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DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS AND KINDERGARTENS IN MONGOLIA

Abstract

In the article, the authors consider the issues of ensuring that schools and kindergartens are ready in the context of inclusive education, that is, to study the process and difficulties of developing inclusive schools and kindergartens. The research was conducted using document research methods, questionnaire research methods, focus group interview methods, and the Inclusiveness Index, which guides them through the process of developing inclusive schools and kindergartens. An analysis of a number of official documents on inclusive education of children with disabilities in general education schools and the procedure for inclusion of children with disabilities in preschool education services, approved by the orders of the Parliament of Mongolia, the Government of Mongolia, the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the People, the Minister of Education and Science, the Minister of Health. In the study, school No. 12, kindergarten No. 7 of Darkhan-Uul region, school No. 1, kindergarten No. 8 of Dornod region, comprehensive school "Goviin ireedui" of Dundgovi region, kindergarten No. 3, school No. 105

of Songinokhairkhan district of Ulaanbaatar, kindergarten No. 253 “Support group” members are included. The results presented in the article reveal the problems of further accelerating the development process of inclusive schools and kindergartens in Mongolia, eliminating the identified difficulties, effectively providing quality education services for children, and increasing the comprehensive responsibility of the education sector in order to increase the inclusive competence of teachers.

Keywords: inclusive school, inclusive education, special education, needs, inclusive environment, teacher’s inclusive competence, professional training.

Introduction. Education is one of the basic human rights and every country is committed to ensuring every child’s right to education. General Recommendation 4 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines inclusive education as “not only a process of continuous and active commitment aimed at removing barriers to the realization of the right to education, but also changing the stereotypical culture, policies and practical activities of normal schools in the field of effective education in order to achieve mass inclusion of all students. he said that he understands the results achieved by” (United Nations, 2016). The Convention and its 4th General Recommendation state that states are obliged to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to primary and secondary education in the area where they live and that they are not separated from their homes for the purpose of special education. However, 258 million children, adolescents (UNESCO, 2020) and young adults, especially students with disabilities, are out of school worldwide, and one in four countries still have policies (UNESCO, 2020) and practices that segregate students with disabilities into special schools.

The array of international studies mentioned highlights the diverse perspectives and experiences in the realm of inclusive education. (Filiz Polat et al.’s 2023), exploration of inclusive early childhood education (IECE) in Kazakhstan delves into the complex factors influencing multi-stakeholder perspectives. (Similarly, Christopher McMaster 2015), in New Zealand contemplates sustainable inclusive change through the lens of a comprehensive framework for whole school development. (Sunčica Macura-Milovanović et al. 2012), contribute to the discourse with a case study in Serbia, advocating for a broader concept of inclusive education, especially in the context of teacher education. In another dimension, (Karolina Urton et al. 2023), explore the factors that shape teachers’ intentions to implement

inclusive practices, drawing from the theory of planned behavior. (Dr. Susan Carter et al.’s 2023), study, “In Sync,” examines inclusive school communities’ support for students dealing with anxiety. (Amy Corning et al. 2023), evaluate the early impact of an inclusive school for computer science, utilizing propensity score matching. (Mélanie Jaeck et al. 2023), propose a framework for inclusive business schools, adding a unique perspective to the inclusive education discourse. The ongoing global challenge of COVID-19 becomes a focal point in (Brent Bradford et al.’s 2023), study, “Principles of inclusive practice in schools: what is COVID-19 teaching us?” This investigation sheds light on the lessons learned from the pandemic in the context of inclusive education. (Sonja Krämer et al.’s 2021), meta-analysis on inclusive education of students with general learning difficulties contributes empirical insights into this complex field. Shifting to broader trends, (Renato Operti et al. 2008) analyze inclusive education at regional and interregional levels, identifying key issues and challenges. Mel Ainscow et al. (2008) question the future direction of inclusive education in their study, “Making Education for All inclusive: where next?” while (Petra Engelbrecht 2020) explores developments and challenges specific to South Africa. Christopher Johnstone et al. (2019) bring a financial perspective to the discourse in “Resourcing inclusion,” considering the economic aspects of inclusive education policy. (Federico R. Waitoller et al.’s 2013), critical review of a decade of professional development research emphasizes the ongoing need for a comprehensive research program in inclusive education. (Harsh Suri et al. 2009), contribute to the methodological aspect of inclusive education research with advancements in research synthesis methods. Insights into the Middle East and North Africa region are provided by Maha Khochen-Bagshaw (2020) in “Inclusive education development and challenges,” offering

