

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND VIEWS ON BARRIERS TO INCLUSION IN JORDAN

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This study explores teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special education needs (SEN) in mainstream schools in Jordan. It also examines the barriers the teachers perceived to hinder successful inclusions. The study sample consisted of 87 primary school teachers who responded to an open-ended questionnaire asking about their knowledge, experiences, attitudes and barriers toward inclusion. Teachers' responses were qualitatively analyzed with the guidance of the research questions. Findings showed that teachers do not have enough and appropriate knowledge about inclusion due to the lack of preparation they received in their teacher education programs. Teachers also have negative attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special needs (SEN) attributed to various barriers. These barriers included the negative attitudes of the students and schools staff toward students with special needs, underprepared school environment, unsuitable curriculum and evaluation modules and lack of family and society's support. The study concluded that without changing the infrastructure of the educational system where all necessary components to build inclusive education are accounted for, inclusion will remain an unrealistic idea.

Introduction

In Jordan, the law for the Welfare of Disabled People (No. 12/1993)- reinforced in 2007 with the issue of the Law on Rights of Disabled People (No. 31/2007)- has changed the way in which children with special education needs (SEN) receive their education. It stipulated for the right of SEN children to receive their education in the mainstream schools, and for those schools to introduce all required changes to provide SEN children with the education that meet their needs. Corresponding to this law, The Ministry of Education (MOE) has taken actions to facilitate the inclusion of SEN students in its schools. It has adopted an inclusive provision that allows SEN students to attend special classrooms called 'recourse rooms'. In these classes, they receive individual support for one session a day by a special education teacher and attend the regular classroom along their peers for the rest of the school day. Today, there are more than 600 resource rooms opened in mainstream schools distributed across the country, their number and capacity, however, is still limited. Most SEN students are still educated in special centers waiting for the MOE to further expand their inclusive provision so to allow for more of them to join mainstream schools.

Despite the recognition of the inclusive education as one of the SEN students' rights, and the provision the MOE adapted to facilitate its implementation, inclusive education is still facing numerous challenges. Among those challenges is the lack of the infrastructure necessary to build inclusive schools, such as school buildings, which are currently not disability friendly, unprepared staff, unsuitable curriculum and evaluation modules. Another pressing challenge facing inclusion is the underprepared general education teachers. These teachers, with the adoption of inclusive education, have been expected to develop new competences and skills such as knowledge of characteristics and needs of SEN children, and implementation of wide range of teaching methods, learning activities, and evaluation strategies in the classroom. Such competences they, ironically, have not received training on in their both pre and in-service teacher education programs (Amr, 2011).

Equally important to the development of the above competences, is the need for regular teachers to first develop positive attitudes toward working with SEN students. Teachers' attitude has been identified as a prominent factor toward the successful of inclusion (Varcoe & Boyle, 2013; Puri & Abraham, 2004). Pijl and Meijer (2002) explained that without regular teachers accepting the education of SEN students as a part of their job, they will often try to hold responsibility of those students to others, such as the special education teachers. Such problem, eventually, results in encouraging hidden exclusion in the school. This particular problem has been identified in Jordan. In a recent study investigated the collaboration between special and regular teachers in inclusive schools, regular teachers explicitly suggested that SEN students are the responsibility of special education teachers as they have better understanding of those students and their needs (Al-Natour, et al., 2015). Such result seems to reflect rather negative attitudes by general education teacher toward inclusion.

Mapping Out Regular Education Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Views About Inclusion:

Attitudes are important because they help making judgments and decisions, and hence direct our behavior and how we respond to attitude objects. Attitudes also influence the type of information we attend to and retrieve from memory, and hence the way we interpret the different things we encounter in the world (Ajzen, 2005; Petty & Cacioppo, 1996; Maio & Haddock, 2010). Therefore, the way teachers react to inclusion is, to great extent, influenced by the knowledge and experience they have about SEN students and inclusion. Research suggests that teachers, who possess sufficient and accurate knowledge about inclusion, have more positive attitudes toward it (Gilmore, Campbell & Cuskelly, 2003; Al Zyouidi, Al Sartwai & Dodin, 2011; Hakim, 2009).

