

“Masked Inclusion”

Implementing the Inclusive Education Policy in Three RAK Primary Government Schools: An Investigation study.

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well as, it is to provide them with equal education opportunities for placing them on appropriate environment where they meet their needs. Moreover, a parent believes that resource rooms and special education is better for their children with disabilities than to include them with others in regular classrooms. As a result of this, nowadays inclusion in the UAE is a key topic and international phenomenon (Perarpoint & Forest 1994).

Data collection tools

The researcher used mixed methods to collect data from the three selected schools. The purpose of this study, is to investigate how the three schools are implementing Inclusive Education in primary schools regarding identification, referral and procedures. Data collection tools were utilized to fulfill this purpose.

Participants

Total number of participants in this study was 113; this includes the selected schools' teachers, special needs students, special needs parents, other school staff and Support Special Education Center team (SSEC). 89% of subject teachers have a bachelor degree teaching students (grade one to grade five). Furthermore, 44% of these participant teachers are teaching in regular class with more than eleven years of experience; however, these 44% of participants did not receive any training in special education.

Results

Inclusion is Unfair

From open-ended questions responses indicate that teachers believe that inclusion is unfair neither to them nor to students (both normal and special needs). For example, one teacher put it this way: "I don't agree about this at all to include special needs students with others because ... they need special services. This is because teachers are not qualified enough for this field as well as they do not have enough skills to deal with them at all". Interestingly, teachers are aware that they lack the qualification and skills to deal with special need students in regular classrooms. While another teacher

mentioned the importance of reducing class size. For example, one teacher did not agree about inclusion by saying "I don't agree with inclusion because of the class size" (see below Figure 5 where 70% of participants are teaching more than 25 students in their class.

Results show that school C administration is highly supportive of Inclusive Education by encouraging all teachers to visit other fields to observe different inclusive classes to explore more about the implementation of this program. Below section presents interview findings in more details.

Challenges to Inclusive Classrooms

One of the most challenges that face subject teachers is the class size. The results from the interviews show that all interviewees are teaching more than 27 students including special needs students without shadow teachers. This causes difficulties in teaching them with normal students. However, some interviewees do agree to include special need students by highlighting that this is their right to learn like others. Moreover, the researcher found that there is a very high need for a TA. Their findings validate similar responses by surveyed teachers.

Teachers' Attitude towards Specific Training

There is a very high interest from participants to receive a special education training, particularly to know more about their special needs students' characteristics in their classes. For example, T4 (grade 4) and T5 (grade 5) from school C pointed out that they are both teaching Autistic students and sometimes when they scream or cry they do not know how to control them while teaching. Similarly, T5 from School A mentioned, "this will be great if I will be trained to know and understand their needs". Moreover, T2 from school B highlighted her training needs to be better able to manage special needs students' problems: "this (training) will help me to know how to deal with their difficulties".

Furthermore, while attending RAK EDZ training provided teachers with relevant workshops, a few teachers, who attended the training, felt they needed more specific training sessions tailored to special needs students in their classes. On the

other hand, data reveals that when the training fails to address teachers' concerns, they assume other future training initiatives would be useless and a waste of time.

Parents Limited Awareness of Inclusive Education

Responses indicate that parents' awareness of Inclusive Education process is limited and especially when they include their children into the regular classes. Parents from school A and B indicate that they had no background about Inclusive Education before. At the same time, they were happy to participate in the study saying "please help our children". Parents from school A and B were not informed by the school about the study topic. With the explanation from the researcher about the study topic they were able to agree to answer all questions. Yet, the concept of Inclusive Education is something new to them. Parents'

Perceptions of Teachers' Readiness

Parents believe that teachers are still not ready to teach special needs students saying: "teachers do not understand how to reach the right information's for them", while other parent said "teachers keep telling me to take my child to special need center"; whereas another parent from school C mentioned "not all teachers do not know how to teach, but they still need training specially how to deal with an Autistic child ". This view is also confirmed by observation findings where there is a need for teachers to know more about the students with disabilities and how to teach them like normal students.