a unique regional perspective. Adrienne Kinnear et al.'s (1991) case study on gender-inclusive technology materials in primary schools, (Chiu-ling Liu et al.'s 2022), comparative observation of inclusive education in Taiwan, and Irmeli Halinen et al.'s (2008), examination of inclusive education in Finland enrich the global discourse on inclusive practices. Renato Opertti et al. (2011) advocate for developing inclusive teachers from an inclusive curricular perspective, while (H. Hosshan et al. 2020), conduct a scoping review of literature on inclusive schooling in Southeast Asian countries. Masud Ahmmed et al. (2014) present recommended strategies for implementing inclusive education in primary schools in Bangladesh, and (Triyanto, 2022), investigates teachers' perspectives concerning students with disabilities in Indonesian inclusive schools. In summary, these diverse studies collectively contribute to our understanding of inclusive education, addressing specific contexts, challenges, and opportunities across different regions and educational levels.

The coverage percentage of pre-school, primary and lower secondary education in Mongolia is 95.7% of primary, and 93.8% of lower secondary, (Ministry of Education and Science, 2022) which has reached a relatively high level and has been stable for a long time. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only 4-5-year-old children were included in the main kindergarten for a certain period of time, the net weight of inclusive preschool education decreased by 17.0 points and reached 62.2% (Ministry of Education and Science, 2022) in the 2021-2022 school year. However, some groups of children, such as boys and girls with disabilities and children from poor families, still face various barriers in accessing quality, inclusive education services. Therefore, the Government of Mongolia emphasizes the importance of the role of schools and kindergartens in the development of inclusive education and pays special attention to improving the quality and inclusiveness of education. The Government of Mongolia's directions in the development of inclusive education are "Strategies of Kazakhstan and Mongolia and psychological support of inclusive and digital education in educational programs" (N. Razukhan., N. B. Zhiyenbayeva., 2021). In

2021, we have fully studied it. In this regard, we are conducting research on the topic "Processes and challenges of developing inclusive schools and kindergartens in Mongolia" and presenting the results.

Main part. Based on Clause 5 of Article 37 (Mongolian Parliament, 2016) of the Law "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" approved by the Parliament of Mongolia in 2016, the "Regulations of the Commission on Health, Education and Social Protection of Children with Disabilities" (Government of Mongolia, 2021) were updated and approved with the addition of Resolution No. 173 of 2021 of the Government of Mongolia. And in December 2021, according to the joint orders of the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the People, the Minister of Education and Science, the Minister of Health A/220, A/475, A/812 "Methodology of comprehensive support for the development of children with disabilities" in kindergartens and schools, the specific needs of children and created a working group "Support Group" (Minister of Labor and Social Security., the Minister of Education and Science., and the Minister of Health., 2021) consisting of 7-9 people, which ensures the right to education and development according to health conditions. Also, in the "Principles of Equally Inclusive Education of Children with Disabilities in General Education Schools" (Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Sports., 2019) approved by Order A/292 of the Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Sports of 2019, general education schools teach children equally at school and adapt to the school environment and work responsible for supporting primary, basic and full secondary education, creation of the "Support Group" by the order of the school director, in the "Procedure for the inclusion of children with disabilities in preschool education services" approved by the order of the Minister of Education and Science A/177 of 2021 (Minister of Education and Science., 2021) creation of the "Support Group" responsible for providing support and assistance to the relevant parties in preschool education of children by the order of the head of the kindergarten and the order of the group's work is specified. These policy documents define the composition and roles of

the support team. We have analyzed a number of the above-mentioned documents in the field of development of inclusive education in Mongolia according to the research methodology.

