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Bibliometric Analysis of Research on Inclusive Education: A Review of Papers from the Scopus Database Published in English for the Period of 2013-2022

Mahzuna Hamdamova
Tashkent State Pedagogical University Named After Nizomi

Shaista Sadikova
Tashkent State Pedagogical University Named After Nizomi

Fazilat Abdiyeva
Tashkent State Pedagogical University Named After Nizomi

Abstract: This study examines the trends in inclusive education research by analyzing 1836 publications from the Scopus database (2013-2022). Focusing on Social Science and Arts and Humanities subjects, we observe a consistent rise in publications, reaching a peak of 316 in 2022. The collaboration of diverse institutions worldwide, with Monash University leading, underscores the global effort in inclusive education research. Geographically, English-speaking countries dominate, supplemented by a robust European presence. This analysis offers insights into the evolving landscape of inclusive education research and provides a foundation for future investigations.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Special education, Bibliometric analysis

Introduction

Background information: The UNESCO (n.d.). endorsed inclusive education in 1994. Due to inclusive education focuses on placing students with special needs in age-appropriate general education classes or mainstream schools and enabling them to succeed (Magnússon, 2023), it is viewed as "an issue of social justice as well as an issue of equity"(Sharma & Subban, 2023) and one of the most effective means of reducing educational inequity. In recent years, the field of inclusive education (IE) has garnered increasing attention, reflecting a global commitment to fostering equitable and accessible learning environments. Despite the widely recognized relevance of IE, the understanding of the word remains vague, ranging from 'inclusion as concerned with disability and special educational needs (SEN)' to 'inclusion as a principled approach to education and society'(Ainscow et al., 2006). For evaluating the success of IE, both academic and socio-emotional results should be examined(Koster et al., 2009). IE is thus part of a broader human rights agenda that emphasises the importance of teaching all students in mainstream education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 1997; Lindsay, 2007).

IE is a complicated and dynamic concept that has evolved differently across cultures(Peters, 2003). Multiple academics (Goransson & Nilholm, 2014) highlight discrepancies in opinions among legislators, researchers, and practitioners on what schools can and should do to ensure IE's success, as well as what should be addressed while implementing and monitoring IE. IE involves views on how education and schools should be organised and may therefore be considered an educational philosophy; yet, there will always be an established educational system from which to define the goals for IE.

According to Goransson and Nilholm (2014), politicians play a significant role in determining what the purpose of education should be. Practitioners put these aims into action, and so play an important role in implementing IE(Rouse, 2008). Researchers should be open to new ideas about education, but they should also look at how different levels and aims for an inclusive educational system may be met.

We attempted to map inclusive education knowledge using a comprehensive bibliometric evaluation that included yearly publications, most-cited countries, most-cited journals, most-cited institutions, key topics, and future trends. This study serves as a comprehensive exploration of the inclusive education research landscape, offering valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and educators invested in fostering inclusive and equitable educational practices worldwide.

