

opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 36, 2020, Especial N°

26

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

School staff's perceptions of managerial and technological barriers to mainstreaming special needs students

Enas Abulibdeh¹

¹Al Ain University, UAE

enas.abulibdeh@au.ac.ae

Hytham M Bany Issa²

²City University College of Ajman, UAE

hbaniissa@yahoo.com

Zuhrieh Shana³

³Al Ain University, UAE

Zuhrieh.S@au.ac.ae

Mohannad althawabeyeh⁴

⁴Al Ain University, UAE

Mohannad.A@au.ac.ae

Abstract

This study aims to identify the perceived managerial barriers of principals, teachers and pre-service teachers on mainstreaming special needs students in the United Arab Emirates schools. Through using qualitative research methodology, the data was collected adopting open-ended questionnaires and conducting interviews with school principals, teachers and pre-service teachers. Initial results revealed that the perceptions of the main parties of the barriers are multidimensional. In conclusion, special education experts should select technologies, programs, tools and equipment that best support the curriculum and educational performance of special needs students.

Keywords: Inclusive, Mainstreaming, Education, Students, Services.

Percepción del personal escolar de las barreras gerenciales y tecnológicas para la incorporación de estudiantes con necesidades especiales

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo identificar las barreras gerenciales percibidas de los directores, maestros y maestros de pre-servicio en la incorporación de estudiantes con necesidades especiales en las escuelas de los Emiratos Árabes Unidos. Mediante el uso de una metodología de investigación cualitativa, los datos se recopilieron adoptando cuestionarios abiertos y realizando entrevistas con los directores de las escuelas, los maestros y los maestros de pre-servicio. Los resultados iniciales revelaron que las percepciones de los principales partidos de las barreras son multidimensionales. En conclusión, los expertos en educación especial deben seleccionar tecnologías, programas, herramientas y equipos que mejor apoyen el plan de estudios y el rendimiento educativo de los estudiantes con necesidades especiales.

Palabras clave: Inclusivo, Transversal, Educación, Estudiantes, Servicios.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mainstreaming special needs students refers to placing special needs students into the mainstream schools, this is consistent with education for all movement spearheaded by UNESCO. The world community has made a renewed pledge to guarantee the right of education for all, regardless of individual differences in the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. The right to education for every individual is protected under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Also, World Conference on

Special Needs Education: Access and Quality, held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994 urged to inclusive education (GUEST, MACQUEEN & NAMEY, 2012). Furthermore, an important international article that supports special education documented in The Salamanca Statement Induces governments to improve their education systems so as to allow the inclusion of all children irrespective of individual differences and disabilities, and to establish the principle of inclusive education outlined by UNESCO as educational policy. According to The Statement, these should be given the highest priority in terms of policy and budgetary. Special education needs involve individuals with any intellectual and specific learning disability; emotional and behavioral, autism spectrum disorder and speech and language disorder; physical and health-related disabilities; visual and hearing impairment; and multiple disabilities that may obstruct students' learning and achieving educational performance (KRAHÉ & ALTWASSER, 2006; AHMAD & AHMAD, 2018).

The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 further states the responsibility of governments to provide inclusive education for all learners, at all levels of education. The Convention urges the governments to include people with disabilities into the mainstream education; ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to access education in their own community; establish reasonable endowment to support accommodation, which facilitate access to learning and education performance; provide support in the mainstream education to assist effective teaching and learning; and to make personalized support

available to ensure achievement congruent with the aims of inclusion in social, emotional and academic is at the highest potential (IDOL, 1994). Inclusive education is defined as:

A process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth, and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (ABBOTT, 2006).

To support the practice of inclusive education, UNESCO outlined four key components of inclusion, as follow:

- Inclusion is a process. It should be understood as an ongoing endeavor to discover and develop better solutions to respond to multiplicity. Inclusion concerns with learning about and adapting with differences; and learning to extract wisdom from differences. Differences are understood as great opportunities to foster learning amongst children and adults (SAZESH & SIADAT, 2018).
- Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. It involves extensive studies and investigations to make an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses in policy and effectiveness in practice in order to plan for improvements.