According to 2020 statistics, there are 12,324 children with disabilities in Mongolia. Based on the need to identify developmental delays and problems of children at an early age and to immediately involve them in development support and participation services, the “Commission for ensuring the health, education and social protection of children with disabilities” was established in Mongolia. The purpose of the commission is to determine whether a child aged 0-16 years has a disability, to coordinate and monitor the implementation of measures to include disabled children in healthcare, education, and social welfare services. The main purpose of the commission’s rules is to identify the delay and disabilities of children’s early development and to connect them with the necessary social services, to ensure fair, high-quality and equal access to children and parents receiving services within the framework of the relevant legislation, to organize quickly, to improve control, and to be transparent. In 2016-2020, 30 sectoral commissions of regions and districts included a total of 20,658 children in permanent care, 5,331 children in education, and 9,064 children in health care.

The purpose of the research is to study the possibility of developing inclusive education in harmony with the national education system within the framework of the topic “Development process of inclusive schools and kindergartens in Mongolia”. Within the framework of this goal, the results of the research obtained by means of documentary research, questionnaire research, and interviews were discussed with the academics of the field. The main purpose of the study is to discuss the problems faced by general education schools and kindergartens in Mongolia from all sides, and to discover ways and resources to solve them.

Research materials and methods. We used the following research methods as a research methodology. Among them: Document research methods, questionnaire research methods, focus group interview methods and inclusiveness index were used.

Index of inclusiveness (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2016) is a set of materials that guides them through the process of developing inclusive schools and kindergartens. This supports the creation of supportive communities and high achievement for all staff and students. We used the index to: analyze the inclusive cultures, inclusive policies and inclusive practices of schools and kindergartens, and used a self-audit approach to identify potential barriers to learning and participation in each of these areas.

In this study, school No. 12, Kindergarten No. 7 of Darkhan-Uul Region, School No. 1, Kindergarten No. 8 of Dornod Region, “Govyn Uzme” Complex School, Kindergarten No. 3 of Dundgovi Region, School No. 105 of Songinokhairkhan District of Ulanbatyr, Kindergarten No. 253 “Support Information was collected from the members of the “show group” and conclusions were drawn.

We used data collection tools of documentary research, statistical data, questionnaire survey, observation, and interviews. The data analysis process includes quantitative and qualitative data and factor analysis, descriptive analysis, diagnostic analysis, predictive analysis, and prescriptive analysis.

Results. As part of the study, members of the support team of participating schools and kindergartens developed a survey using the Index of Inclusive Actions to review the current reality of inclusive culture, policies and activities. It is essential to establish gender-balanced “Support Teams” in schools and kindergartens and strengthen their capacity to provide developmental support services for children with disabilities.

A total of 58 people (95%) participated in the research support group, 31 members from 4 schools, 27 members from 4 kindergartens. 29.5 percent of them were men, 70.5 percent were women. However, in the field of education of our country, especially in the field of pre-school, primary and secondary education, the majority of employees are women, so it is impossible to maintain a gender-balanced structure of the support group, that is, a 50:50 ratio. 57 members of the support group participated in the baseline survey and conducted focus group interviews, as

well as written questionnaires. By conducting a survey, the members of the 8 support groups of the target schools and kindergartens will find out their views on the culture, policy and activities of inclusive education, activities based on the principle of inclusion in the normal school and kindergarten, and get a wider knowledge and understanding of their further development, other teachers and we identified the possibility of providing methodical support to parents.

Schools and kindergartens have various experiences in inclusive education. For example, the target schools and kindergartens of the Darkhan-Uul region have been teaching children with disabilities in special classes for some time. Therefore, local people consider these schools and kindergartens as “special school”

and “special kindergarten”. In the target school in the Dornod region, there is one special class where children with disabilities study in mixed groups, while schools and kindergartens in the Songinokhairkhan district of Dundgovi region and Ulaanbaatar city do not have “special” and “integrated” education experience.

The main role of support team members should be to organize and implement multifaceted services and support aimed at supporting not only children with disabilities in school or kindergarten, but also other vulnerable groups, participating in educational services and supporting their successful learning and development. Let’s take a closer look at the survey results of the “support group” of schools and kindergartens in each region and district.

