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**TEACHERS' AND PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
INCLUSION IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS IN SAUDI  
ARABIA**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Implementation of educational inclusion policy has been shown to be influenced by a range of factors, such as leadership, training opportunities, collaborative teamwork and, the focus of this thesis, parents' and teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. This study explores perspectives and practices on inclusion in Saudi Arabia in the context of inclusive primary schools for girls, with specific consideration given to the inclusion of children assessed as having learning difficulties, specifically being dyslexic, seeking to understand how the country culture informs understandings of inclusion. Reflections on theoretical perspectives on special educational needs and inclusion consider concepts of equality, difference, diversity and inclusion within Islam. In this interpretative-constructivist study, data collected from five schools in contrasting socio-economic environments are presented under the thematic headings of: inclusion, teaching strategies and the curriculum, school ethos and collaboration, and leadership, training and resources. Participants were general and special needs education supervisors and teachers, headteachers, parents of children with and without SEN and children. Data was collected through interviews, observations and exercises with children. The use of observations recognized that expressed attitudes do not necessarily translate into manifest actions and that barriers to inclusion may lie in practicalities as well as attitudes. The findings show that understandings and implementation of inclusion in Saudi Arabia are informed mainly by Islamic precepts, especially those concerning equity and difference, but that cultural traditions also play a role. Attitudes towards inclusion were generally positive, although less so regarding children with cognitive impairment. However, further progress in implementing inclusion requires certain key issues to be addressed, in particular how inclusion is understood and collaboration, between general and special needs teachers, school and home and schools and the Ministry of Education. The thesis concludes by proposing that the implementation of inclusion would be enhanced by the adoption of a capability approach.



## **Chapter One INTRODUCTION**

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, teachers are increasingly implementing ministry policies aimed at promoting inclusive policies in schools. Whilst there will continue to be special schools for visually and hearing impaired children, as well as for severely physically and mentally disabled children and children with speech and language difficulties, many teachers for the first time include Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils in their class. Saudi Arabia has signed up to adapting the long-established standard curriculum for the country, the principle being that all children should be able to access the national curriculum although some may work through it much more slowly. Furthermore, teacher training programmes have been developing. However, many teachers face difficulties in attending workshops and training sessions due to work overload. New teachers receive more training more quickly than in-service teachers. The overriding need for the next few years will be to ensure that initial teacher and in-service training equips all the teachers involved with inclusion to understand the needs of these children and to gain the skills that will help them provide the best possible learning environment. An understanding of current perspectives and practices on inclusion in Saudi Arabia is essential for creating an environment where inclusion has the best possible chance of success which is why this study is important.

The researcher's MEd case study showed a gap between the aspirations for inclusion in the Saudi education system, as expressed by educationalists in policy, and the reality of

inclusive practices in some schools. The Kingdom's geography and certain features of its education system such as gender segregation make it difficult to fully implement inclusion as proposed by Western researchers such as Bayliss (1997a) and as developed by Miller and Katz (2002), which is inclusion as the state of belonging, a state which is reached through a process of integration that includes location, function, social opportunities, terminology/administration and psychological aspects. Rather, the current state of inclusion in Saudi Arabia reflects attempts towards integration where all children are placed together, with the proviso of gender separation for most, if not all, age groups. This means that the trend is towards assimilation not accommodation; "inclusion means educating abnormal children in the regular school and providing them with special education services" (Ministry of Education, 2002a, p.8).

Research in many countries has highlighted a range of factors that help or hinder successful inclusion, such as premises and space (Prosser and Loxley, 2007; Gaad, 2011), resources including human resources (Janney et al., 1995), leadership (McLeskey and Waldron, 2002; Hattie, 2005; Shevlin et al., 2008). Schools where inclusion has been successful share certain factors: training opportunities, effective use of support staff, collaborative teamwork, involvement of parents and teachers' attitudes towards pupils assessed as having SEN (Nutbrown and Clough, 2006). Attention has been drawn in particular to the importance of teachers' attitudes and the correspondence between positive attitudes and successful implementation of inclusion (Avramidis and Norwich 2002; Norwich 2002). Factors which have been identified as exerting a positive influence on teachers' attitudes include training (Dickens-Smith, 1995; Avramidis and Kalvya,