Evidences and insights gained from these studies can be used to stimulate creativity and problem-solving.

- Inclusion is about the presence, participation, and achievement of all students. Presence refers to the schools the children go to, and the consistency and punctuality of their attendance; participation concerns with the value of their experiences and must include learner's opinions, and achievement' relates to what children's can perform at the end of learning process across the curriculum; it is not just being able to pass exams (AHMAD & AHMAD, 2019; SHARMA & DEPPELER, 2005).
- Inclusion invokes a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement. This means that learners have the moral rights to be provided with special care to ensure they are included, participating and they are able to achieve the set educational goals in the education system (KOUTROUBA, VAMVAKARI & STELIOU, 2006).

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative methodology to collect data from 61 female participants including 5 school administrators, 24 school teachers and 32 pre-service teachers who were registered at practicum course in the Professional Diploma Teaching Program at Al Ain University of Science and Technology in the UAE during the

second semester of 2012. The researchers approached 46 schools in the UAE to seek participation in this study. Due to the confidentiality of the schools and students involved, who were hesitant to sign written permission, the researchers sought verbal permission from those involved. Confidentiality was guaranteed by the researchers (CAMPBELL, GILMORE & CUSKELLY, 2003).

Open-ended questionnaires were distributed to all participants. To verify the validity of the data collected from questionnaires, two principals, 10 teachers, and 10 pre-service teachers were interviewed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were guided by semi-structured questions related to the themes namely types of disabilities in schools, managerial barriers for school principals, teachers and pre-service teachers, technology resources to facilitate learning and participants' views on mainstreaming. The transcribed data from interviews were validated by the involved participants. The data were analyzed and coded according to themes (HARRIS, 2009).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to investigate managerial barriers to mainstreaming special needs students in schools, and to explore the technological resources employed to reinforce the concept of educational inclusion. The open-ended questionnaires covered (a) types of disabilities in schools; (b) managerial barriers for school

principals and administrators, teachers and pre-service teachers; (c) technological resources available/used to facilitate and enhance mainstreaming; and (d) participants' perceptions towards mainstreaming (MARSHALL, RALPH & PALMER, 2002).

The data revealed that schools accepted enrolment from different types of special needs students namely students with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, learning disabilities, down syndrome, mental disorder, hearing and visual impairments, growth disorder, physically handicapped, speech impediments and orthopedic impairments. Table (1) classifies these types of disabilities. It is worth mentioning that some students suffered from multiple disabilities, and one student suffered from partial damage in the left brain with hearing difficulties. This data indicated that schools in the UAE practice some kind of inclusive education either fully or partially (MAYAHI & ALIREZAEE, 2015).

Table 1: Types of Disabilities in Schools

Type of disability	Frequency
Autism	3
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	8
Learning disabilities	12
Down syndrome (DS)	1
Mental disorder	7
Hearing impairments	6
Visual impairments	3
Growth disorders	1
Physically Handicapped	4
Speech impediments	4
Orthopedic Impairments	5
Multiple disabilities	8

Five school principals were surveyed about their perceived managerial barriers to mainstreaming special needs students. Results showed that all of the principals were in favor of mainstreaming special needs students in general, and they supported the effort from the Ministry of Education to implement and deploy mainstreaming as a means of equality among students. They highlighted some barriers to the full adoption of mainstreaming. All of the school principals unanimously agreed that parents of non-disabled students were against mainstreaming special needs students for fear of affecting the effectiveness of the learning and education performances of their children. Four of the school principals viewed the lack of resources for special needs students at school as one of the major barriers (KIDD & KACZMAREK, 2010).