Despite the importance of teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, several studies reported that regular teachers are not often in favor of it (Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2009; Gilmore, Campbell & Cuskelly, 2003; Shadreck, 2012; Tait & Purdie, 2000). For instance, Boer, Pijl & Minnaert (2009) reviewed 26 studies investigated regular primary school teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of SEN students and found that most teachers hold either neutral or negative attitudes toward inclusion. Similar result was reached when reviewing the literature on teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in the Arab world, where Jordan is located and share with its countries cultural and historical contexts (Al Zyouidi, Al Sartwai & Dodin, 2011; Hakim, 2009; Gad & Khan, 2007).

Such negative attitudes toward inclusion encouraged researchers to investigate the reasons behind it. Various factors were identified which could be summarized in two domains; first, factors related to teachers' knowledge and preparations in the area of inclusion. Second, factors related to the educational environment and context.

As for the first domain, literature in this area suggests that developing positive attitude toward inclusion requires that teachers acquire sufficient knowledge about inclusive education. This knowledge includes learning about the characteristics of SEN children and how to utilize various teaching and evaluation strategies to correspond to students' diverse needs in the classroom. Accordingly, research demonstrated that teachers' negative attitude is partly ought to the insufficient or inaccurate knowledge that teachers have about SEN students or inclusion (Anati, 2012; Gad & Khan, 2007; Razali, et al., 2013; Shadreck, 2012). Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly (2003), for example, studied teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of Down syndrome children and found that most teachers did not favor their inclusion as a result of the insufficient knowledge they have about those children and inclusion. Similarly, Al Zyouidi, Al Sartwai and Dodin (2011), examined pre-service teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and concluded that teachers hold negative attitudes toward inclusion due to the lack of knowledge and preparation these teachers received in the area of inclusion. On other hand, Ching, Forlin and Mei Lan (2007) found that teachers' attitude toward the inclusion of students with disabilities has improved after those teachers undertook a training course provided them with the required knowledge and skills they needed in order to work with SEN students.

As for the second domain, literature suggests that a learning environment that lacks the required resources and support, often leads to teachers become less accepting of the inclusion of SEN students. For instance, Gaad and Khan (2007) found that teachers working in Dubai mainstream schools do not favor inclusion due to their perceived lack of support and recourses. Those teachers also suggested their lack of appropriate instructional materials, sufficient time and large teaching load as prominent factors hindering the successful of inclusion. Also, Anati (2013) found that teachers in United Arab of Emirates (UAE) are more likely to support inclusion when certain factors are made available such as: the availability of specialized professionals to support teachers and students, the availability of necessary learning tools and sources, schools and classrooms design that facilitate the mobility of students with disabilities.

Teachers' attitudes and views on barriers to inclusion might vary across cultures due to different contextual factors characterizing each education system. Therefore, the current study is opting to qualitatively examine teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and barriers to inclusion that are particular to the Jordanian context. Identifying those barriers is important in order to help the educational authorities developing an inclusive education system that correspond to the needs of both SEN students and regular teachers.

Research Questions and Design

This study examines the regular teachers' knowledge, attitudes and views on the barriers to the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream schools in Jordan. It specifically set to qualitatively answer the following two questions:

First: what do regular teachers know about inclusion and what are their attitudes toward the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream schools?

Second: what, from the teachers point of view, are the barriers toward realizing a successful inclusion?

Study Sample

The study sample was chosen from those schools that have recourse room (special classes that support SEN students in the mainstream schools) in Amman as they are the ones that have SEN students enrolled in their mainstream classrooms. The primary school teachers in those schools were then contacted and those who had the experience teaching SEN students in their classroom were asked to participate in the study. Those who agreed to take part in the study were then asked to fill out the study open-ended questionnaire. The sample initially consisted of 107 primary school teachers (79 females, 28 males) working in 23 state schools in the city of Amman. The number of the returned and completed questionnaires was 87 (67 females and 19 males) forming the finale study sample.

All participants are primary school teachers teaching grades from first to sixth. All teachers held university degree in one of three areas: Maths, Arabic language, primary education (home class teacher), and have teaching experience ranged from 5-26 years.

