

The Future of Inclusive Education in Saudi Schools

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Abstract : This article explores the future of inclusive education in Saudi schools by examining the historical plan for special education, identifying the support services needed for children with disabilities and their families, discussing expectations for inclusive education in Saudi schools, and analyzing the vision of Saudi teachers for inclusive education. The historical plan for special education in Saudi Arabia dates back to the 1970s when the government established schools for children with disabilities. However, it wasn't until the 1990s that a comprehensive plan was developed to provide special education services to all children with disabilities. Today, the plan includes a range of services, such as early intervention, assessment, and individualized education plans, but there is still a need for improvement in terms of access and quality of services. Children with disabilities and their families require a range of support services, including medical services, assistive technology, counseling, and training for parents and teachers. The article discusses the current state of support services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and highlights the need for more comprehensive and accessible services to ensure that children with disabilities receive the support they need to succeed. Expectations for inclusive education in Saudi schools are high, with a growing demand for inclusive schools that serve all students, regardless of their abilities. The article discusses the benefits of inclusive education, such as improved academic outcomes and social integration, and the challenges that need to be addressed in order to implement inclusive education successfully.

Overall, the article highlights the need for continued efforts to improve special education services, increase access to support services, and implement inclusive education in Saudi schools. By addressing these challenges, Saudi Arabia can create a more inclusive and equitable education system that meets the needs of all students.

Keywords: Inclusive education- Special education- Support services- Saudi teachers- Disabilities.

1 Introduction

Considering the potential and limitations of the Saudi education system? You may be in an inclusive classroom at this very moment and are proactively searching for appropriate approaches. Hopefully Reading this essay on inclusive teaching will help you gain a better understanding of what is required to achieve this, and what research offers validated approaches that benefit all. Special education services for disabled students were introduced in light of the inadequate state of the current public education system, which is unable to adequately accommodate many disabled students. Each nation worldwide has developed its special education services program and makes improvements to the education organization every year. Saudi Arabia is one of the developing countries that has built and changed its educational model over time to help students with disabilities receive an education.

In one word, the term inclusion refers to a social ideology that is all-embracing. Inclusion offers opportunities, along with non-disabled students in general education schools, for individuals with disabilities and special education. The development of an effective inclusive classroom varies in difficulty, depending on the needs of the handicapped student. Nevertheless, a proactive approach and optimistic attitudes on the part of the parents and teachers are pivotal in overcoming any potential obstacles.

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Inclusion education ensures that all students are provided high-quality education, interventions, and support to help them to achieve success in their core curriculum, despite their difficulties, in income-level-appropriate general education classes in their local public school⁽¹⁾.

Schools and classrooms function on the assumption that disabled students are as naturally as intelligent as normal students. Thus, in their classes and the school district community, all students will engage equally. A large part of the action relates to laws that offer students less inflexible teaching. This suggests they are as disadvantaged as their friends and that basic education was the first option placement for all students⁽²⁾.

Inclusive teaching is a concept of accepting, questioning and encouraging all the students in their efforts. It is also important that young children receive assistance. It requires the presence of a standard teacher as well as a special education teacher, along with the other staff and students – which may include parents. The definition and the philosophy behind it began with an informed approach and a positive attitude towards inclusion. Why include children with special needs in a regular school? Who's being helped? What are the outcomes? What are the findings? Inclusion is essential because we build on our progress through our diversity. If you don't have a different classroom or a diverse environment, then you won't achieve the same levels of innovation

According to the authors of the Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), according to the principles, students with special needs are entitled to obtain required curriculum modifications according to their individual special needs. Accommodation and upgrades are included. Students receiving accommodation follow the same academic standards as their colleagues; improvements, however, led to changes that decreased those standards. Curricular change depends on the particular needs of each learner⁽³⁾. Continuing contact is important to source individuals, resources and materials for all of your students to better serve them. Furthermore, several primary approaches for planning and teaching will make a major contribution towards reaching students with different abilities and skills.

The Special Education Historical Plan in Saudi Arabia

Before 1958, there had been no special education for children and individuals with disabilities provided by the Saudi Arabian Government. Al-Ajmi (2006) states that special needs children relied solely on their parents to facilitate their education. Salloom (1995) suggested that special instruction on how to learn and understand Braille began in 1958. Appropriate facilities have only been provided to blind adults while none of the youth has been engaged and services other than blindness have not been made available⁽⁴⁾.

