



الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة  
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF MADINAH

# مجلة الجامعة الإسلامية للعلوم التربوية والاجتماعية

مجلة علمية دورية محكمة

العدد الرابع عشر - الجزء الثاني  
ذو القعدة 1444 هـ - يونيو 2023 م

## معلومات الإيداع في مكتبة الملك فهد الوطنية

### النسخة الورقية :

رقم الإيداع: 1441/7131

تاريخ الإيداع: 1441/06/18

رقم ردمد : 1658-8509

### النسخة الإلكترونية :

رقم الإيداع: 1441/7129

تاريخ الإيداع: 1441/06/18

رقم ردمد : 1658-8495

### الموقع الإلكتروني للمجلة :

<https://journals.iu.edu.sa/ESS>



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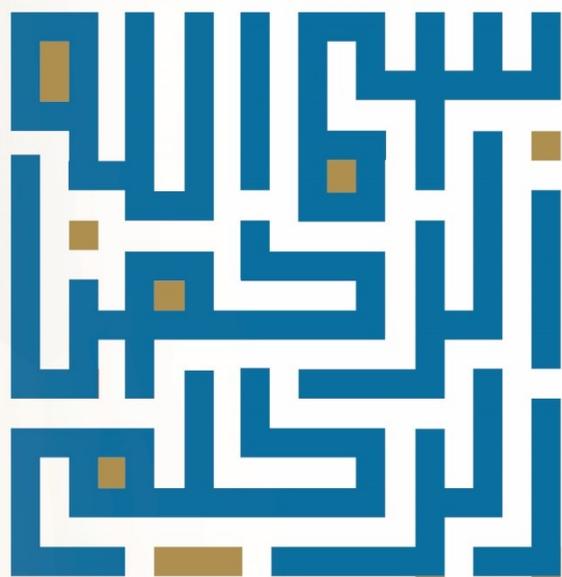




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\* ترتيب الأبحاث حسب تاريخ ورودها للمجلة مع مراعاة تنوع التخصصات



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**وجهات النظر عن تدريس الدمج الشامل  
للطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية في مدينة سكاكا،  
المملكة العربية السعودية: المنهج النوعي**

**Teaching Perspective in Inclusive  
Classrooms for Students with Intellectual  
Disability in Sakaka Aljouf, Saudi Arabia:  
Qualitative Approach**

إعداد

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DOI:10.36046/2162-000-014-011

## المستخلص

الهدف الرئيسي من البحث هو التحليل النقدي لتحديات المعلمين الذين يتعاملون مع الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية من خلال فصول الدمج الشامل في سكاكا الجوف بالمملكة العربية السعودية. في فصول الدمج الشامل، استفاد الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة. ومع ذلك، فإن التنفيذ يمثل الكثير من التحديات. لأجل هذا، تم إجراء مقابلة شبه منظمة مع ثلاثة معلمين للتركيز على التحديات التي واجهتهم خلال تدريسهم في فصول الدمج الشامل. من خلال الدراسة الوصفية، تم الاستنتاج أن المعلمين الذين لديهم خبرة أقل في فصول الدمج الشامل لم يكونوا مستعدين جيداً لبدء الفصل. كما خلصت النتائج إلى أن المعلمين كانوا أقل ثقة بسبب خبرتهم الأقل أثناء تعاملهم مع الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية. اقترح البحث أن هناك حاجة للتركيز على تدريب المعلمين الذين يتعاملون مباشرة مع طلاب التربية الخاصة من أجل نجاح فصول الدمج الشامل في السعودية. علاوة على ذلك، يعدّ الاستعداد المهني هو مفتاح النجاح في فصول الدمج الشامل في المملكة العربية السعودية من أجل تعلم أفضل للطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية. لذلك، يجب على وزارة التعليم التعامل مع هذا الأمر على أساس الأولوية والحصول على المعلومات التدريبية العالية المهارة من تجارب البلدان الأخرى لتدريب المعلمين عليها لأنه بدون هذا التدريب، لا يمكن للمعلمين التعامل مع المهارات الجديدة والخاصة بالطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** إعاقة فكرية، فصول الدمج الشامل، الدمج، مدرسو المرحلة الثانوية والتربية الخاصة.