Instrument and Data Collection

To answer the research questions, an open-ended questionnaire was designed. This questionnaire included open-ended questions where the participants have a free space after each question to write their answers. This type of questionnaire has the advantage of allowing the respondents to express their opinions without being restricted by a set of limited responses to choose from. This questionnaire format allows the researcher to discover the responses the individuals give spontaneously, and avoid the bias that may result from suggesting responses to the individual (Reja, et al., 2003). The use of this type of questionnaire in this study was deemed to be advantageous. It gave each teacher the opportunity to openly expressing her/his attitudes toward inclusion and discussing the barriers that they face drawing on their own personal experience. This eventually provided a more in-depth understanding of those teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward inclusion in Jordan.

The questionnaire was designed inline with the aims and questions of the study. It included seven open-ended questions focused on asking teachers what do they know about inclusion, do they think it benefits the education system, what are their roles as regular teachers when teaching in inclusive schools, do they think it is possible to adopt an inclusive approach in schools and what are the challenges that impede achieving a successful inclusion.

The questionnaire was accompanied with a cover letter stating the aims of the study and providing instructions for teachers on how to fill it out. The questionnaire also included a personal information section where teachers provided information about their qualifications, teaching experience, age, and school name.

Data was collected with the help of a group of teachers who were enrolled in the learning disabilities diploma course at the University of Jordan. Those teachers helped in the sample recruitment as well as the questionnaire distribution. The data was collected over a course of three weeks during the second semester of the academic year. All returned questionnaires were transferred into a Microsoft document format to facilitate analyzing the data later on.

The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed qualitatively with the use of the thematic analysis method. This included reading through the teachers' response to the questionnaire and then developing a coding list. This list was then used to code the entire data. The coding list helped eventually identifying themes and sub themes that were then used to answer the study questions. For example, three main themes were identified in the study: teachers' knowledge about inclusion, teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and teachers' views on the barriers to inclusion. Teachers' responses concerning each theme were then placed underneath it providing the detailed results for that

theme. The first two themes were used to answer the first question and the third was used to answer the second question.

Later when presenting the results to answer each research question, the main theme was presented and quotes from the teachers' responses were provided to support the detailed results for the question.

Results and discussion

First question: Teachers Knowledge and Attitudes Toward the Inclusion of SEN Students:

As stated above, it is evident that teachers' attitude toward inclusion is an important factor for successful inclusion. Teachers who hold positive attitudes toward the inclusion SEN students are more likely to support an inclusive learning environment in which students' diverse needs are met. (Brophy & Whittingham, 2013; Campbell & Cuskelly, 2003; Stella, Forlin & Mei Lan, 2007; Razali, et al., 2013; Shadreck, 2012). Therefore, this section presents the answer to the first research question which explores the knowledge and attitudes of regular teachers toward inclusion. It presents the results under two themes: teachers' knowledge about inclusion and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. Knowledge about inclusion is explored first as literature suggests that attitudes are influenced by the knowledge we already have about the attitude subject and whether or not this knowledge is sufficient and accurate.

First theme: Teachers' knowledge about inclusion of SEN students: Teachers' knowledge about inclusion was explored through three aspects; what does inclusion mean, who benefits from it, and what are the roles of regular teacher in the inclusive classroom.

To research the first aspect, teachers were explicitly asked what does inclusion mean from their own views. Interestingly, teachers' answers were almost unified. With no exception, they all stated that inclusion means 'placing students with disabilities in regular classroom in mainstream school' T4. The word 'placing' was found across all teachers' responses to this question, indicating that teachers understanding of inclusion is limited to the physical placement of SEN students in the regular classroom.

Few teachers, on the other hand, particularly those who mentioned receiving training in the area of special education, added that inclusion also entails enabling social interactions between SEN students and their societies. For example, T29 said that 'inclusion is to include children with special needs in regular classroom which allow them to talk, play and make friends and eventually develop some interaction with their society'.