INCLUSIVE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

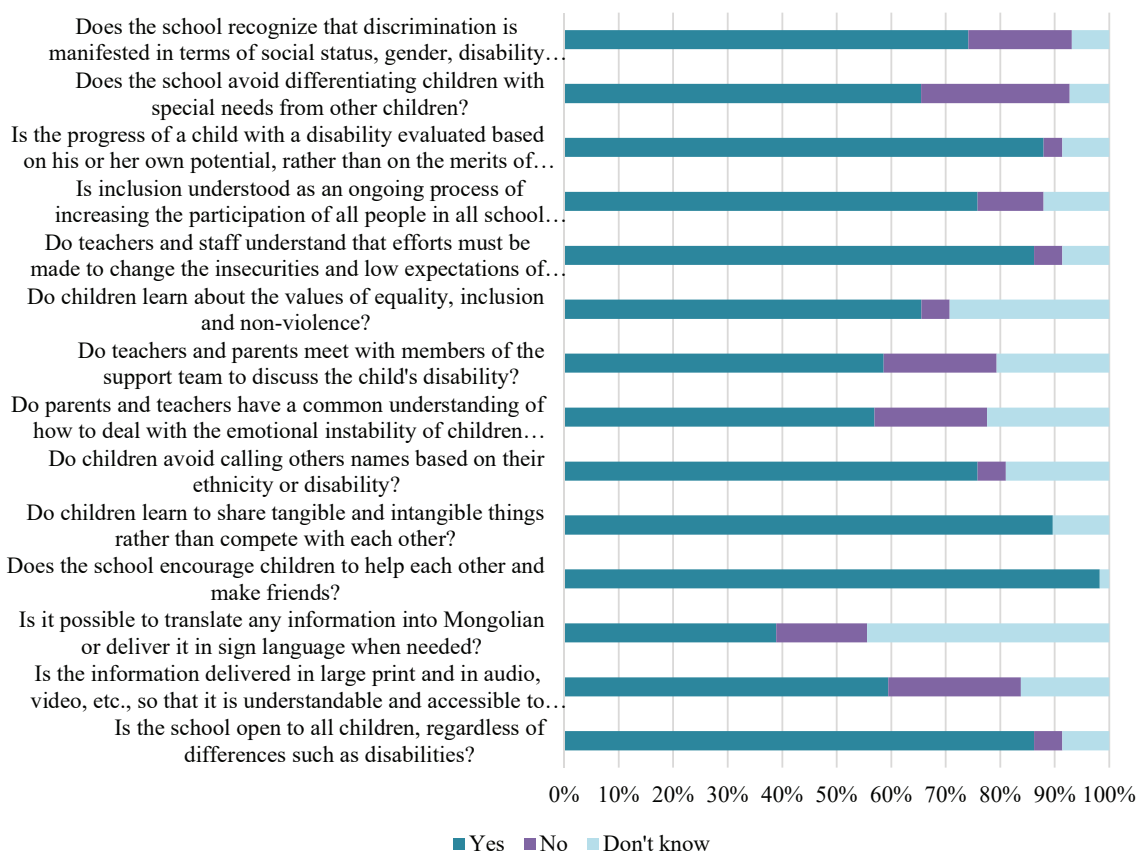


Figure1. Research results on the inclusive cultural environment of the target schools and kindergartens involved in the study

According to the result of the survey conducted on the inclusive culture of the support group of the target school and kindergarten, 73 percent said «yes», 12 percent «no», and 15 percent did

not know. Also, 56% of respondents believe that blind, deaf or severely disabled children should study in special schools and kindergartens, while 10% answered «don’t know» to this question.

It shows that there is a high positive attitude in understanding and to reach a common understanding. towards an inclusive culture, but it shows that there is a need to overcome some differences