## Abstract

The main objective of the research is to critically analyze the challenges of professionals who are dealing the students with intellectual disability, after the implementation of inclusive classrooms in Sakaka Aljouf, Saudi Arabia. In inclusive classrooms, students with disabilities benefited, however, its implementation is challenging. For that purpose, a semi-structured interview was conducted with three teachers to focus on the challenges faced throughout their journey in inclusive classrooms. By descriptive categorization, it was concluded that the teachers having less experience in inclusive classrooms were not well prepared for class initialization. Findings also concluded that the teachers were less confident because of their less experience while dealing the students with intellectual disability research proposed that there is a need to focus on the training of teachers who are dealing with special education students for the success of inclusive classrooms in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, professional preparedness is considered the key to success in inclusive classrooms in Saudia Arabia for the better learning of the students with intellectual disability. Further, the Ministry of Education should handle this task on a priority basis and bring highly skilled training information and their experience from other countries to train their teaching staff because without this highly skilled training the teaching staff cannot handle the educational setup, especially for students with disability.

**Keywords:** Intellectual Disability, Inclusive Classroom, Integration, High School Teachers and special Education.

## 1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the topic of inclusive education become trending in Saudi Arabia. So, this study will be the first study that had taken the teacher perspective in Aljouf - Sakaka. Some teachers spoke positively about the implementation of inclusive classrooms while some are still dealing with barriers. Special training programs are required for professionals in the form of mentoring networks to integrate the practice with theory in inclusive classrooms in Saudi Arabia to improve the learning abilities to disable students (Gibbs & Bozaid, 2022).

In inclusive classrooms, a professional's self-efficacy is monitored. There were three methods to analyze the confidence of professionals in inclusive classrooms which include descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, and multivariate analysis used to measure the variation in the confidence of professionals while they were dealing with special education students. Professionals show a lack of confidence when dealing with aggressive students. The professions must be confident about their teaching style, they also facilitate the parents of the students with disability to come frequently to schools rather than insulting their children in front of parents. Encouragement is required to motivate students with disability as well as their parents. A professional can only motivate the students or parents when they are confident enough to explain the personality of their disabled students (Alnahdi, 2019).

The curriculum, teaching, assessment, and teaching methods for students with disability need to be designed, especially in the domain of their disabilities. For this aspect, comprehensive research is required with the contribution of disabled student parents, their teaching staff, and their doctors. Because of this research, a well-defined mechanism can be designed for the institutions, their teachers, and as well as for their parents. The most inspirational persons for disabled students are especially their teachers. Therefore, according to that the training for the teaching staff is done on the higher priorities and from the very skilled professional of this field. Teaching staff training is the key for all the institutions that are educating disabled students, on which government has to provide the best infrastructure facilities and training for teachers to make this educational system successful (Rieser, 2022). In summary this study will discover the inclusive classrooms in Saudi Arabia to improve the gap, and show a lack of confidence when dealing with aggressive students and about their teaching style.

### 1.1. Research Goals

This study seeks to understand the teaching perspective in inclusive classrooms for students with intellectual disability with regard to teaching inclusive classrooms. In particular, the study seeks to answer the following researcher questions:

- 1.) How well the teachers in inclusive classrooms professionally prepared to handle this pedagogical setting?
- 2.) What are teachers' perspectives about the benefits and detriments of inclusive classrooms in relation to their classroom experiences?
- 3.) What are the challenges that teachers' face in teaching students with and without intellectual disabilities together?

4.) What educational policy development implications can be drawn from teachers' experiences that can potentially benefit different stakeholders in the Saudi Arabian school system?