Methods

The Scopus database was searched on May 15th, 2023, and a total of 1836 publication entries were collected for the years 2013-2022. Since the research was centred on the teaching and education sphere, we conducted a search on the Scopus database platform for the Social Science and Arts and Humanities subject areas selected. All publications were analyzed and reviewed using inclusive education as the keyword. Only articles were selected as document type during data collection. Then, a database was categorized including the year of publication, journal names, authors' names, countries, the number of citations per paper, the number of citations per journal and the percentage of publications by the topic cluster name. Map chart and Vos viewer In the end, we synthesize findings and discovers potential research directions for inclusive education issue in the World.
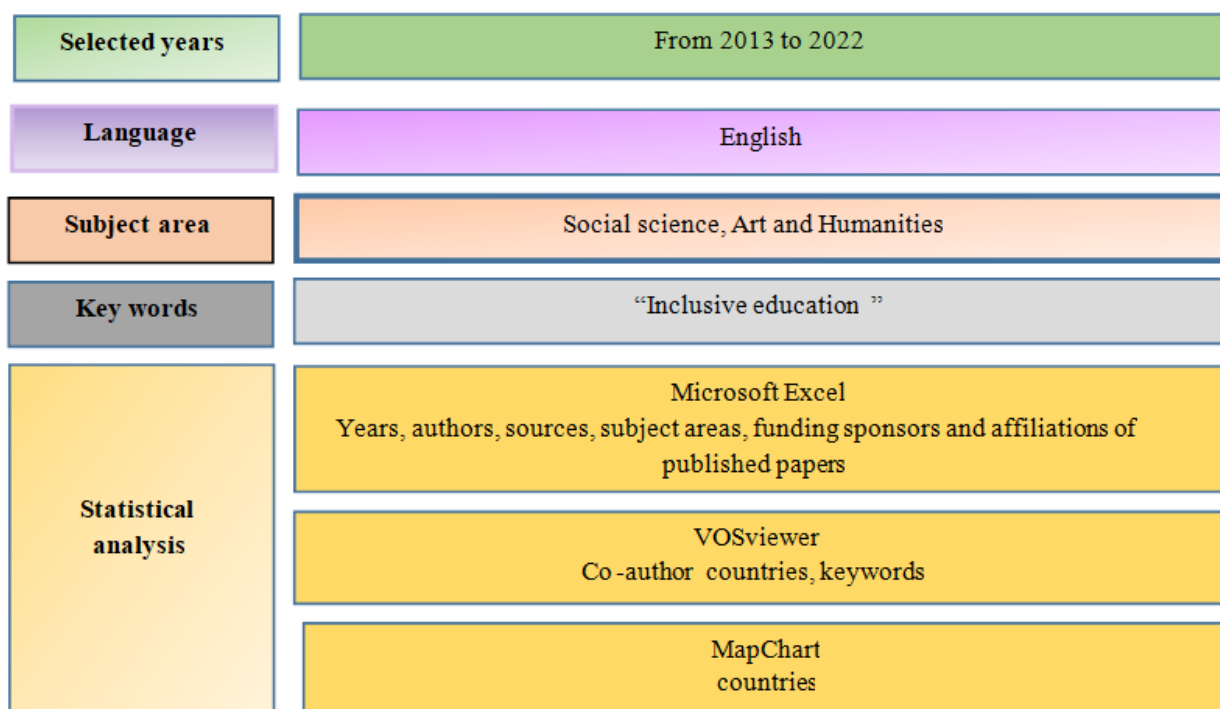
Selected years	From 2013 to 2022
Language	English
Subject area	Social science, Art and Humanities
Key words	"Inclusive education "
Statistical analysis	Microsoft Excel Years, authors, sources, subject areas, funding sponsors and affiliations of published papers
	VOSviewer Co-author countries, keywords
	MapChart countries

Figure 1. Methodology flowchart for the research

Results

Publication Trend on Inclusive Education

The publication rate on inclusive education demonstrates a steady increase in the number of articles during the selected period. Figure 2 presents the overall distribution characteristics of articles from the period of 2013-2022. The number of published papers on a particular issue shows the growth in the literature that focuses on Inclusive Education in the Scopus database over time. The data exhibits a distinct upward pattern. A total of 1836 papers were published for the period of 2013-2022 in the World inclusive education issues. It is crucial that the last three years were the most productive during the whole period and the highest number of

publications (316) was published in 2022. In the years from 2013 to 2017, there is relative stability, in which the number of articles by year was hesitated lightly from 114 in 2013 years from 133 in 2016 and 2017. From 2018 we can see a rapid increase in the number of publications. In the last year (2022), the number of articles was almost tripled compared to 2013.
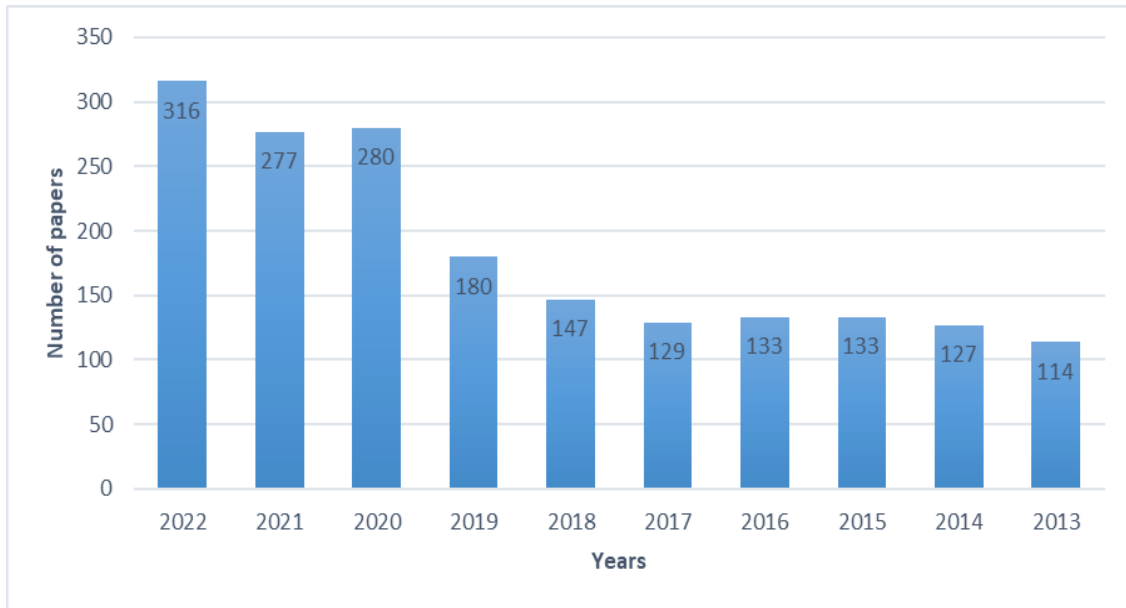