In 1962, calls were made for individuals with visual impairments and blindness and other disabilities - such as those who were deaf or had an intellectual disability - to receive rehabilitation and education services, prompting the Ministry of Education to establish the special education unit for Arabic Saudi Arabia in 1962⁽⁵⁾.

¹⁾ Alquraini, T. (2012). Critical components of successful inclusion of students with severe isabilities. *International Journal of Special Education.*, 27-42-59

²⁾ Alquraini, T., & Dianne Gut, D. (2012). Critical Components of Successful Inclusion of Students with Severe Disabilities: Literature Review. *International Journal of Special Education.*,

³⁾ Inclusion. (2013-2020). Retrieved from Spicial Education Guide: <https://www.specialeducationguide.com/pre-k-12/inclusion/>

⁴⁾ Al-Wabli, A. (1996). Related Services That Are Provided for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Special Education Institutes in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Education*, 20, 191-123.

⁵⁾ Afeafe, M. (2000). Special Education in Saudi Arabia. Retrieved from <http://www.khayma.com/education-technology/PrvEducation3.htm>

To be suitable for the needs of individuals with visual disabilities such as blindness, Saudi Arabia had founded three academics in Alhofouf, Aneaza, and Mecca in 1964 (Al-Mousa, 1990). Such institutes were named Al-Noor and were funded by the government of Saudi Arabia and run by the minister.

Today there are some 746 general schools in Saudi Arabia, including those that support intellectual and physical disabilities, providing special education classes for students with mild to severe disabilities and 47 services for students with average to severe autism. In Saudi Arabia, public schools have about 316 deaf and hearing-impaired students and 171 blind and visually impaired students⁽⁶⁾.

Moreover, in the context of the class schedule in support rooms, in 1417 classes, students with individual disabilities are paired with part-time students with special needs as they were properly integrated into common classrooms in public schools⁽⁷⁾. Students also attend specialized schooling with serious and multiple disabilities (Alquraini, 2011). Nevertheless, certain types of impairment such as BEDs and Attention Loss and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) do not warrant special treatment because these conditions appear to be more disabilities than illnesses. The Saudi Government has historically provided inadequate special education support for students with disabilities. Therefore, a Minister for Education member from the Department General for Special Education in Saudi Arabia and several experts at King Saud University Special Education, (who hold their masters 'and a doctoral degree from the United States in special education), will also establish a policy on special education for disabled students in Saudi Arabia. Special education laws in the United States have been revised, among the Education for All With Children Performance, 1976, and the Education Act for People with Disabilities, 1990⁽⁸⁾.

Saudi Arabia's intellectual disabilities teachers also have training in different specialist educational institutions where they cannot communicate with their normal established partners in inclusive environments, where their familiar group, communion and learning skills can be enhanced. Rather than being individualized and adapted or modified from the general curriculum, these courses are produced by the Ministry of Education directly. Furthermore, specialist educational institutions lack the associated resources, including occupational therapists and language and speech therapists, which could help students with disabilities, allowing them to take full advantage of their IEPs to improve their connection, natural abilities and alternative skills in their lives, similarly to these added in many general schools^{(9),(10)}. With that said, the way many of the students now receive an education in different settings is unidentifiable and unique, just as all of the students with slight disabilities have to be included.

To build an effective style for inclusive learning, it is important to consider the teacher's perspectives. Besides, the push towards inclusive education for disabled students, particularly these with balanced and serious disabilities, has expanded. As a result, divers of Saudi Arabia's general schools nowadays have pupils with mild disabilities. It is worth noting that teacher prospects for inclusive learning were previously strongly negative for pupils with harsh psychological disabilities⁽¹¹⁾. The outcome of the recent research followed previous studies on the opinions of pupils with high-psychological disabilities on inclusive education. The research by Cook (2001) and Cook, Tankersley and Cook et al. (2000)

⁶⁾ Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia (2002). Rules and Regulations of Special Education. (2002). Retrieved from https://www.moe.gov.sa/Arabic/PublicAgenciesAndDepartments/BoysEducationAgency/SpecialEducation/DocumentsLibraries/RulesAndRegulations/se_rules.zip

⁷⁾ Al-Otaibi, B., & Al-Sartawi, Z. A. (n.d.). Related Services That Are Needed for the Students with Multiple Disabilities and Their Families in Saudi Arabia. <http://www.dr-banderlotaibi.com/new/1.pdf>.