## 2. Historical Review

### 2.1. Development of Disability Services and Special Education Policy

Formal attention to special education in Saudi Arabia began in the late 1950s with the government's recognition of the need to provide specific attention to the education of visually impaired children in the country (Aldabas, 2015). This led to the establishment of state-run schools for the blind. It was not until several decades later that Saudi Arabia would recognize the need to provide parallel services to students with other disabilities, particularly disabilities relating to mental health. The 1970 General Educational Policies of Saudi Arabia detailed 236 articles that described the country's overall goal in the field of education, which was to provide each citizen with sufficient knowledge and skills for them to become functioning and productive member of society (Rabaah et al., 2016). As with Saudi Arabian legislation in general, the rationale behind the stipulations in this document was explicitly tied to religious beliefs, particularly that of the right of every individual to resources that can enable them to enjoy a good life (Rabaah et al., 2016).

In 2000, the government enacted its disability law which was intended to protect individuals with disabilities in the country and uphold their rights. In this law, a disabled person is defined as any individual who has a partial or total inability to function stably in terms of physical, sensory, mental, and psychological capacity (Al-Jadid, 2013). This law guarantees provisions for services necessary for such people to be able to enjoy a healthy life. The definition adopted by the law is consistent with those accepted by the United Nations, indicating that the government was striving to accord a comparable level of importance to providing essential services for people with disabilities either those in the other part in their country or in any country in the world. In terms of education, the law states that people with disabilities have the right to the same level of proper education as other people in the country and that the state must provide appropriate means for them to be able to achieve such education despite their disability (Al-Jadid, 2013). Furthermore, the law requires that each learning institution in the country has the means necessary to address the needs of students with disabilities and that periodic assessment of curricula offered to students with disabilities be conducted to ensure that they are effectively addressing these students' educational needs (Al-Jadid, 2013).

Despite this, an independent report from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2002 stated that there was relatively little attention provided by the Saudi Arabian government towards helping people with disabilities gain sufficient training for employment. The report pointed out that although the number of educational institutions in the country with facilities to provide special education had increased considerably, little information has been released about the actual effectiveness of the country's special education programs (JICA, 2002). In contrast to this, a survey conducted by Abahusain (2016) showed on the parents of female students with intellectual disabilities studying in schools in Riyadh reported that

parents were generally satisfied with the special education services provided to their children.

## 2.2. Steps towards Inclusive Education

As discussed by Aldabas (2015), until the late 1980s, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education did not have proper facilities to provide inclusive education for students with intellectual disabilities and subscribed to the medical model of intellectual disability in guiding its policy development. This changed considerably in the early 1990s as more research evidence from other countries about the value of integrating students with intellectual disabilities into inclusion classrooms accumulated. The government's first step towards inclusive education was the introduction and implementation of resource rooms in the public school system (Al-Mousa, 2010). Resource rooms were special classrooms located within inclusion public education facilities where students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities could receive special education services that augment their inclusion education (Al-Mousa, 2010). In 2012, the Ministry of Education was able to report that 746 of their public schools have special education classrooms and that students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities have largely been integrated into inclusion classrooms while having access to additional education through resource rooms.

In 2016, the government released a Special Education Policy document to provide details on its direction in special education across different stakeholders. The policy defines students with disabilities across a broad spectrum of conditions and highlights the different responsibilities that general teachers, resource room specialists, and support staff have in providing educational services to them (Abahusain, 2016). The document also provides a framework for institutions to construct intervention and teaching plans for students with disabilities who are part of their inclusion student population. However, Abahusain (2016) argues that the government has not done enough to ensure that the policy is fully implemented and that specific aspect of the policy lack detail to enable effective implementation. In particular, while the policy document does stipulate the need for inclusion classroom teachers to be sufficiently trained in inclusive education and to be aware and prepared for accommodating students with intellectual disabilities, it does not provide particulars on how these are to be accomplished. Alnahdi (2019) observed a positive impact on intellectually challenged students when they study with normal kids. This is supported by Battal (2016) who points out that while progress has been made in educating teachers on inclusive special education through the introduction of special education departments at Saudi Universities, there is not yet sufficient data gathered on the effectiveness of these programs. In this study, we attempt to fill this information gap.