The above result conveys limitedness in teachers' knowledge about inclusion, perceiving it only as a physical placement of SEN students in regular classrooms. Their knowledge of inclusion does not include the changing of the learning environment, philosophy, pedagogy, curriculum, as well society in order to meet the needs of those students. It only hovers around the idea of the SEN students being for long isolated in special centers, and now being enabled to join mainstream schools. This view clearly does not reflect the real meaning of inclusion, which entails, in its very essence, creating a learning environment where the learning of all is facilitated.

To explore the second aspects of teachers' knowledge about inclusion, Teachers were asked about whom does inclusion benefit. All teachers explicitly stated that inclusion 'is for children with disabilities', T22. Teachers, in fact, were more concerned, when answering this question, about discussing which disabilities are more suitable for inclusion and why. Their responses were found to be interesting as it further helped understanding their knowledge about inclusion. Some teachers stated that inclusion is not suitable to all categories of disabilities as 'some of them could never benefit from the education provided in mainstream classroom', T20. They suggested that inclusion is only suitable to students with 'learning disabilities or visual, hearing and physical impairments', T15. Teachers justified the possibility of the inclusion of those disabilities on the premise that 'their intelligence level is not necessarily below average and therefore they may be able to learn what other students learn in the regular classrooms' T35, on condition that 'required facilities such as physical adjustments to school building and classroom and learning materials are made available' T65.

Other teachers suggested that inclusion might be suitable for children with 'mild disability such as those with partial visual and hearing impairments and mild learning disabilities' T36. The severity degree of the disability here is important to determine the SEN students' suitability for inclusion as 'they may still have the ability to communicate and interact with other children and meet minimum requirement of the learning objectives taught in the classroom' T61'.

As appears above, teachers perceive inclusion not to be suitable to all SEN students. It is only for those whom the nature and severity of their disability would not disable them from learning the content taught in the classroom. Such result explains why teachers think that inclusion is just placing SEN students in regular classroom. For them, the disability of those students should not interfere with the learning process in the classroom, implying that the students should fit the learning environment and not vice versa.

This result is consistent with the results of other studies which showed that teachers' attitudes toward inclusion varies according to the type of the student's disability. Teachers' attitudes become more positive toward the inclusion of children with mild disability because their characteristics and needs are not very different from their peers (Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2009). For example, Gad and Khan (2007) found that teachers are more in support of the inclusion of students with learning difficulties and dyslexia, but less willing to support the inclusion of students of severer disabilities such intellectual challenged, profound and multiple learning difficulties. Those teachers thought that such students lack skills needed to master the curriculum taught in the classroom. Shadreck (2012) also found that some teachers support the inclusion of SEN students but not those with sever disabilities and behavioral and emotional problems. Teachers, however, owe that to their lack of the appropriate training and skills to work with those students.

As for the third aspect examining teachers' knowledge about inclusion, teachers were asked about the roles of the regular teachers in inclusive classrooms. Most teachers suggested that their roles is to 'sympathize with SEN students and give more to them during lessons' T6, and 'be patient when teaching them and try to accept that they can not learn with the same speed as other children' T2. On the other hand, other teachers stated explicitly that they do not know what roles they are supposed to play when teaching SEN students, because they 'do not know much about the problems and needs of those students'. T40.

This result shows that teachers lack also the knowledge related to the fundamental part they are supposed to play as teachers in the inclusive classrooms. They perceive their role as to only sympathize with SEN students, and not to facilitate their learning process. Similar result was found by Gaad and Khan (2007), where teachers expressed their lack of knowledge about making instruction adaptation for SEN students be.

Second theme: Attitudes of regular teachers toward the inclusion of SEN students: In order to explore teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, we asked them what do they think of the inclusion of SEN students and whether or not inclusion benefits those students. Responses of the majority of teachers showed that they do not favor inclusion. The reasons underlings this view, however, vary among those teachers. Some of them argued that SEN students, due to their disabilities, can not meet the learning requirements in the classroom. Other teachers suggested that SEN students have certain needs and require certain services that are not available in the classroom. Many of the teachers also thought that SEN students often have behavioral problems that can be disruptive to the leaning process in the classroom. Few other teachers thought that inclusion might expose SEN students, who may have certain physical and behavioral characteristics, to the humiliation and mockery of other students. These views are demonstrated in the following extracts:

T15: I do not think inclusion is beneficial to the SEN students. From my experience, it is very difficult for them to engage with the learning activities taking place in the classroom and hence corresponding to the learning requirements and goals similar to their peers.