Figure 2. Number of articles on inclusive education by year of publication in the Scopus database from 2013 to 2022

Top Institutions on Inclusive Education

The top ten most productive institutions altogether contributed 304 papers, with an average of 30.4 papers per institution. The difference in the number of articles among universities is not drastic, but only four institutions produced more papers than the group's average. One hundred sixty different institutions worked in cooperation to publish 1836 papers on Inclusive Education in the World for the period of 2013-2022. Figure 3 reports the ranking of institutions publishing their research on these topics These 10 institutions produce 17% (304) of the total sample (1836). As shown, Monash University has the first position in record rank (52 articles), followed by North-West University (45) and Universidad de Sevilla (34).
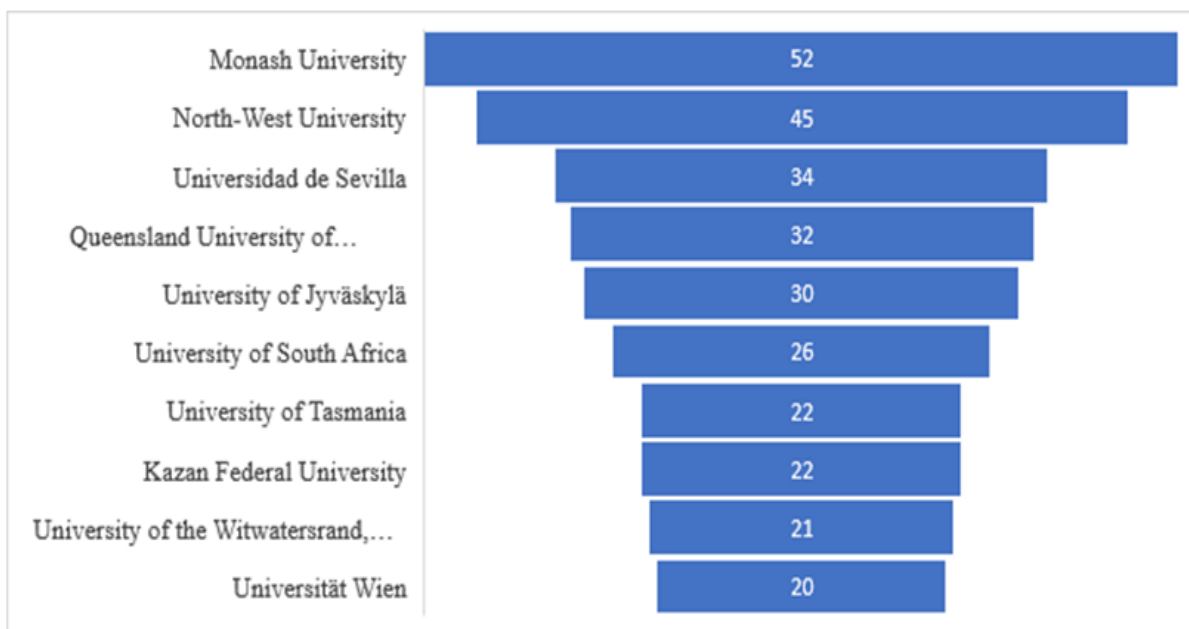