2007), knowledge and confidence (Anderson et al, 2007; Koutrouba et al, 2006) and experience (Avramidis et al., 2000), together with support and encouragement from the headteacher (Shevlin et al., 2008) and special education teachers (Janney et al., 1995). Teachers have direct responsibility for implementing inclusion in the context of the classroom, therefore their commitment and motivation are essential to effecting the necessary changes. Parents' attitudes have also been identified as important to establishing and maintaining the necessary degree of collaboration between home and school (Elkins et al., 2003) and a study by Kalyva et al. (2007) reported that positive attitudes held by parents of children without SEN also enhanced inclusion. The majority of studies investigating parents' attitudes to inclusion have not differentiated between attitudes of parents of children with special needs and other parents (ElZein, 2009).

Despite the importance of studying teachers' and parents' perceptions and attitudes towards educational change, and despite the efforts made by the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) to improve the educational provision for children with SEN, there is little evidence that these changes have taken teachers' and parents' voices into account. Therefore, the current study attempts to address this gap. Findings may therefore have implications for the implementation and organization of education inclusion, hence be of interest to policymakers and administrators. Home-school interactions may be a further area with implications of particular interest to headteachers.

The study examines key themes and theories in the literature, beginning with inclusion policy in Saudi Arabia before exploring a range of theoretical perspectives on inclusion. These theoretical perspectives comprise: models of disability and SEN, the influence of context, inclusion as a process, inclusion as a state and inclusion as a right, taking into consideration inclusion as an effective practice. Reflections on the theoretical perspectives consider concepts of equality, difference, diversity and inclusion within Islam. Specific consideration is given to the inclusion of children assessed as having learning difficulties, in particular as being dyslexic, because they comprise the greatest number of children with SEN included in Saudi Arabia to date, while evaluating a much wider range of factors that shape inclusion such as teaching strategies and the curriculum, teacher training, resources, the physical environment, the school ethos, teachers and parents attitudes and children's perspectives. A summary of key themes and issues leads into presentation of the research questions and methodology.

Despite the richness of the international literature on inclusion, there remains a shortage of qualitative studies in the Saudi context. Most Saudi studies are positivist in their nature. This means that many of the earlier educational studies employed quantitative research approaches. There was a lack of interest in making use of interpretative qualitative research designs in educational research in general and the special education research field in particular since quantitative studies were considered more rigorous and reliable. Given the dearth of interpretative-constructivist studies in the Saudi context, it was timely that a study investigating inclusion and the factors (such as teachers' and parents' attitudes) that facilitate or hinder inclusion should be conducted. Since the

current study started, some further qualitative studies have become available. However, other studies have continued to adopt a more positivist approach by employing statistical analyses such as factor analysis, while some have tended to focus on attitude surveys, so although the Saudi Arabian studies have indicated a shift towards greater acceptance of inclusion, the focus has been on the characteristics of teachers and the factors affecting them rather than on implementation. Justification of the qualitative research design and methodology includes details of the sample, the selection criteria on which it was based and the socio-economic contexts from which it was drawn. Selected data collection methods and individual data collection instruments are justified, with illustrations of the links between themes from the literature review, the research questions and the instruments. The chosen data analysis method is also described and justified, followed by discussion of the ways in which the validity of this qualitative study are established, and ethical issues arising in the research are addressed.

The qualitative findings of the study are presented under the thematic headings of: inclusion, teaching strategies and the curriculum, school ethos and collaboration, and leadership, training and resources. These results are discussed in terms of equality, equity, diversity and difference, making recommendations for each of the four key themes.

Key gaps identified in the literature review of studies in Saudi Arabia and the west were about teachers' expressed attitudes to inclusion, the implementation of inclusion policy

and the views of children in inclusive schools, in addition to an in-depth understanding of how inclusion is conceived and implemented within a specific cultural and religious framework. There is a lack of studies in an Islamic context which take into account children's perceptions, chiefly because a key role of parents in Islamic societies is to speak and act on behalf of their children until they come of age and are considered able to speak and act on their own behalf. Hence the purpose of this study is to examine the meaning and practices of inclusion, and factors which facilitate or hinder inclusion such as teaching strategies and resources, in addition to teachers' attitudes and parents' attitudes and their influences on the implementation of inclusion in a Saudi Arabian context.

