benchmarks (OECD, UN, UNICEF, UNESCO)?

Kazakhstan has made strides in legally recognizing inclusive education and creating structures for SEN assistance, such as state-backed specialized services. Yet, few elements stand out as innovative internationally. Progress is hindered by the absence of intersectionality, poor enforcement, and lack of disaggregated data—key priorities for OECD and UNESCO. While the intent aligns with global norms, execution remains conventional and siloed.

6.2. Key findings

6.2.1. Lack of explicit intersectional considerations. Kazakhstan's national education laws demonstrate a strong rhetorical commitment to inclusive education but lack explicit intersectional considerations, particularly in relation to gender and special educational needs (SEN).

6.2.2. Use of universalist language. The universalist language used across all five policy documents masks the specific challenges faced by girls and boys with SEN, reflecting a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to address layered vulnerabilities.

6.2.3. Lack of monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms described in Kazakhstani policies are primarily administrative and lack indicators that capture intersectional experiences or educational outcomes for marginalized groups.

6.2.4. Absence of intersectional resource allocation. When compared with international frameworks, Kazakhstan's education policies show partial alignment in principles of inclusion but fall short in operationalizing equity through intersectional resource allocation and professional development.

6.2.5. Policy-centered approach in inclusive education. The findings suggest that Kazakhstan's inclusive education agenda remains policy-centered rather than implementation-driven, requiring urgent reforms to embed intersectionality in legal, institutional, and pedagogical practices.

6.2.6. Summary. Overall, the lack of intersectional framing in national policies risks reproducing inequalities rather than dismantling them, especially for children who experience multiple forms of disadvantage.

6.3. Policy implications

The results of this study can be further used in three main areas. Firstly, the study showed that in policy design there is a tremendous need to integrate intersectionality into legal frameworks when developing policies in education and inclusive education. Secondly, policy makers can enhance the monitoring and evaluation processes via developing data systems disaggregated by gender and SEN, based on this study.

6.4. Limitations of the study

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the analysis was based on only four national policy documents, which may not fully capture the breadth and evolution of inclusive education policy in Kazakhstan. While these documents represent key legislative frameworks, a broader set of policies, including implementation guidelines, national programs, and regional regulations, could have provided a more comprehensive picture. Second, the depth of the analysis was constrained by time limitations. A more extended research period would have allowed for a deeper exploration of policy language nuances, historical policy shifts, and a closer alignment with the evolving international discourse on intersectionality and inclusive education. These limitations suggest that future studies could expand the corpus of analyzed documents and adopt a longitudinal approach to policy analysis to generate richer insights.

6.5. Suggestions for further research

While this study focused on the content of national policy documents, further research is needed to examine how these policies are implemented at the school level and how intersectionality is experienced by learners and educators in practice. Future studies could explore the following:

- investigating implementation gaps by conducting qualitative research (e.g., interviews or focus groups) with teachers, school leaders, and families of students with SEN, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas of Kazakhstan
- exploring lived experiences of students who experience multiple vulnerabilities—such as gender, disability, and socio-economic disadvantage—within inclusive classroom environments.
- comparative studies between Kazakhstan and countries with more established intersectional approaches to inclusive education (e.g., Finland, Canada) to identify transferable policy mechanisms and institutional practices.

These directions can contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between inclusive education policy and practice and help ensure that no learner is left behind due to overlapping disadvantages.

6.6. Personal Reflection

I would like to begin by saying that writing a thesis is a substantial undertaking, and the earlier you start, the better. If I could give advice to my past self, I would say, “Do not be afraid, just start. Even writing one sentence is better than writing nothing at all.”

This thesis provided me with the opportunity to reflect on processes that are global in nature yet demand careful attention to nuance. It taught me that before making a statement or putting an idea into writing, it is essential to think it through multiple times and to support it with evidence. This experience helped me avoid making sweeping generalizations or

presenting personal opinions as universal truths. From now on, I will be more mindful before taking a firm stance and will prepare more thoroughly for public discussions or presentations. My words should represent my perspective but also respect and acknowledge the perspectives of others.

Finally, this journey has reinforced my belief that education is always striving toward improvement, and as a society, we are collectively responsible for its quality. It is impossible to solve all challenges with a single action or decision, but fortunately, society continues to move forward, seeking better solutions. This commitment to progress is the essence of education – we do not stagnate; we grow.

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Appendix A: Completed AI Declaration Form



Thesis Title: **Intersectionality of Gender and SEN in Inclusive Education: A**

Comparative Policy Analysis of International and Kazakhstan-Specific Approaches

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 to paraphrase my sentences and improve my writing.

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 appropriate AI use.