Figure 3. Top institutions on inclusive education

Top Counties of Publications

A total of 112 countries were counted, and only the top 12 countries were listed in Fig. 4 (MapChart.(n.d.)). Regarding the geographical distribution, The United States ranked first based on the number of articles (231, 12.6% of the 1,866), followed by Australia (227, 12.4%), the United Kingdom (186, 10.1%), Spain (178, 9.7%), South Africa (146, 7.9%), and Canada (82, 4.5%), respectively. More than a third (35%) of all published articles came from English-speaking countries in the top three positions. Noteworthily, the vast majority of listed countries (8 from 12) were from the European continent, which showed a powerful research force in the field.
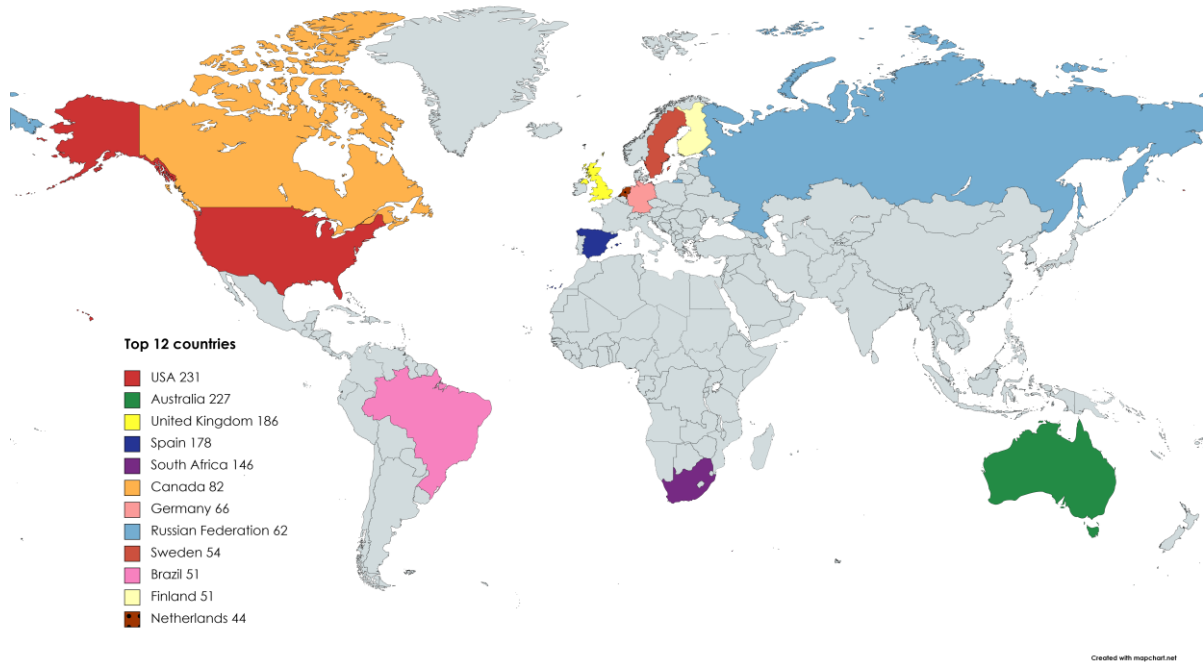