### ***1.1 Aim and research questions***

The aim of this research is to explore how inclusive policies translate into practice within the education system of Saudi Arabia. Objectives linked to this are to identify factors that help or hinder the implementation of inclusive practices, to explore teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion and to identify school and classroom practices (such as teaching strategies and curriculum differentiation) that assist the translation of inclusive policies into practice. In doing so, the study focuses on inclusion for children with SEN described as learning difficulties, specifically girls of primary school age with dyslexia, since, according to a lecturer who teaches special needs student teachers at King Saud University, children with dyslexia constitute the largest group of children involved in the initial stages of country-wide inclusion in Saudi Arabia. Detailed statistics were requested

but the researcher was informed such data were not available; the last available statistics published on the Ministry of Education website ([www.moe.gov.ksa](http://www.moe.gov.ksa)) grouped all learning difficulties together.

The specific research questions generated by the aim are:

- a) What are the key factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of inclusive practices in Saudi Arabia?
- b) What are Saudi teachers' attitudes towards including pupils with SEN?
- c) What are Saudi parents' attitudes towards including pupils with SEN?
- d) How is inclusion understood and practised in schools within the cultural and religious framework of Saudi Arabia?

This is one of the early studies investigating the implementation of inclusion in Saudi Arabian primary schools, and one of the first two to collect data in girls' primary schools. It takes into account what children themselves have to say and, in preference to employing attitude questionnaires, looks at how attitudes translate into action in the classroom and the playground in recognition of the fact that expressed attitudes do not necessarily translate into manifest actions and that barriers to inclusion may lie in practicalities as well as attitudes.

## **Chapter Two LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

This chapter reviews studies on inclusive education, starting with the development of inclusion policy in Saudi Arabia. The meaning and practices of inclusion and models of disability are critically discussed, exploring inclusion from a range of different perspectives and examining the models of disability and SEN which underpin these perspectives and provision. This is followed by a discussion of the inclusion of children with dyslexia in particular, since this is the main category of learning difficulties and SEN investigated in this research. Consideration is next given to key factors that have shaped and continue to shape inclusion, such as teaching strategies and the curriculum, leadership, school ethos and related findings from relevant studies regarding teachers' and parents' attitudes, also inclusion through children's eyes, together with leadership, training and resources are then reported. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings of the literature review, drawing together the key themes that inform the current study.

### ***2.2 Inclusion policy in Saudi Arabia***

This section evaluates Saudi Arabian policies on special education and inclusion, bearing in mind three factors which have a particular impact on the framing and implementation of these policies, namely the economy, infrastructure (school expansion programme) and religion. Firstly, it should be remembered for all Saudi Arabia's wealth from oil, the



country is very young in comparison with for example, the UK, the United States or Yemen. As a result, many changes are being compressed into a relatively short timescale, for example special education and inclusion are running concurrently with a major ICT initiative, and this is likely to impact on education policy. Secondly, the country has been experiencing a dramatic increase in the school age population; in the late 2000s numbers of new schools were equivalent to one opening every day and a major school building programme has been under way. Although the rate of increase is slowing, many new schools will be needed for years to come. This results in a situation where new education policies are being rolled out before the last ones are fully implemented (or evaluated), creating a patchwork of policy strands and provision. Finally, Islam is the guiding force behind adoption, modification and implementation of educational policies, which influences how policy is translated into practice in keeping with Islamic precepts. An example of this is the introduction of ‘pupil guides’ (pupil counsellors) into schools: where many countries have learning mentors, the emphasis in Saudi Arabia is on guiding rather than mentoring pupils and their parents as appropriate through difficulties that could adversely affect their learning, always with the aim of helping them to come closer to Allah. Thus it is guidance that operates within a specific religious framework of ethics rather than guidance for the purpose of enhancing individuals’ sense of themselves. Hence the distinction between the development of policy and its implementation is less directed by abstract or technocratic principles and more guided by the teachings of Islam.