They also experienced obstacles from parents of special needs students and this was shared by four principals. Other major hindrances to effective practice of inclusive education shared by three principals were lack of financial support; the requirement to get permission from different authorities to change school facilities to accommodate special needs student with physical disabilities; inflexible curriculum and lack of teacher training and professional development; and barriers originated from students' negative attitude towards special needs students. Two principals conveyed that the lack of qualified teachers and qualified special education teachers could hinder the successful practice of inclusion as well. Further, one principal viewed multiple disabilities as one of the barriers (HSIEN, 2007).

Generally, the principals' experience on the barriers to inclusive education was consistent with the findings reported by (AVRAMIDIS & NORWICH, 2002). Lack of awareness, knowledge, and understanding from parents of non-disabled students led to disagreement against mainstreaming. This may result from a lack of communication and collaboration between ADEC special education division, school management, teachers and parents. Parental pressure can be a huge barrier to the implementation of inclusive education. This experience is consistent with the finding discovered in the study of inclusive education in Kuwait by BRUNVAND & BYRD (2011).

From 26 schools, a total of 32 pre-service teachers responded where all perceived mainstreaming as a negative step towards effective education, as they faced several issues related to classroom management, student's disruptive behavior, educational problems, administration problems, awareness problems. Pre-service teachers commented:

“I do not agree on mainstreaming as it prevents students form real learning, they need more time and effort to understand, it is much better to have them in a separate classroom.”

“I do not encourage mainstreaming as it is not good for the students, they need more attention and lots of effort to get through the educational system.”

“I talked with the management about the negative effect of mainstreaming on other students’ achievement, but no response.”

“I do not recommend mainstreaming at all.”

“I do not recommend mainstreaming as it forces me to change lesson plans and activities.”

Another participant drew attention to the other students in the classroom. She commented, we usually neglect them and do not take their point of view into consideration, the idea of inclusive is good but we need to prepare other students to accept a student with special needs in their classroom.

On the other hand, nine respondents from pre-service teachers gave a positive point of view such as mainstreaming special needs students is good so the student gets used to real-world experiences. Another participant commented that Mainstreaming is good to enhance students’ social interaction, but it makes my class go very slow. Another said “I asked the school management to give special permission for the student to go earlier to the class, they gave her permission”.

All participants agreed that implementing mainstreaming needs special training and a special setting in the schools. Only 9 pre-service teachers agreed to mainstream special needs students with modification of the current settings.

Pre-service teachers provided a total of 214 opinions and comments regarding the barriers to mainstreaming special needs students. These opinions were categorized under seven themes: (a) attitudes of school management, (b) lack of training, (c) divergence of special needs students, (d) awareness, (e) school environment, (f) classroom setting, and (g) curriculum. The themes and frequencies are presented in Table. 2.

Table 2: Pre-service Teachers Perceived Barriers

	Theme	Frequency
1	The attitude of school management: Private information, management cannot provide any information about students.	15
	No respond to complaints.	7
	No help provided to solve the problem	10
2	No clear rules and regulations: I don't know where to go for help	11
	Have to ask permission to use equipment	3
3	Divergence of special needs students	19
4	Lack of awareness (in terms of disabilities)	24
5	The school environment is not adequate for special needs students	26
6	Classroom setting: modify the classroom setting	15
	reduce the number of students	2
	Provide access for resources room	12
	Provide teacher assistant	26
	provide special equipment	19
provide special needs teachers	5	
7	Curriculum : modify current curriculum	15
	Add special skills for special needs	2
	Reduce the content	3

As shown in the above table, 15 of the pre-service teachers mentioned that attitudes of school management as one of the major barriers which are a very important factor that goes with the findings of (EMAM & FARRELL, 2009). They found that exclusive attitudes

and practices of principals, teachers, and teacher aids are major barriers to mainstreaming at schools.