Figure 4. List of top countries on Inclusive Education issue in the World.
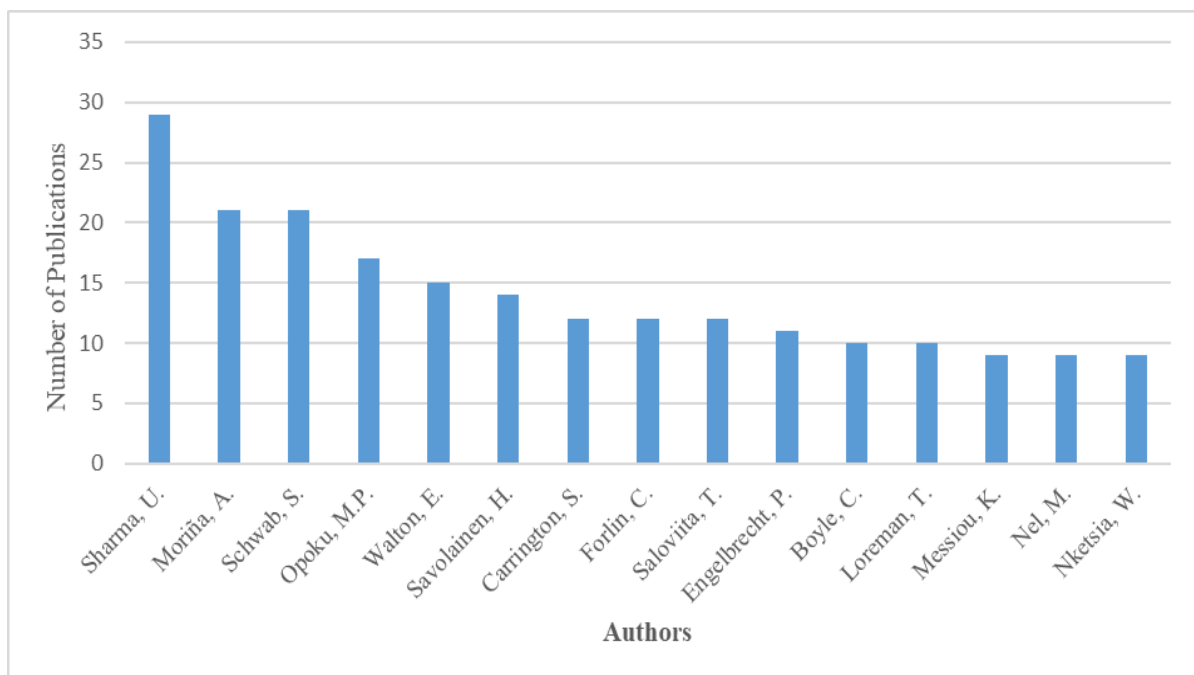
Top Authors on Inclusive Education

Figure 5. List of top authors published on inclusive education issues in the world

Authors are crucial to the growth of a specific subject of study and play a leading role in creating trends in a research field. During the period total of 160 different authors worked to publish 1836 papers on the inclusive education issue in the World. Figure 5 lists 15 authors who published 9 or more papers. Most of the rest published less than 8 articles, among whom 85(53.1 %) had produced 4 or more papers and a total of 60 (37.5 %) had produced only 3 papers. The top 15 most productive authors altogether contributed 211 papers, which consist of 11% of a total number of articles. Between them, Sharma, U. reigned with 73 publications, followed by Moriña, A. and Schwab, S. each of which published 21 articles

Publications by the Topic Cluster Name on Inclusive Education

There are different topic cluster names available for the subject areas given in Scopus database. Most of the papers published on inclusive education issue in the World belong to 7 different topic cluster names in Figure 6. The vast majority (56%) of papers are covered by Social Sciences cluster name, while Art and Humanities 13%, Psychology 12%, Health Professions 8%, Energy 3%, Engineering 2% and Biochemistry, Genetics, Molecular Biology and Chemical Engineering each with 1% of total publications.
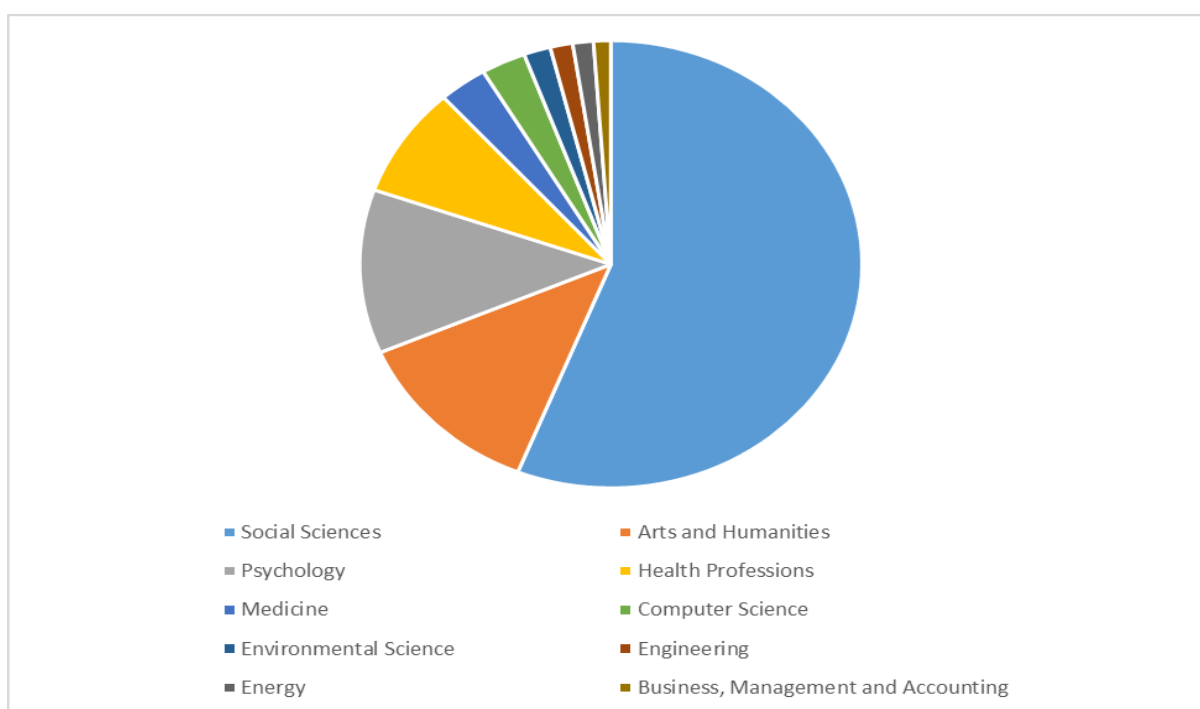