INCLUSIVE POLICY

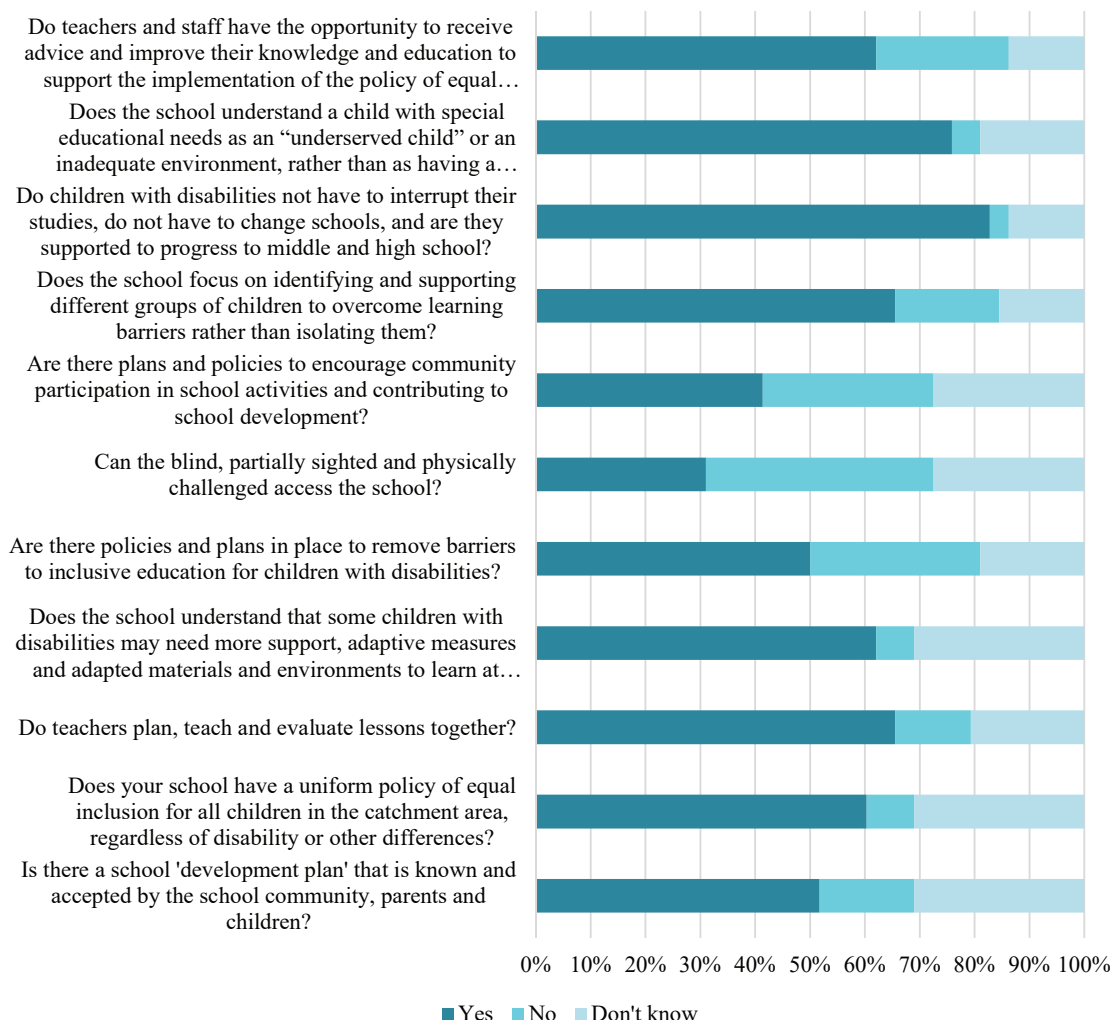


Figure 2. The results of the research on the inclusive policy of equal coverage of target schools and kindergartens involved in the research

Regarding the results of the survey of the members of the target support group about the inclusion policy, 59% said yes, 18% said no and 23% said they don't know. This suggests that there are many differences in support group members' perceptions of inclusive policies. The results of the study show that there is a need for regular support to support groups for primary institutions that provide inclusive education services, such as schools and kindergartens, to expand their capacities, create real opportunities for continuous development and improve methodological capabilities.

If we look at the results of the survey on the inclusive service of the members of the

target support group, 59% answered yes, 18% answered no, and 22% did not know. This shows that it is necessary to pay attention to the quality performance of the tasks of the school and kindergarten team and members of the support group responsible for providing comprehensive measures of inclusive education, to increase their abilities, to expand human resources, and to continuously improve teachers in terms of professional methods.

A total of 58 people participated in the focus group interview and written question-and-answer study, 31 support group members from 4 target schools and 27 support group members from 4 kindergartens. 19 of its members or 32.8% were

ACTIVITIES OF INCLUSIVE SERVICE



Figure 3. Research results on the inclusive activities of target schools and kindergartens involved in the research

involved in the methodology of developing individual training programs, creating support groups, including children with disabilities in inclusive education, diagnosis, understanding in supporting the comprehensive development of children with disabilities, providing special education and methods and skills for working with children with disabilities. it was found that he had various experiences, having participated in trainings 1-2 times.