Furthermore, the curriculum acts as a barrier that is consistent with studies conducted by Peters (2003), UNESCO (2008), Lynch and Irvine (2009) that indicated a failure to modify the content and instruction is one of the barriers to mainstreaming. As for the availability of technological resources or special needs equipment in the schools, the participants indicated the availability of the following facilities and equipment: Resource center, smart-board, computers, data show, braille printer, hearing equipment, headset, braille books, multimedia programs, TV screen, Microsoft magnifier kit, text to speech program, flashcards, Robot (Lego). These learning tools and equipment are listed in Table (3).

Table. 3: Tools and Equipment

Technological /non technological resources	Available in school
Resource center	7 schools
Smart-board	3 schools
Computers	22 schools
Data show	25 schools
Braille printer	1 UAE government school
Hearing equipment	5 schools
Headset	22 schools
Braille books	3 schools
Multimedia program	12 schools
TV screen	2 schools
Microsoft magnifier program	2 UAE government schools
Text to speech program	1 school
Flashcards	7 schools
Robot (Lego)	2 UAE government schools

The participants in this study indicated that there is a lack of technological and non-technological resources to further enhance the educational experience for special needs students. Furthermore, they stated that even if the resources are available, no sufficient training is provided for teachers. In addition, parents provide some equipment for their children to enhance and improve their learning experiences, such as hearing aids, computerized wheelchairs, and special needs computer with the touch screen. It is worth mentioning that in the interview for more clarification we asked the teachers if the equipment in their schools is being provided for general usage or for special needs purposes. The teachers indicated that they are for general purposes unless stated otherwise.

Teachers in the UAE government schools indicated that ADEC is keen to provide schools with appropriate technologies and tools in order to enhance and improve the quality of teaching and learning experience for students and teachers. Also, the Ministry of Education is taking steady plans to implement mainstreaming at selected schools and provide them with adequate technologies to enhance and improve the level of education. They are aware of using technology to enhance and improve education and this is supported by several studies carried out by (BRUNVAND & BYRD, 2011; CONNELL, FREED, & ROTHBERG, 2010; ERICKSON, HATCH, & CLENDON, 2010; HUFF & STENZHORN, 2010; MILNE, 2008; MOELLER & REITZES, 2011; PARETTE, HOURCADE, BOECKMANN, & BLUM, 2008; PETERSON-KARLAN, 2011) which emphasized that

using technology as a method to teach special needs students could help them effectively in terms of content, skills and behavior.

Finally, analysis of the data revealed the following barriers: (a) negative school culture; (b) lack of funding and resources; (c) lack of access in terms of physical access, facilities, and curriculum; (d) inadequate infrastructure to cater the needs of individual students; (e) lack of communication and collaboration among stakeholders; (f) inadequate teacher training and professional development; (g) special education needs is not emphasized in curriculum of pre-service teacher training; (h) lack of technological and non-technological tools and resources. These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed except that in the UAE, the experience is quite similar to the experience of Kuwait where parents were against mainstreaming.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the current study, many implications can be derived that may lead to better and more effective mainstreaming schools in the UAE. First of all, school principals should be more supportive towards the inclusion of special needs students by providing managerial support, improve school infrastructure, implement best practices for mainstreaming, encourage teachers to adopt new teaching methods, and provide them with emerging technical training, spread awareness among parents to accept

special needs students in normal classes by promoting the education for all concept.

Secondly, due to lack of information and best practice when dealing with special needs students in the classroom, policies, rules, regulations, directions, and best practices should be created for school managers, teachers, parents, and students.

Thirdly, special education experts should select technologies, programs, tools and equipment that best support curriculum and educational performance of special needs students. Forth, the educational program at universities should offer a special course and link it with mainstreaming in schools to create a better understanding of new teachers. Finally, the current study made a contribution to the body of knowledge in terms of identification of managerial barriers to mainstreaming special needs students in the UAE for the purpose of a better understanding of the obstacles to inclusion so that proper actions to remove the barriers can be planned and implemented. Further studies are needed to investigate and document the best practice of mainstreaming in public and private schools.