⁸⁾ Alquraini, T. (2012)., **Opcite**

⁹⁾ Al-Otaibi, **Opcite**

¹⁰⁾ Al-Wabli, A. (1996). **Opcite**

¹¹⁾ Alquraini, T. (2012)., **Opcite**

suggest that teachers and administrators are less likely to include pupils with psychological disabilities than pupils with learning difficulties and emotional disorders in general education classrooms.

In public schools, some special education teachers work with students with mild disabilities and they may have been through a disappointing experience in an inclusive environment. Negative interactions with inadequate inclusive classes may also have a huge effect on teachers' views on special education (Cook, 2000).

What are the support services that children with disabilities and their families need in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

It is important to know the nature of the support services that children with disabilities and their families require in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The adequacy of these services from the viewpoint of teachers and parents is crucial. Parents have expressed the need for children with multiple disabilities and their families to have access to all the services included in the list of support services, to agree on the services they require, and that their assessment of needs sometimes differ from those of the teachers. There are significant differences in the views of parents and teachers about the availability of the services provided, where the estimates of parents were distributed between not receiving any service at all and receiving the service insufficiently⁽¹²⁾.

The philosophy of special needs has developed rapidly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, especially over the past few years, which has accelerated development and fostered a clear and keen interest in caring for people with special needs. This was evidenced by the tendency to integrate them into public education schools and the monkey's possible distance from isolation institutions and interest in genetic counseling. Work to rehabilitate children with special needs and reduce the negative effects of these disabilities on the other hand⁽¹³⁾.

There is no doubt that disability, in general, affects all aspects of a child's development, and the matter becomes more difficult in cases where a child has more than one disability or his disability falls within the mental retardation. Everyone close to the individual is impacted by problems accompanying their disability, which is why a focus on education and support services for the individual and their family, through the active role of teachers and professionals who specialize in providing appropriate services, is necessary. In the year 2020, the organizational regulations issued by the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia affirmed the provision of support services for children with special needs, devoted a special section to specify the forms of appropriate services that must be provided for each category of disability, and called for the provision of many forms of services appropriate for children and their families⁽¹⁴⁾.

Therefore, the success of any educational program has become dependent on the capacity of the support services it includes and its ability to meet the individual needs of the child in the light of the multidisciplinary evaluation procedures which had been experienced. specialized institutions and centers taking into account that the quality of the support services included in the individual educational programs varies according to the handicap and its number on the one hand and the needs Disabled child, on the other hand, as it diverges between medical, psychological and social services related to physical and occupational therapy, talking and speech therapy, as well as rehabilitation, transportation, and other technical and physical services. the success of the service provided to disabled children is not measured just by what is provided to them but is also on the level of support and assistance provided to the family.

¹²⁾ Al-Otaibi, **Opcit**

¹³⁾ Al-Wabli, A. (1996). **Opcit**

¹⁴⁾ Al-Otaibi, **Opcit**

Families, with all their problems and difficulties stemming from the presence of a handicapped child, needs many forms of support and assistance that will alleviate the amount of the pressure they're exposed to. This will allow them to accept their Childs disability and actively participate in the programs provided to them, using psychological, cognitive, and social materials provided by the support services.

Expectations for Inclusive Education in Saudi Schools

I will summarise the essential recommendations that I have drawn from my investigation of the literature on the topic of integration in Saudi schools, which have shaped the aspirations of researchers and monitored the views of Saudi teachers and families regarding the future of the handicapped student. If one asked: What are the key ingredients of an inclusive education system? The capacity to not stigmatize and to be able to adapt to that child's needs would be a simplistic answer. Delving into more detail, however, is difficult. There have been some case studies of inclusive schooling which have produced interesting findings. All students have different abilities and we must deal with them on a teacher level, and as an institution. Categorizing them however may not be the best way.

(Aldabas, Rashed, 2015) has concluded that special education in Saudi Arabia has been widely used to enable students with disabilities to obtain affordable, respected and effective education. Saudi Arabia's Educational background demonstrates tremendous improvement in the provision of special education programs in the last 50 years. In collaboration with other organizations of the Department of Education, the Ministry of Education has ensured that sufficient education and qualified teachers are equipped to provide special education for students in need. Initially delivered in small classes, for people with visual impairments, for example, these services were eventually extended to both women and men affected by hearing difficulties, learning disabilities, and visual impairments.