In keeping with the precepts of Islam, Saudi Arabia asserts the rights of disabled children and students for education, care and encouragement according to their potential and

capacity, and considers education to be an obligation. Unlike western interpretation of rights and responsibilities, the right to education is conferred directly from Allah through the word of the Qur'an, as is the obligation or duty of every individual to educate herself or himself as much as possible. The role of the family is to provide a nurturing environment in which children grow to observe Muslim practices every day of their lives and the role of the school is to provide formal education, in particular correct education about Islam with a central focus on reading and learning the Qur'an. The state has to provide access to education for children with disabilities in order for them to be able to fulfil their obligations as Muslims to educate themselves. So there is a strong religious element at the heart of education.

Saudi Arabia has a long history of providing special education institutes for children with visual and hearing impairments and of educating children with less severe special needs in regular schools prior to the expansion of special education institutes in line with inclusive policies and practice in other countries. A more recent focus on meeting the educational needs of children with a range of SEN (SEN) has also led to increasing specialization of programmes for children whose educational, social, emotional and behavioural needs are not met by the standard national curriculum alone (Al-Mousa, 2010). Since 1960 when the first Al-Noor Institute for the blind opened, increasing and significant resources have been dedicated to training special education teachers and to making available an ever-widening range of educational aids and equipment. Writing in the context of inclusion of visually impaired children in regular schools and highlighting the importance of the individual learner, Al-Mousa (1992) defined inclusion as educating

“abnormal children so that they are enabled to integrate with their peers, learning time, socializing, according to plans and programmes that take account of their needs of each child individually” (Al-Mousa, 1992, p.208). As in other western countries, educational integration started with individuals with sensory impairments before gradually extending to other areas of disability.

Over the years, special education services have expanded, not only in the number of special schools following a segregation model, but also in subsequent implementation of mainstreaming in state schools, based on a United States model (Al-Mousa, 2010). There has been increasing support for the concept of mainstreaming and inclusive educational teaching practices, whereby students with SEN are educated in regular state schools alongside their non-disabled peers. This shift towards inclusive education reflects a genuine change in public perceptions and attitudes to disability, from a caring perspective to a human rights and child development perspective within an Islamic context. Recent statistics have provided evidence that students with SEN receiving education in regular schools outnumber those receiving their education in special schools (Al-Mousa et al., 2008), statistics which probably reflect the much higher numbers of children assessed as having learning difficulties, most of whom have been accommodated in neighbourhood schools.

According to Saudi Arabia’s education policy, two groups of pupils are targeted for mainstreaming or inclusion. The first group is already found in regular schools and is

benefiting from their educational programmes, therefore special education programmes are needed for these schools. This group includes gifted and talented children as well as children with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, behaviour difficulties, low vision students, and children with communication disorders in addition to children with dyslexia. The second group consists of children who are traditionally taught in special education institutes or self-contained classes but will benefit from education in more inclusive settings. This group includes children who are described as blind, deaf, hard of hearing, mentally retarded, multi-disabled and autistic.

The Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) education policy asserts that provision of free and appropriate education for all children, including those with disabilities, is obligatory (Ministry of Education, 2008).

"All children have the right to be educated at a regular school with their peers.... The education of gifted and talented and disabled children forms an integral part of Saudi policy and there are many dimensions of inclusion.... There is recognition that SEN pupils constitute at least 20% of the school population... The regular school is the natural place of education for most SEN children" (Alkhashrami, 2000, p.152).