T3: I do not think regular classroom is the place to educate students with special needs. These students often have needs and physical or medical conditions that require special services which are not available in regular classrooms.

T66: Children with disabilities always have behavior problems. For example they scream sometimes in the middle of the lesson, or do not sit in their desks during the lessons. Such behavior disrupts other children and makes it difficult for me to maintain discipline in the classroom.

T35: I think inclusion is not a good idea. Placing a student with disability with other students will expose him to their humiliation and insults.

This result coincides with the results of many studies, for example, Gaad and Khan (2007) found that mainstream teachers do not favor the inclusion due to various reason among them feeling that SEN students lack skills required to learn and master the learning content taught in the classroom. Also, Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly (2003), found that despite teachers in their study recognized the emotional, social and educational benefits of inclusion, the majority of them did not believe that mainstream classroom is the best place to educate children with down syndrome which might be explained by a perceived lack of support and resources for teaching those children in mainstream schools.

On the other hand, few teachers suggested that inclusion could have benefits to SEN students such as: 'boosting their self-confidence and remove negative stigmas usually attached to them' T1, 'helping the development of their social skills and relationships with other students' T2, 'helping them not feeling inferior to others and boost their self-esteem' T43, 'increasing the chances of social interactions' T37, 'changing the attitudes of school's personal and students toward disabilities and students with special needs' T9, 'changing the attitude of the society toward people with disabilities' T25.

Despite such rather important benefits teachers listed above, a close look at these benefits reveal two important issues: first, all these benefits are of social and psychological nature where SEN students' self confidence is boosted and social interaction is encouraged. As for the educational benefits, teachers do not seem to think that inclusion can also be beneficial to SEN students in this area too. Second, teachers discussed the benefits of inclusion but to SEN students only and not to any other parties such as other students, schools or society. This may suggest that teachers see inclusion as a mono approach that its sole goal is to only support SEN students. A rather limited understanding of inclusion which one of its goals is to improve the educational system in its different aspects so to achieve equality among all learners with or without special needs. Society also benefits when having all of its members actively participating in its economic, social and cultural development.

Not favoring the inclusion of SEN students by the teachers reflects their rather negative attitudes toward the inclusion of those students. However such attitude is justifiable on the premise of the very limited knowledge these teachers possess about inclusion and how it is implemented. Moreover, teachers' rather negative attitude toward inclusion is also linked to many existing factors that teachers perceive as barriers toward inclusion as next section demonstrates.

Second question: Teachers' Perceptions on the Barriers Toward Inclusion

This section demonstrates the answer of the second research question which explores the teachers' perception on the barriers that hinder inclusion. Barriers to inclusion are a key issue when discussing inclusion. Although inclusion may seem theoretically feasible, its feasibility is highly challenged when it is implemented on the ground. Studies showed that even when teachers favor inclusion and support it as a right of SEN students, they often express deep their concerns about implementing it due to several challenges and barriers that seem to jeopardize its success. (Anati, 2012; Dapudong, 2013).

Literature, in general, discusses barriers to inclusion at different levels; economical, educational, social and environmental. Such barriers, nevertheless, vary across cultures, and hence should be discussed with regard to the specific context in which inclusion is implemented. In this section barriers to inclusion in Jordan are explored from its teachers point of view. Teachers' views are particularly important because they are exposed to the day-to-day problems and challenges rising from adapting inclusive practice in schools (Meijer, Pijl, & Hegarty, 2002)

To explore barriers to inclusion, teachers in this study were asked explicitly to discuss the barriers they perceive to hinder implementing inclusion in their schools. Teachers suggested various barriers which were emerged in five sub-themes: 1) students' negative attitudes, 2) staff related barriers 3) environmental related barriers 4) scarcity of learning resources 5) unsuitable curriculum and evaluation modules, 6) family and society related barriers. These sub themes are discussed in the following:

First: students' negative attitudes toward students with disabilities: teachers suggested that students hold negative attitudes toward their SEN peers. This results in those students being unsupportive to their SEN peers and gradually developing ineffective relationships with them:

T57: In my school, children hold negative attitude toward the disabled. For instance if I ask one of my student to set next to a student with disability they give me a sad face to show that they are unhappy to do it.