REFERENCES

- ABBOTT, L. 2006. "Northern Ireland head teachers' perceptions of inclusion". **International Journal of Inclusive Education**. Vol. 10: 627-643. UK.
- AHMAD, I., & AHMAD, S. 2018. "Multiple Skills and Medium Enterprises' Performance in Punjab Pakistan: A Pilot Study". **Journal of Social Sciences Research**, Vol. 7, N^o 2010: 44-49.

- AHMAD, I., & AHMAD, S. 2019. "The Mediation Effect of Strategic Planning on The Relationship Between Business Skills and Firm's Performance: Evidence from Medium Enterprises in Punjab, Pakistan". **Opcion**. Vol. 35, N° 24: 746-778.
- AVRAMIDIS, E., & NORWICH, B. 2002. "Teachers' attitudes towards integration/inclusion: A review of the literature". **European Journal of Special Needs Education**. Vol. 17, N° 2: 129-147. UK.
- BRUNVAND, S., & BYRD, S. 2011. "Using voicethread to promote learning engagement and success for all students". **Teaching Exceptional Children**. Vol. 43, N° 4: 28-37. USA.
- CAMPBELL, J., GILMORE, L., & CUSKELLY, M. 2003. "Changing student teachers' attitudes towards disability and inclusion". **Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability**. Vol. 28, N° 4: 369-379. UK.
- EMAM, M., & FARRELL, P. 2009. "Tensions experienced by teachers and their views of support for pupils with autism spectrum disorders in mainstream schools". **European Journal of Special Needs Education**. Vol. 24, N° 4: 407-422. UK.
- GUEST, G., MACQUEEN, K., & NAMEY, E. 2012. **Applied thematic analysis**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. USA.
- HARRIS, J. 2009. **Elementary school assistant principal's attitudes toward inclusion of special needs students in the general education setting**. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. UK.
- HSIEN, M. 2007. "Teachers' attitudes towards preparation for inclusion in support of a unified teacher preparation program". **Post-Script: Postgraduate Journal of Education Research**. Vol. 8, pp. 49-60. UK.
- IDOL, R. 1994. "Don not forget the teachers". **Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Problems**. Vol. 3, N° 3: 28-33. USA.
- KIDD, T., & KACZMAREK, E. 2010. "The experiences of mothers home educating their children with autism spectrum disorder". **Issues In Educational Research**. Vol. 20, N° 3: 257-275. UK.

- KOUTROUBA, K., VAMVAKARI, M., & STELIOU, M. 2006. "Factors correlated with teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs in Cyprus". **European Journal of Special Needs Education**. Vol. 21: 381-394. UK.
- KRAHÉ, B., & ALTWASSER, C. 2006. "Changing negative attitudes towards persons with physical disabilities: An experimental intervention". **Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology**. Vol. 16, N^o 1: 59-69. USA.
- MARSHALL, J., RALPH, S., & PALMER, S. 2002. "I was not trained to work with them: Mainstream teachers' attitudes to children with speech and language difficulties". **International Journal of Inclusive Education**. Vol. 6, N^o 3: 199-215. UK.
- MAYAHI, N., & ALIREZAEI, M. 2015. "Investigating Iranian language learners' use of circumlocution for culture-specific referents". **Research in Applied Linguistics**. Vol. 6, N^o 2: 94-113.
- Sazesh, A., & Siadat, S. A. 2018. "The Relationship between Quantum Management and Organizational Agility in Ministry of Roads and Urban Development of Golestan Province, Iran". **Dutch Journal of Finance and Management**. Vol. 2, N^o 2: 51. <https://doi.org/10.29333/djfm/5827>
- SHARMA, U., & DEPPELER, J. 2005. "Integrated education in India: Challenges and prospects". **Disability Studies Quarterly**. Vol. 25, N^o 1. USA.



**UNIVERSIDAD
DEL ZULIA**

opción

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 36, Especial N° 26 (2020)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

Maracaibo - Venezuela

www.luz.edu.ve

www.serbi.luz.edu.ve

produccioncientifica.luz.edu.ve