It is clear that while the policy is in place to ensure that students with intellectual disabilities receive proper education in an inclusive environment, there is uncertainty over the extent to which those policies have been effective. One way of examining this is from the perspective of inclusion teachers who are teaching in classrooms which include students with intellectual disabilities. (Alquraini & Rao, 2020). These teachers are different from the specialists in the resource rooms who

are assumed to be extensively trained to specifically address the needs of students with disabilities. Rather, these are the teachers that students with intellectual disabilities interact with in the inclusion class, and are expected to be able to help such students adapt and thrive in an inclusive environment. It is not possible to make inclusive classrooms successful without providing proper training to teachers. Standard teacher training in Saudi Arabia is not good enough to equip teachers with the necessary skills to deal with intellectually challenged and normal kids in the same space. (Schwab et al., 2020,; Alnahdi, 2020).

The research proposed that the practice and preparedness of professionals matters in inclusive classrooms for dealing with children with severe disabilities. If the teacher has less experience in inclusive classrooms then the professional cannot maintain accuracy, whereas professionals train themselves in inclusive classrooms with their experiences which improve the learning of the students with intellectual disability (Aldabas,2020).

A study is proposed to observe the experience of professionals while dealing with students having to severe disabilities. The study was based on questionnaires Findings concluded that according to the teachers, students with disability find difficulty in solving online assessments within a specific period. The study also reported that support from parents and the health ministry is required to improve remote teaching for the students with intellectual disability (Al-Amri, 2022).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Study Approach

This study utilizes a phenomenological approach based on the work of Farber (1943) and developed in later works such as Finlay (2009) and Schmicking (2010). The phenomenological approach is a type of qualitative tool which is used to analyze individual life experiences. The scope of this research is limited to specific areas. This qualitative approach used focuses on the phenomenon of the fast-growing implementation of inclusive education in Saudi Arabian schools and the corresponding increasing presence of students with intellectual disabilities in inclusion classrooms. This phenomenon is investigated from the experiential perspective of a specified group or groups of stakeholders – namely, inclusion teachers who are tasked with teaching in classrooms with a mix of students with intellectual disabilities and students who do not have such disabilities.

#### 3.2. Participant Sampling

Consistent with a qualitative approach, sampling for the study was conducted purposively. Administrators from public secondary education institutions in Sakaka Aljouf in Saudi Arabia were contacted and asked about their existing policy implementation of inclusive education. From this, permission was sought to recruit teachers who are currently teaching some subjects in their inclusion classrooms that have students with intellectual disabilities. This study just found Three teachers who teach the inclusion classrooms. Contact with these teachers are made by the Department of Education in Aljouf- special Education section, and those who were willing to participate in the study were scheduled for data collection.

#### 3.3. Recruitment and Participant Description

This study has sent a consent form to the Department of Education in Skaka to have the teachers who teach the Inclusive classrooms. Three teachers matching the inclusion criteria for the study were recruited. Each of the teachers worked in the same school. Henceforth, the teachers are referred to as Teacher A, Teacher B, and Teacher C. Teachers A and C both taught mathematics while teacher B taught science. Teacher C was the most experienced, with 20 years of teaching, while Teachers A and B had 8 and 6 years of experience respectively. All three teachers were male.

Table1: Recruitment details.

Participant	Gander	Subject	Experience	Note
A	M	Mathematics	8	
B	M	Science	6	
C	M	Mathematics	20	

### 3.4. Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were constructed to examine different aspects of the participant's experiences with the phenomenon of interest. In this study, these aspects were identified as follows:

- 1) The extent of participants' academic and professional preparation for teaching in inclusive classrooms.
- 2) The extent of participants' experience with intellectual disability in general.
- 3) Participants' experiences with students who have intellectual disabilities in inclusive classrooms.
- 4) Challenges that participants encounter are related to having students with intellectual disabilities in inclusion classrooms.
- 5) Participants' evaluations of their current preparedness and effectiveness in fulfilling their responsibilities in inclusive classrooms.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