Although more than 30% of the respondents answered that they had received certain trainings on inclusive education for children with disabilities, during the focus group interview, 100% of the participants expressed their desire to improve their knowledge and skills in this field and participate in further trainings and exercises. This indicates the need for further improvement and development of knowledge and skills of all team members.

Discussion. The results of this study were discussed with the Department of Education, school and kindergarten staff, support teams and other professional stakeholders. Some of the results of the discussion are summarized as follows. It includes:

- Intensive efforts to fully understand the concept of inclusive education in the education sector and eliminate the gap in understanding. There is still a need to develop a culture of inclusive education. The participants of the discussion emphasized the need for the management of schools, kindergartens, and the Department of Education to give special importance to parents, teachers, and students for mutual understanding, mutual support, and the formation of the right attitude.
- Policy and legal framework for equal inclusion education needs to be implemented in a stable and transparent manner. This is evidenced

by Filiz Polat et al.'s (2023) in Kazakhstan, Similarly, Christopher McMaster (2015) in New Zealand, Sunčica Macura-Milovanović et al. (2012) in Serbia, Petra Engelbrecht (2020) South Africa, and Middle East and North Africa region, Chiu-ling Liu et al.'s (2022) in Taiwan, Irmeli Halinen et al.'s (2008) in Finland, H.Hosshan et al. (2020) in Southeast Asian countries, Masud Ahmmed et al. (2014) in Bangladesh the results of research conducted by researchers on these international examples. The results of the research show that there is a great need for professional teachers and professional teams to consistently support the activities of inclusive education, and to provide the necessary classrooms and materials.

- The main results of the discussion, focusing on this policy, it is necessary to intensify the preparation of professional teachers and specialists, to deliver accurate and real information to society, and to organize influence work to increase the participation of citizens' interventions very useful.

Conclusion. According to the research methodology, 73% of the members of the support group answered positively to the questions asked in the framework of the “culture of inclusion”, but 56% of all participants believed that children with visual, hearing or severe disabilities should be educated in special schools and kindergartens, and 10% answered this question “I don't know,” he answered. 59% of support group members responded positively to the questions about the “policy of inclusion” environment, while the rest answered “no” or “don't know.” 59% of school and kindergarten support group members answered “yes” to the survey questions about “inclusion activities”. And 41% did not know about the implementation of inclusive activities.

Also, more than 70% of the participants answered the question about the issues of inclusive education of children with disabilities at the level of school and kindergarten. And the most common answers were the lack of special classrooms, lack of equipment, lack of professional teachers, and problems with diagnosing children. According to these responses, a significant percentage of participants believe

that children with disabilities should be taught by special education teachers in special classes, rather than considering inclusive education as an environment and method accessible to all (ADB., 2022). However, 73% of all participants gave a positive answer to the questions about the concept of inclusive education and the choice of approach in the context of the evaluation of the inclusive cultural framework. But it shows that there is doubt in this concept.

According to the open questions of the research, target schools and kindergartens, except school No. 12 and kindergarten No. 7 of Darkhan-Uul region, do not receive an additional percentage of variable costs for children with disabilities. They also do not know that teachers working with children with disabilities are paid extra and do not understand these rules well.

More than 30% of the respondents said that they know some documents approved by the Ministry of Education and Science related to inclusive education, while more than 60% said that they do not know the orders and decisions related to inclusive education. This shows a lack of news, information and understanding of policies, decisions and actions related to inclusive education. Due to the gaps, it is determined that there is a need to provide an explanation, information, and news about the adopted policies and decisions related to the inclusive education of children with disabilities in normal schools and kindergartens.

Summarizing the above results of the study, it is clear that the process of developing inclusive schools and kindergartens in Mongolia is still accelerating, and eliminating the identified difficulties is not only a problem for all members of the support group, but also the entire team of schools and kindergartens must effectively provide quality educational services to children, their necessary knowledge. and in order to strengthen their capabilities, to increase their competence, they should comprehensively understand their responsibility as a field of education. To fulfill this role, the above analysis shows that there is a great need to strictly monitor the implementation of official documents in real life, to provide methodical assistance and step-by-step support to all teachers.

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