Also, when I ask my students to help a student with disability doing a worksheet they try to make excuses to avoid helping him.

T18: Our students still do not accept children with disability. This is resulting in exposing those children to all kind of insults and humiliation by their peers in the classroom.

Perceiving the students' negative attitudes toward their SEN peers as a barrier to inclusion by the teachers is crucial. Teachers showed how attitudes are linked to our behavior where students' negative attitudes resulted in two behaviors: a) rejection to support their SEN peers in their learning process, and b) building a negative relationship with the their SEN peers. Both behaviors seem to adversely affect both SEN students and teachers: the SEN students who may develop psychological problem due to their peers' mistreatment and missing out on the valuable benefits of peers' learning. And the teachers by lacking the students' support they need to help their SEN students. In conclusion, such negative attitude the students hold toward their SEN peers creates a negative dynamics in the classroom and act as a barrier to achieve inclusion.

Second: Staff related barriers: teachers discussed here a number of barriers related to the school's staff. These, barriers included: underprepared teachers, staffs' negative attitudes toward inclusion, unclear roles and responsibilities of the school's staff working with SEN students including the regular teachers, special education teachers, head teacher, school counselor. These barriers are presented in the following extracts:

T41: well, currently it is difficult to have children with disabilities in mainstream schools because schools' staff is not prepared to work with them. Teachers, for instance, do not know anything about the teaching strategies that are effective with those children. They also do not know how to tailor the curriculum and the different learning activities and materials to suit those children. I personally do not know how even to assess them! Should they be assessed like other children? I do not know!

T37: one of the problems is the school staff who is not ready to welcome children with disabilities in the school. For example, I do not know what are my responsibilities toward those children and neither do the other staff such as the special education teacher and school councilor. I always thought that those children are sole responsibility of the special education teacher and now they tell us that we also share this responsibility!

The above barriers to inclusion, suggested by the teachers, seem legitimate. Teachers' concern about their lack of preparation to work in inclusive classrooms is a pressing issue as found in different studies (Dapudong, 2013). A study, conducted in Jordan, showed that both pre and in service teachers education programs do not provide teachers with the required knowledge, pedagogies or skills that are necessary to work in inclusive schools. Such lack of preparation hinders their effectiveness as teachers and also leads to develop negative attitudes toward their SEN students and inclusion (Amr, 2011). A recent study also showed that there is no guidance provided by the educational authority or schools on the roles and responsibilities of both general teachers and special education teachers in inclusive classroom, which resulted in confusion among those teachers and led to a general belief that SEN students are the responsibility of special education teachers only (Al Natour, et al., 2015).

Third: Environment related barriers. Teachers suggested three barriers to successful inclusion that are related to school and classroom environment and resources: firstly, the large classroom size, which exceeds 50 students sometimes resulting in the time allocated to each student to be limited. Secondly, schools' buildings not being designed to be disability friendly. Thirdly, the lack of necessary learning resources and materials where available materials are either basic or insufficient:

T19: schools are packed with children; in my school the number of students per classroom is about 50, which makes it impossible for teachers to allocate time for children who might need extra help.

T33: School building is not prepared to suit children with disabilities. For example we have four-stories school building but no lifts in the school.

T5: I think one of the barriers is not having any materials and resources that are important to help me diversifying the teaching strategies to correspond to the students' array of abilities and needs. When I teach reading and writing I only use the chalkboard which seems to be satisfactory to most of my students, but this will not be sufficient to students with special needs. I see their special education teacher, in order to facilitate their learning at the resource room, uses a variety of materials such as flash cards, magnetic letters and numbers, computer programs, stories,

etc. It will not be fair to those students to learn in my classroom unless my classroom is as equipped with learning materials as the resource room.

