

IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract: Inclusive education and its application around the world has been met with significant disagreement and debates. Wide variety of interpretations and uneven application of inclusive education terminology often originates from insufficient consciousness in the Middle East. Generally speaking, inclusive education typically refers to the capability of an education system to assist all students with the academic and behavioral care, irrespective of their disability/difference (i.e., gender, ethnicity, location, language) and to help them take part and do well in the academic, social, and extra-curricular activities of any education institution together with their peers. Paying special attention to disabilities, inclusion requires an alteration from isolated learning environments to inclusive classrooms within standard schools, where children with disabilities learn together with their peers without disabilities.

The definition provided will aid as a frame to inspect and follow progress and opportunities of an inclusive education reform in the Middle East, while simultaneously distinguishing the importance of altering inclusive language, definitions, practices, and approaches to confirm cultural and social relevance in future. When assessing and applying the idea and practice of inclusive education, social, cultural and historical settings, in which it exists, must be taken into consideration. Creating methods with no respect to the backgrounds mentioned decreases inclusive education's implementation of reliability and sustainability.

When it comes to education, discovering ways to encounter the learning needs of students with disabilities can be perplexing, particularly in schools and areas with sternly restricted resources. Even though inclusive education completely involves all students, including the ones with special needs, disabilities and any other learning challenge, and has been recognized as mainly effective in helping all students learn, the challenges along the way of its application still continue.

Keywords: inclusion policy, education, implementation strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Significant complexity and debate surrounds the idea and application of inclusive education around the world. Different interpretations and unpredictable practices of inclusive education terminology often spring from a lack of consciousness in the Middle East.

With detailed connection to disability-inclusive education, inclusion requires a change from isolated, learning surroundings for people with disabilities as described in the "special education" approach, to inclusive classrooms in standard education schools, where children with disabilities learn alongside their peers without disabilities.

Inclusion process demands a system of operational and methodological components that guarantees effective teaching and available evidence-based interventions for all students with disabilities regardless of severity.

2. PHILOSOPHY OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Providing support and equal entree to educational programs and services for students with special needs/ as well as talented and gifted ones, are of utmost importance of the educational policy in the United Arab Emirates. Inclusive education certifies that all students have the right to be educated to with their peers who do not essentially have disabilities in the standard education setting of their neighborhood school with support provided. Inclusive education is not aimed at limiting the participation of students with special needs to. Rather, inclusive education means that students with special needs gain the opportunity to take part in educational programs in the environment that is equal to their individual strengths and needs.

3. CURRENT STATE OF DISABILITY (DETERMINATION) INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

During the last two decades, Middle East has taken major interest in inclusive education, as signs by strategic efforts, political dialogues, and inclusion initiatives for students with mild disabilities or determination, according to the new explanation in the UAE (United Arab Emirates).

As such, the emphasis is on competency development and development of putting into practice volume of school staff and organizational units to encourage local and strong application measurements. With this aim, a capacity-focused approach includes a move from short and periodic training initiatives, to evidence-based professional development strategies within prevailing organization structures and daily teaching practices and activities.

Additionally, research shows the next features may considerably strengthen the effectiveness of training effects as for developing countries: 1) long-term, continuing training and support, 2) stress on mindfulness and practice as opposed to theory, 3) attention on effective school models, 4) preparation of local teacher-trainers that provide training, 5) include on-the-job practice openings, 6) encompass the cooperation among teachers and 7) address subjects significant for teachers.