As inclusion is conceptualised within Saudi Arabia, its aim is to enable children with disabilities to access quality education in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (Al-Mousa, 2010). The LRE, a concept borrowed from the US legislation on special

education, covers a range of educational settings, one of which is where most lessons take place in regular classrooms with some support from SEN specialist teachers in resource rooms. As such, children participate fully in the general curriculum with some modifications to meet their individual needs. Another setting deemed more appropriate for children with more noticeable cognitive disabilities (severe learning difficulties or SLD) is for all lessons to take place in separate classrooms in regular schools and for noncurricular activities such as break times to be shared with other children. In such a setting, children follow a separate curriculum more appropriate to their needs and abilities. As stated by the Directorate General of Special Education in Saudi Arabia, the overall aim of special education is “to provide educational and training services for people with special needs in accordance with the general education system or in special programs”. Articles 54-57 and 188-194 (Ministry of Education, 2001) stipulate that the education of outstanding students and persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system, a provision passed into law in 2000 in the Provision Code for Persons with Disabilities in the Kingdom. This law guarantees the rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life, including free appropriate public education.

In 2001, custom and practice in education for children and students with disabilities were updated and formalized in the Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI), policy documents based on policies originating in the USA. The RSEPI define five major categories of disabilities, namely deafness, blindness, multiple disabilities, mental retardation (SLD) and learning disability (mild and moderate learning difficulties including dyslexia) (RSEPI, 2001). The regulations contain detailed procedures covering

diagnosis and assessment of children with SEN and determine their eligibility for special education services. The RSEPI also specify the individual education programme or plan (IEP), individual elements of the IEP and the personnel who should participate in producing and monitoring the IEP. In addition, the ways in which schools must provide special education services is set out in the Document of Rules and Regulations for Special Education Institutes and Programs (MoE, 2002a). Article 18 in Chapter 3 of this document reaffirms that regular schools are the natural environment for educating students with SEN (MoE, 2002a), meaning that the neighbourhood school, close to the support of family and friends and surrounded by the local community is the natural place for these children to receive their education, as it is for any other children.

Central policies and procedures determine how the school conducts assessment and diagnosis of pupils with special education and how procedures such as preparation of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Behaviour Modification Plan should operate. Parents/ guardians are to be informed in writing when their child is referred for special education services, setting out reasons and benefits; they receive two requests for consent to the child's assessment, and are invited to meetings to discuss the assessment results and the subsequent IEP. Theme 8 defines assessment essentially as a "process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting every available piece of information for every SEN child to 'identify the nature of the problem'" (Article 78), determining "eligibility for special educational services, the extent and nature of their disability or giftedness, the current level of the child's performance and their needs and the suitable educational establishment and techniques to provide appropriate services" (Article 79, MoE, 2002b).

“The child’s guardian has two weeks to approve the assessment after notification, otherwise their silence is taken to mean assent” (MoE, 2002b, Article 80). Moreover, the Guide for Learning Difficulties Teachers (MoE, 2002b) details in Chapter 5 the steps to be followed by teachers in preparing, conducting, reviewing and recording lessons. Schools are also required to arrange awareness programmes for families and the community about special education students, the services provided, and the importance of home-school cooperation (Al-Mousa, 1999). Furthermore, specialist teachers are required to raise awareness of learning difficulties among managers, teachers and students, and to “educate parents” (Chapter 3, MoE, 2002b). However, there is no distinction in the policies and guidance on SEN between types of learning difficulty such as dyscalculia and dyslexia, although such distinctions do exist in terms of assessment, diagnosis and programme. However, specialist teacher education covers these very briefly. Specific teacher education modules available to student teachers specializing in learning difficulties in 2009 were: introduction to learning disabilities, learning disabilities in reading and writing, developmental learning disabilities, learning disabilities from the perspective of different theories and case study in learning disabilities (totalling 12 credit hours). Moreover, teaching practice is limited to a single period in the final year of a four-year course (<http://www.ksu.edu.sa>). Thus there is little focus on identifying, understanding and meeting the needs of children with dyslexia.