Name: Zhannetta Bayanbekova
Date: 27.04.2025

Signature:

Appendix B: Example of first- and second-cycle coding

Figure 1. First-cycle coding of 'Law on Education' (2002).

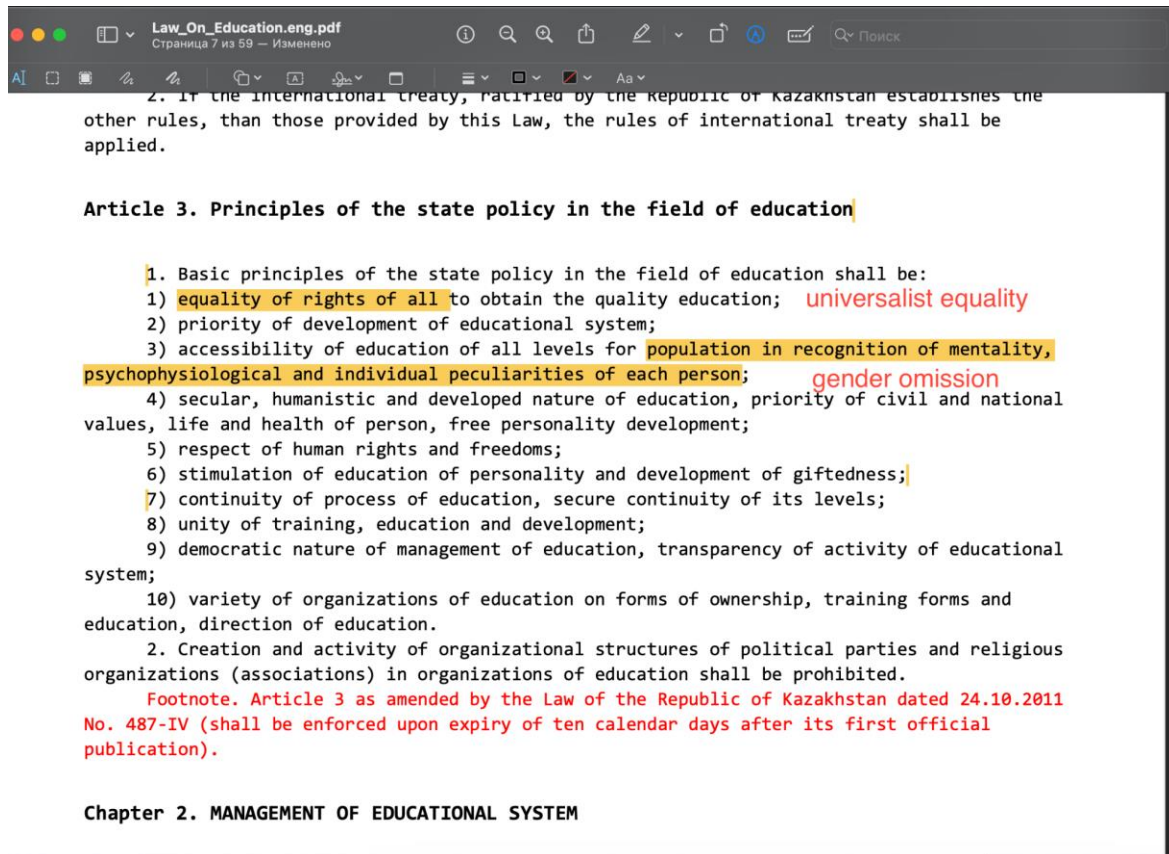


Figure 2. Second-cycle coding of 'Law on Education' (2002)

Data	Code	Category	Themes
Article 3. Principles of the state policy in the field of education			
1. Basic principles of the state policy in the field of education shall be:			
1) equality of rights of all to obtain the quality education;	universalist language	Erasure of differentiated needs	
2) priority of development of educational system;			
3) accessibility of education of all levels for population in recognition of mentality, psychophysiological and individual peculiarities of each person;	gender omission	Erasure of differentiated needs	
4) secular, humanistic and developed nature of education, priority of civil and national, values, life and health of person, free personality development;	universalist language	Erasure of differentiated needs	
5) respect of human rights and freedoms;		Ignoring intersectionality	
6) stimulation of education of personality and development of giftedness;		Resource neutrality	
7) continuity of process of education, secure continuity of its levels;	gender-blind resourcing	Erasure of differentiated needs	
8) unity of training, education and development;		Erasure of differentiated needs	
9) democratic nature of management of education, transparency of activity of educational system	Recognition of specialized resources	Erasure of differentiated needs	
10) variety of organizations of education on forms of ownership, training forms and education, direction of education.			
			Disability Recognition Without Gender Integration