Environmental related barriers, as teachers seem to argue, affect their ability to fulfill their teaching job limiting their ability to provide effective teaching to all students. Such barriers were also identified by different studies. For instance, Anati (2012) found that teachers are keener to accept the inclusion of SEN students when all necessary learning resources are made available and school buildings are designed to facilitate the mobility of SEN students. Similar result was also found in the Gad and Khan's study (2007), where teachers did not have positive attitudes toward inclusion due to the lack of resources and support. Teachers also found their large teaching load as an obstacle to work with SEN students effectively. Similarly, Shadreck (2012) found that in service teachers in Zimbabwe have negative attitudes toward inclusion because of the large classes and lack of resources and support.

Fourth: unsuitable curriculum and evaluation modules: teachers within this theme suggested a number of barriers that are related to the curriculum, its design, how it is taught and how learning outcomes are evaluated. For example, some teachers argued that the curriculum is dense and lengthy making it difficult for them to diversify its content to suite the wide range of student's abilities in the classroom:

T4: the curriculum is very dense and long. I have a student with learning difficulties and he cannot follow what is taught in the classroom, it is too difficult for him and I do not know how to make it easier to him.

Other teachers suggested that the curriculum must be fully taught and finished according to specific time schedule. This problem limits their ability to adjust the teaching pace to correspond to those who learn at slower pace.

T16: children with special needs are slow in learning the content of the curriculum. I know that because I had a student with learning difficulty last year in my class and it was so difficult for him to follow the speed at which the lessons were taught. He ended up just sitting in his desk without really knowing what we are talking about. Of course I could not help him because I had too many children in my class and the time is really limited.

Teachers also suggested that the educational evaluation to be another problem to face when teaching SEN students. They argued that evaluation is traditionally done at group level and learning outcomes are measured to all students with the use of the same methods and materials. The evaluation usually corresponds to the curriculum's content and designed without taking into consideration the SEN students and their characteristics and needs. Some teachers also argued that even if they want to diversify their evaluation methods to suite the characteristics of those students, their lack of the required knowledge and skills will not enable them to do it successfully.

T51: I do not think the assessment criteria and methods we use suit those children with special needs. Frankly, I do not have any idea how school exams can be made to suite to everybody. What if I have a blind or deaf student or someone who can not hold a pen to write?! How do we assess such students?! And do we use the same learning outcomes and criteria to assess them?! Certainly this issue needs to be addressed before thinking about the inclusion of such students.

Teachers concerns about the unsuitability of the curriculum are legitimate. In Jordan, the curriculum is the core of the educational process, and its effectiveness is measured by the extent to which the students achieve learning this curriculum. Teachers see the students' failure to achieve the required level of the curriculum as their own failure since they are the deliverers of this curriculum. Such problem will not be solved if the curriculum remains the way it is now, dense, lengthy and rigid. This obstacle was also identified by other studies. Gaad and Khan (2007) found that teachers do not prefer inclusion because SEN students lack skills needed to master the curriculum taught in the mainstream classroom.

Fifth: family and society related barriers: Teachers argued here that families and society play a fundamental role in hindering the implication of inclusion. They listed several barriers including: a) families' negative attitudes toward disability and inclusion, b) limited support and collaboration from families of SEN students, c) society limited collaboration and negative attitudes toward SEN students.

T42: Families of children with disabilities are not supportive and do not collaborate with schools. I have in my class a student with learning disability and I want to see his parent to discuss his situation with them but they never reply

to my notes. This is a big obstacle because without their help, I do not think their child will be able to succeed in the school. Also, my job as a teacher of this child will be harder and less effective.

T12: in my opinion, it is too early to talk about inclusion! The society still does not accept children with disabilities and they are still socially excluded. I am saying this judging from what I see in my school; the students, their families and staff all do not held positive attitudes toward children with disabilities. They may sympathize with them and choose to be nice and supportive to such children sometimes but that is not what inclusion is or meant to be.

Teachers' responses show that they are aware of the important role the families and society need to play to support inclusion. They are aware that without such support their job as teachers is more challenging, and the effectiveness of the learning process of SEN students is less effective. Inclusion, after all, cannot be achieved by single effort, but the collective efforts of students, teachers, staff, families, and society.