In this study six special needs students were observed from the three selected schools. Two students were observed from each school

School-Based Support: IEP development and implementation

The UAE MOE guidelines indicate that any special needs students who are enrolled in regular classes and suffer from specific disability, they need an IEP to attend individual or group support in the school setting (MOE 2010). The results for Farah from school B indicate that she

used to write letters before when she was in Grade two, because she was attending a few classes in the resource room but as her sample writing shows above her developing skill to recognize Arabic letters has deteriorated. Moreover, she did have an IEP when she was in Grade two albeit incomplete; there was nothing written on it, only one or two dates, her parents' name was not included either. Currently, she does not have an IEP for this year, which is the same as the second observed student below.

Aisha form school B suffers from Cerebral palsy and physical and intellectual disability. Aisha is a wheelchair user, and she cannot write. She used to have an IEP when she was in grade four, but nothing was written in her plan. Attending an inclusive classroom without an IEP for both students is not conducive of any kind of learning.

Recommendations

As mentioned earlier the researcher found that in the UAE, the MOE is the one entity in charge of all education policies that are related to special needs students and students with learning difficulties who were included in regular classrooms. The MOE provided the School for All guideline for all schools, and this guideline presents the main policy by respecting the special education in all schools in public and private schools. But, from this study, it is found that some schools are not following this guide. In general, all staff in school does understand the policy of inclusion and integration of special needs students in regular classes. Also, they all know about the IEP plan, but some never heard about it. Moreover, teachers do accept special needs students in their class to teach them but because of their lack of knowledge and experience they do not support inclusion at all. In this study, all the teachers underline the need for reducing the class size especially for teachers who teach special needs students or those with learning difficulties in their classes. Also, teachers in this study expressed the high needs for teacher assistants' availability while they teach in classes. Furthermore, for best practices more study and research need to be done to investigate the implementation and procedures to make the MOE School for All guideline work more effectively.

Introduction

These days' integration of the disabled students has become a fashionable term, but are all society aware of the meaning of it? Recently there is a lot of discussion going on regarding the inclusion of disabled students in regular schools. This includes a number of disabilities such as mental retardation, giftedness, talents, hearing impairments, physical and health impairments, learning disabilities, behavior disorder and communication disorders. These students have their own kind of creativity and abilities, and they need someone to support them by giving them the opportunities to express their talents. Also, it helps them to engage with their friends by gaining social behavior. Most of the community has started to talk about the inclusion issue and the right of people with disabilities to live in such an environment among their families and friends.

Every child has the right to an education, and this is where the United Arab Emirates' interest lies, developing a learning environment for all students with and without disabilities. This is since His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan the President of the United Arab Emirates approved the Federal Law No.29 of 2006. This law is to protect the rights of these students by ensuring that they have been integrated fully with others with appropriate services (Gaad 2010).

In general, school is an environment of educational, social and psychological

support for students including special needs by knowing that they can provide special services for them according to their difficulties. Beside this, the success of inclusion depends on school leaders when they do "good things" to all students equally then the result will come naturally (Taylor & Esq 2010).

The inclusion issue raised researcher's attention to exploring more about this issue and to find the needs to include these students with disabilities into education in normal classrooms. Education for all is a very important issue for everyone where this has been mentioned in the world conference in Spain. This statement focused on adopting a new framework for action where everyone has a right to education (United Nation 1994). Furthermore, it also stated that believing every child is unique with their own interest, abilities and characteristics where they can access through regular schools. Also, it is to promote the equality of education system across the world by ensuring that education for 'all' were it has been mentioned in the Salamanca statement that United Nation agenda is all about education for all (United Nation 1994).

The main purpose of this paper is to answer these study questions. Nowadays Inclusive Education has become a fashionable term. However, recently many discussions started to come out about this issue.

Inclusive Education in the UAE means different things to different people. As