In line with the phenomenological approach, the analysis of data was done through descriptive categorization. Participants' responses to questions under each of the five aspects of interest were collated and similarities and differences between them were identified to construct frames of experience concerning the phenomenon of interest. ANCOVA program has used. It includes both qualitative as well as quantitative independent variables in an ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) model.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Academic and Professional Preparation for Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms

All three teachers claimed to have attended school-provided seminars on teaching students with intellectual disabilities in the context of inclusive classrooms. In addition to this, Teacher A recalled taking at least one course during his undergraduate years that extensively involved topics on inclusive education. Teacher B claimed to have attended an external short course on inclusive education the

previous year and it was very helpful. This course was described by Teacher B as being much more extensive than what was provided by the school, lasting for 4 sessions within one month. As Teacher B recalled, topics discussed included what to expect from inclusive classrooms and students with intellectual disabilities in such classrooms, strategies on how to address student motivation and behavior for both students with and without disabilities sharing an inclusive classroom, and how to ensure fairness in student assessment. Overall results showed that inclusive learning has many benefits for teachers and students. The main aim of the study was to increase motivation for inclusive learning.

#### **4.2. General Experience with Intellectual Disability**

Both Teachers A and B claim that their only experience the children with an intellectual disability is in their classrooms. In contrast to this, Teacher C shared having a nephew who was diagnosed with an intellectual disability (namely, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). (Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a type that highlights the problem of attention and excessive activity.) While his nephew is already an adult, Teacher C recalled the difficulties that the child's parents had experienced concerning the child's education when he was growing up. Teacher C interacted often with his nephew and discussed how, even then, he understood the challenges of having such a student in a classroom. Teacher C said that while there were no inclusive classrooms back then, his nephew was enrolled in a special school and that this school was able to address his nephew's specific needs. The main purpose was to state that disability comes with special needs. The student needs particular attention from the teacher which sometimes is not provided in non-inclusive classrooms. The student as well needs the teacher's conviction that the student is able to learn.

#### **4.3. Experiences with Students in Inclusive Classrooms**

All three teachers have taught in inclusive classrooms for at least the past two years of their careers. Teachers A and C both described their experiences as relatively new and challenging. Teacher A discussed how it had brought a newfound sense of responsibility as a teacher, as he needed to consider not just the general delivery of content to the class, but whether or not the content was reaching specific groups of students in the class. According to Teacher C, teaching in inclusive classrooms is considerably more difficult. For him, it was not a simple matter to anticipate the needs of students with intellectual disabilities, especially since these needs differed from one student to the next. Both Teachers A and C recognized the importance of resource rooms as a means to augment the instruction that students with intellectual disabilities receive in the inclusive classroom. Teacher C in particular explained that the resource room is necessary because there is simply not enough time to accommodate all students with different needs in the current inclusive setting. In contrast to this, Teacher B discussed the treatment of students in his inclusive classroom, on the one hand, as the same in that all students were equally deserving of his instruction and attention, but on the other hand as different in that the students have distinctive and varying needs. In his view, the challenge was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each student in the class, regardless of whether they had been diagnosed as having an intellectual disability or not and

designing instruction in a way that could play upon the strength of each student and minimize the impact of their weaknesses. The Teachers should play upon the strength of each student. All the teachers shared their views on the inclusive classroom and it was connected to the major argument of the study.