Figure 6. Top topic cluster name on inclusive education issues in the world

Discussion

The point of this review is to survey distributed articles on the inclusive education issue worldwide. This bibliometric analysis showed that articles published during 10 years have the highest results on inclusive education studies between 2020 and 2022 with a peak at the last year of research. The analysis of the Scopus database reveals valuable insights into the trends and patterns of research on inclusive education. The steady increase in the publication rate, especially in the last three years, indicates a growing interest and focus on inclusive education issues worldwide. The highest number of publications in 2022 highlights the current momentum and relevance of research in this field.

The geographical distribution of research demonstrates a global engagement in inclusive education topics. The dominance of English-speaking countries, particularly the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, suggests a significant contribution to the literature from these regions. Nevertheless, the vast majority of nations among leading countries are from the European continent, this trend is also reflected in leading funding sponsors for this period.

Institutional productivity is another crucial aspect, and the top ten institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the discourse on inclusive education. Monash University, North-West University, and Universidad de Sevilla emerge as leading contributors, showcasing their commitment to advancing knowledge in this area. The collaboration of 160 different institutions underscores the collaborative nature of research on inclusive education, fostering a global exchange of ideas and expertise.

The upward trend in the number of publications aligns with the increasing recognition of the importance of inclusive education in addressing diverse learning needs. The data not only reflects the past achievements but also indicates a promising future for inclusive education research. The variety of topics covered within inclusive education, as evident from the different clusters, suggests a multifaceted approach to understanding and improving inclusive practices.

As the research landscape continues to evolve, these findings provide a foundation for identifying gaps, exploring emerging themes, and directing future research endeavours. The collaborative efforts of institutions and researchers worldwide contribute to building a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education, which is crucial for creating inclusive and equitable educational environments globally.

Conclusion

Analyzing 1836 publications from the Scopus database (2013-2022) on inclusive education reveals a notable upward trend in research output, peaking at 316 publications in 2022. The top ten institutions, led by Monash University, played a significant role, emphasizing collaboration in global research. Geographically, English-speaking countries dominated, with eight European nations also contributing substantially. This snapshot reflects a dynamic and collaborative research landscape, setting the stage for future endeavors in understanding and advancing inclusive education globally.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The authors declare that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the authors.

Acknowledgements or Notes

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Author Information

Mahzuna Hamdamova
Associate Professor, Tashkent State Pedagogical University
Named After Nizomi, Dean of The Faculty of Preschool
Education, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Contact email: makhzuna.khamdamova@mail.ru

Shaista Sadikova
Professor, Tashkent State Pedagogical University Named
After Nizomi, Teacher of The Faculty of Preschool
Education, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Fazilat Abdiyeva
Tashkent State Pedagogical University Named After
Nizomi, Teacher of The Faculty of Preschool Education
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

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