Bradshaw evaluates that the proportion of people with disabilities in the UAE is close to the global average of 8-10 percent of the population.¹ The concept of social equality, safety, and fairness for all Emirati citizens is enunciated in Article 14 of the UAE Constitution.² A disabled person was largely defined as “one who has a disability that hinders a person totally or partially from participating in life”. The government first supported the disabled over straight financial aid and the formation of rehabilitation centers. In 1979, the first special education classroom was opened with forty students, with special needs teacher training beginning at the same time at United Arab Emirates University. In 2006, UAE federal law No. 29 Articles 12 and 15 (The Disability Act) stated that “the country assures equivalent education chances for the Person with Special Needs in all educational establishments....it shall be in the regular classes or in special classes” which offers the opportunity of inclusive education.³ Due to this foundation, a high number of special needs students in the UAE are educated in distinct classrooms or institutions. The law offers a framework for inclusion in the classrooms and supports it; nonetheless, it is not clear that the 2006 law calls for a school to provide accommodations for special needs students. In fact, the law indicates the formation of specialized centers as a probable way of respecting the privileges of the special needs individuals. Some parents and general education teachers think that special needs children can be best accommodated in detached amenities directed towards them and many parents do not feel that the standard education system encompasses enough competent special education teachers to meet the requirements of their children.

4. LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

While Middle East countries or focus on GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) has recognized inclusive education directives and related strategic plans, a variety of obstacles remain when it comes to implementation, durability, and impact of evidence-based inclusive educational practices. Nevertheless, a prevailing and rapidly growing research specifies that implementation of a 1) universal design for learning principles (UDL) within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) service delivery model with a focus on developing 2) local competence and capacity development (i.e., implementation science) may be the key to overcoming known barriers and producing sustainable inclusive school structures that meet the needs and actively engage all learners.

- a) Multi-tiered system. A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is an evidence-based inclusive education service delivery model that makes use of data-based problem solving to assimilate and provide behavioral and educational teaching and involvement. Evidence-based, culturally-dependable practices and support, Inclusive Education constantly changes powers to meet the recognized academic and behavioral requirements of all students, stressing the application of the most effective prevention practices for all students in a school and offering additional specialized provisions for students whose social or academic performance has continued to be unresponsive to standard intervention, built on universal selection and growth monitoring.
- b) Universal Design for Learning principles. The context of inclusive education itself includes the capacity development which involves the increase of sustainable schools and national organizational schemes that allow inclusive practice application influenced by 1) high commitment and durability, 2) cultural significance 3) data-based decision making, and 4) local administration and management.

5. CONCLUSION

Ministry of Education as an establishment should take certain actions for increasing inclusive education capacities:

¹ Bradshaw, K., Tennant, L., Lydiatt, S. (2004). Special Education in the United Arab Emirates: Anxieties, Attitudes and Aspirations. *International Journal of Special Education*, 19.1, 49-55.

² Alkhateeb, J. M., Hadidi, M. S., & Alkhateeb, A. J. (2016). Inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in Arab countries: A review of the research literature from 1990 to 2014. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 49-50, 60-75. doi:10.1016/j.ridd.2015.11.005

³ Choi, J. H., Meisenheimer, J. M., McCart, A. B., & Sailor, W. (2017). Improving Learning for All Students Through Equity-Based Inclusive Reform Practices. *Remedial and Special Education*, 38(1), 28-41. doi:10.1177/0741932516644054

- Providing technical aid via a school partnership platform. Universities and schools will work together to recognize actions, systems, and resources required to start evidence-based fields including :1) administrative management, 2) numerous tiered systems of educational and behavioural support, 3) assimilated educational outline, 4) family and community organisation
- Preparing teachers and leaders.
- Creating leadership teams between/within schools and municipalities
- Draft and present an inter-disciplinary action plan that follows goals, pointers, actions and systems
- Plan for spreading action strategies
- Suggest and arrange data structures for observing and assessing progress
- Improve active communication system

Nonetheless, inclusive education is not a destination, but a journey. If the Middle East is really dedicated to educating all its youth, our first paces ought to be focused on constructing the grounds for inclusive education with capacity-focused approach that includes evidence-based training, application phases, leadership team establishment, and multi-tiered systems of support lined up with cultural and contextual factors.

Generally speaking, the road towards education for all learners includes a step-by-step change from exclusion to segregation (i.e., special education delivery), to incorporation and, lastly, to inclusive education.

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