As outlined in the most of research, a range of guidelines can be extracted in the review here on the promotion of students with disabilities as important measures of areas and strategies to be pursued in special Saudi Arabia education. First, the need to enhance special education, by the particular needs of the students, when it comes to comprehensive education. This point is reinforced by innovations in exclusive learning, which represent the inclusion press without the founding of support systems required for this inclusion⁽¹⁵⁾.

Different pupils should be taught according to their needs in the least restrictive settings and should be taken into consideration when drawing up individual educational plans for students. Legislation must also be implemented that enhances the provision of special education facilities in the Saudi Arab republic. This legislation will provide communities with the following services: early warning, early intervention, and public education, which is free and necessary.

Saudi Arabia's Special Education Policy (2016) guides the education of disabled students in special education schools and institutes. Historically, the Saudi Government has not provided exclusive learning programs for disabled children, who instead depend on education and treatment from their parents. In 1958, a special education initiative was set up to educate blind people on how to learn to read braille. Blind people were the first group to be accepted by the state. The Disability Law in Saudi Arabia (2000) also included other conditions under the disability term⁽¹⁶⁾.

¹⁵⁾ Aldabas, R. (2015). Special Education in Saudi Arabia: History and Areas for Reform. Creative Education. 06. 1158-1167. 10.4236/ce.2015.611114.

¹⁶⁾ Abdalleh Alharbi1 and Abdullah Madhesh2 . (2016). Inclusive education and policy in Saudi Arabia. The Victoria Institute for Educational Research and Studies at Victoria University.

Also, professional development programmes in Saudi Arabia must be developed to qualify educators and other school factuality for inclusive classrooms before real inclusive learning strategies are introduced for students with disabilities⁽¹⁷⁾

Saudi Arabia has developed key disability laws in line with international literature, laws and guidelines, and education policies. However, it did not move towards inclusive education as fast as other nations, which did not align with preserving allegiance to the international community. In most cases, teachers in their schools successfully build skills using various forms of professional development approaches such as the technical learning network. When teachers are not adequately trained for inclusion, then high-quality education is difficult to achieve. The teacher training programmes in Saudi Arabia universities will also provide awareness and skills in inclusive classrooms to teach students with disabilities. In most cases, teachers in their schools successfully build skills using various forms of professional development approaches such as the technical learning network. The unique area of this study in Saudi Arabia should be conducted to assess the quality, efficacy, and benefits or drawbacks of special education programmes in Saudi Arabia. Teacher preparation services have also been developed to help promote policy inclusion policies. This program aims to teach children, disabled or otherwise, together in the gender separation system. Inclusion strives to educate all children in traditional education and, if appropriate, to provide additional services. Saudi Arabia has a tradition of providing special education for children with visual disabilities, hearing impairments, and those with less serious disabilities in regular schools.

Saudi teachers' vision for inclusive education

In conclusion, with hard work, we can achieve the vision of Saudi Arabian education for the new generation. The Ministry of Education represented by the Education Development Company is keen to integrate all special education students in all their classes in general education schools, believing that all students have the right to an education in a similar, non-isolated environment. This will start with developed schools, before rehabilitating all schools to accommodate all student groups. We start from the vision of the Ministry of Education, which states "providing equal learning opportunities and support systems to all students without exception", and accordingly as a teacher pushing for change, I have made some suggestions inspired by the studies used in this essay:

1-Qualify teachers, so they're able to accept integration and deal with it in several ways, such as adding merger curricula in universities as well as conducting training courses. This includes believing in the capabilities of students and possessing knowledge of coping methods in addition to other incentives that ensure the success of the integration process

2-The merging takes place from the pre-school stages, including kindergarten, which ensures that the integration is accepted by disabled students and their peers.

3-Educating the community, starting with students and parents, about the necessity of inclusion, which allows all society to accept the integration and consider it the right direction for education.

Saudi Arabia has set up and modified its overtime educational model to provide support for students with disabilities. Saudi education goals to reach its vision.

Hopefully, we will contribute to the implementation of inclusive integration in its truest sense, where all special education classes are integrated, without exception, into the general education classes. Teachers' belief in the capabilities of students with special needs will have a major impact on developing students' abilities and helping them to keep up with their classmates. It will also make them contributors to the community as a whole. The attitudes and views of teachers for students with special needs will have the greatest impact on inclusion initiatives.

¹⁷⁾ Abdallelh, (2016), **Opcit**

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