In summary, teachers' responses about this set of barriers expressed their deep concern and confusion about working with SEN students. This concern expresses their reality working in an educational system that offers no structure and constituent components to support the inclusion of SEN students. Teachers, therefore, view inclusion as an unrealistic idea and its implementation is beyond the capacity of the education system.

Conclusion

The educational authority in Jordan has taken serious actions toward the inclusion of SEN students in mainstream schools. Nonetheless, the readiness of the educational system for inclusion has been in question. The aim of the current study is to provide more insight on inclusion but from the teachers' point of view. Teachers are known for being the agents of the education system; their knowledge, attitudes and experiences are all major factors contributing to the effectiveness of the educational process in schools. The success of the inclusion of SEN students is, as the literature shows, is attributed to teachers whether they have the expected knowledge and attitudes to work with SEN students or not. Therefore, the current study explored whether teachers have enough knowledge and positive attitudes toward inclusion and what are the barriers they perceived to hinder the process of inclusion.

The findings of the study revealed deep concerns by those teachers about inclusion. Teachers expressed their limited knowledge about inclusion and SEN students, owing that to their lack of preparation in this area. Consequently, teachers' attitudes toward inclusion were not particularly positive, which is also explained by the different barriers they viewed to affect the realization of successful inclusion. Teachers discussed different sets of barriers including the negative attitudes of students toward their SEN peers, underprepared school staff, underprepared environment where schools are not well designed and resourced to support the inclusion of SEN students, unsuitable curriculum and evaluation methods and finally the negative attitudes of the family and society toward inclusion.

All the above findings are in line with the literature discussed the inclusion of SEN students, (see: Gaad and Khan, 2007; Anati, 2013, Pijl and Meijir, 2002; Gilmore, Campbell & Cuskelly, 2003). Nevertheless, teachers, in this study, mapped out the specific barriers that they perceived to be salient in the Jordanian context and affect them and their students.

Understanding teachers' attitudes and perceived barriers to inclusion is crucial. It invites the educational authority and those involved in the educational process to revisit their inclusive education agenda. This study recommends that more attention is given toward building an infrastructure that fosters inclusion. This includes; including all required knowledge and skills related to inclusion and SEN students in teacher education programs, improving the learning environment, including school buildings, resources, and classroom size, reconsidering the current curriculum and evaluation models. The curriculum needs be more flexible and less dense to allow teachers diversifying its contents to suite all needs in the classroom. Providing clearer instructions on the different roles school staff are expected to play and how they can collaborate in inclusive schools. Finally, inclusion will not be successful without changing the attitudes of all those involved in the educational process, including students, teachers, schools, families and society. To make inclusion works, all these parties need to take part in it and provide their support, otherwise inclusion will remain, as the teachers in this study liked to describe it, an unrealistic idea.

Study Limitation

This study was limited by two different factors. First, the study sample was not randomly selected limiting the possibility of generalizing the results of the study across the country. This limitation was not to be avoided, however, as the finance for the study was limited and schools and teachers participation was optional. This rendered many schools and teachers not taking part in the study. Second, the study utilized an open-ended questionnaire as a

method of data collection. Though this method is useful when the aim is to survey the teachers' perceptions on inclusion, a use of a face-to-face interview could have served the study's aims better. This method provides more detailed and in depth data and allows the researcher to ask more questions when needed. Using a face-to-face interview was not possible though because it is costly and requires ample time for data collection and analysis.

Future Research

This study provided an overall picture of teachers' knowledge, attitudes toward inclusion and the barriers they perceived to hinder its implication in the capital city of Amman. Future research, however, could consider including teachers from other districts and cities in the country where different barriers may be identified that differ from those found in Amman. Also, a future research could examine the knowledge and attitudes of schools personal and families toward inclusion to provide more information about these important parities that influence the successfulness of inclusion. A continuation of this study could also explore the impact of a training program in the area of inclusion on the knowledge and attitudes of teachers toward inclusion. Such study could invite teachers to enroll in an in-service program that provides teachers with skills they need to work with SEN students in mainstream schools.

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