#### 4.4. Challenges in Inclusive Classrooms

Each of the participants identified challenges in teaching in inclusive classrooms. For Teachers A and C, these challenges were perceived as difficulties or barriers that impaired their ability to be able to teach the entire class effectively. Teacher A explained that having students with intellectual disabilities in his classroom meant that there would be students who could not be expected to maintain the same learning pace as the rest of the class, and so recourse was made to set the pace based on their ability to understand. This meant slowing the lessons down, which had some impact on how the entire class was able to perform. The difficulty was even more frankly expressed in the opinion of Teacher C, who described challenges such as a lack of motivation and unwillingness to learn among some of the students with intellectual disabilities in his classroom. In contrast to this, although Teacher B admitted that an inclusive classroom did present a different challenge from a conventional classroom, he also asserted that the challenge is not necessarily better or worse. Rather, he described it as identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the students in the class and working to capitalize on those strengths and limit the impact of the weaknesses. Particularly for the students with intellectual disabilities, he discussed how he identified the best ways they learn, such as visually or through tactile activities, and how he mixed strategies into his lesson plans. And see what the other strategies may work with them. In this way, he was able to teach the entire class with strategies that he felt he knew could reach those with intellectual disabilities better than otherwise. The challenges were correctly identified and there was a good connection with practical exposure.

#### 4.5. Preparedness

Teachers A and C both felt that their preparation to handle inclusive classrooms still needed further improvement. Teacher B felt that he was prepared, but that additional training and updating of his skills was something he was interested in pursuing. At least, in this case, it seems evident that the in-school training provided to teachers to handle inclusive classrooms is insufficient. All teachers underwent this training, but only Teacher B underwent more rigorous professional development in the area of inclusive education. The teachers said that they should as well work even Online with the other teachers who work with these people.

### 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study focused on the perception and experiences of teachers who are engaged with the students with intellectual disability in inclusive classrooms. The teachers who have previous experience teaching the students with intellectual disability responded positively in classroom settings whereas the less experienced teachers are not well prepared and still need some improvements in their profession to interact with the students with intellectual disability.

The government of Saudi Arabia developed many opportunities to meet the requirements of special needs children. With the growth of the population, students

with special disabilities are observed as a priority, and providing appropriate services for these special education students is still a need. Resource room services are provided to special education students after knowing their disability. There is a need for proper guidelines for the identification of special education students and development programs for professionals to enhance the accountability of the education sector for special education students (Alsarawi, 2022).

A researcher based their investigation on the students with intellectual disability and teachers. Teachers' perception was positive about inclusion settings who already have experience teaching the students with intellectual disability. The teachers who respond positively are the teachers who have previous experience teaching the students with intellectual disability. In the education system, educators realized the necessity of inclusion among learners for promoting emotional and social behaviors (Alquraini, 2012).

A self-efficacy scale was used to determine the teachers who pre-served the students with intellectual disability. The previous experience of teachers teaching students with disability have a significant influence on the participants. There is still a need for the improvement of the experience needed for the teachers of physical education. Whereas the students with intellectual disability were handled by experienced teachers. But teachers of physical education need some improvements (Alhumaid & Khoo & Bastos 2020).

Teachers in inclusion classrooms face difficulties in social skills and communication because of slow cognition. Therefore, it is difficult to process sequential information in the classroom. Multiple means of engagement were used to concentrate on the students with intellectual disability. Further, Multiple means of expression and actions are used to deal with the students with intellectual disability. The experienced teacher is always familiar with all these skills that is why experienced teachers always positively respond in inclusion classrooms (Gargiulo & Metcalf 2022).

It is an international objective to meet the objectives for special students to give them a better life. For valuing diversity, inclusive classrooms are created to strengthen disabled students. Teaching practices matter a lot to solve the barriers of all learners. Further, the scale of inclusive practice is used to educate the pre-service or in-service educators to improve the skills of educators for inclusive classrooms. Teaching strategies can be learned by teachers who have less experience in teaching the students with intellectual disability. For the students with disability, a high level of skills is needed to collaborate and interact. Diverse abilities have been found inexperienced teachers, the experienced teachers have more influence in inclusive classrooms. The well-prepared teachers have a positive experience of inclusive classrooms and the teachers who are less prepared and have no previous experience of teaching responded negatively in the special education system (Mangope, et al., 2018).

The study recommend to all teachers should be offered online courses in inclusive Classroom Strategies by the Ministry of Education to help them understand how to define clear minimum standards for behavior, enforce these standards consistently, and handle low level disruptions sensitively.

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