The inclusion project in Saudi Arabia is implemented in two ways, termed partial inclusion and full inclusion. Partial inclusion is accomplished through the establishment of self-contained classes in regular schools. In this service delivery model, students with

mild and moderate cognitive disabilities are educated in self-contained classes, following a specialized curriculum, with the opportunity to join with their non-disabled peers in some non-curricular activities (Alquraini, 2011). Full inclusion in regular schools is accomplished through the provision of special education support programmes such as a resource room, peripatetic teachers and teacher-consultant programmes. In these programmes, students with mild learning difficulties are educated alongside their normal peers in regular classrooms most of the school day, with some adaptations to the curriculum mainly provided in resource room sessions (Alquraini, 2011). The process of pulling out students with disabilities from regular education classrooms is governed by factors such as the student's need for special education services, nature of disability, severity of disability, the grade in which the student is enrolled, and other variables that the educational situation dictates to both the special education teacher and the regular classroom teacher (Al-Mousa, 2010). However, one of the difficulties that accompanies the policy implementation process is that although children with mild to moderate disabilities may go to school from the age of six until they are eighteen, there is little or no appropriate education for them beyond primary schooling other than vocational training (Al-Ajmi, 2006), mainly because the implementation of inclusion is a work in progress in Saudi Arabia, and there are plans to design appropriate programmes at secondary level.

Saudi Arabian policy of special education and inclusion implements the concept of a 'least restrictive environment' in the form of a blended system of segregative-integrative education. This system reflects an ethos of integration rather than full inclusion,



appropriate for children who could not be accommodated in mainstream schools. This policy continues to be supported in Saudi higher education institutions, for instance in Initial Teacher Education which offers a completely different programme for special education teachers after the first semester, with a three-year programme of specialist modules depending on the type of special educational need (visually impaired, audially impaired, learning difficulties or mentally retarded). Al-Mousa (2010) argued that the role of regular schools in educating exceptional children does not cancel the role of special education institutes, nor diminish their importance. These institutes have played an important role in the education of students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia for many years. However, international trends in educating children with SEN necessitate that these institutes should undertake additional roles in the future such as function as bases for teams of professionals to provide in-depth assessment and specialist support to families and schools, training centres for in-service teachers and vocational training centres, perhaps even providing some forms of work, for adults with disabilities (Alquraini, 2011).

A review of Saudi policy documents on inclusive education reveals a gradual progression from integration to mainstreaming and inclusion, reflecting trends in western educational philosophy if not changes in the language used. The terms ‘inclusion’, ‘integration’ and ‘mainstreaming’ all translate into a single Arabic equivalent, ‘damg’. The understanding of ‘damg’ in Saudi policy documents about integration, mainstreaming and inclusion has evolved to reflect changes in western terminology and thinking, although the word itself remains unchanged. In a sense, this reflects the nature of the globalized model of

inclusion adopted by UNESCO and which many countries follow. However, leaving aside semantic differences, the practice of inclusion inevitably reflects a country's social, cultural and political context rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all model. For example, economic conditions and prospects and the stage of economic development greatly influence the context and educational provision (Miles and Singal, 2010), as discussed with regard to what Peters (2003) terms northern and southern hemisphere schools. For example, the sheer size and geographical and economic variation across India has led to integrated education being provided to pupils with disabilities who are relatively easy to place in neighbourhood schools (Sharma et al., 2009). A different example is provided by Northern Ireland, where an integrated schools initiative has focused on educating together children who come from a community largely divided along religious lines, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian sects. A society's attitude to religion is a significant factor which influences the shape of inclusive education. In some western contexts, inclusive education is a secular education; however, inclusion does not, or should not, mean the absence of a religious framework to guide educational policy. For example in France, religious symbols do not have a place in state schools, whereas in the UK there is tolerance about the manifestations of different religions in the school context.

In education, the Arabic word 'damg' carries connotations of mixed, boys and girls together, children classified as having a disability or learning difficulty and typically developing children, in the same place but doing and learning the same things. So the Arabic word for inclusion causes problems: it means mixed and does not allow for differentiation in the classroom because 'all learning the same things' takes the literal

meaning, and it also brings with it the contentious idea of boys and girls learning together. The meaning attached to the word has to be adjusted to suit the country's context, by allowing 'inclusion for boys' or inclusion for girls' to be understood according to the setting and by allowing inclusion to mean least restrictive environment, whether 'full' or 'partial' inclusion, while gender separation remains intact. Differences in meaning, aims and focus of inclusion further imply differences in the social and cultural contexts within which it is implemented and influence the ways of assessing how well inclusion is implemented and whether it attains the desired goals. In the light of the varying sociocultural contexts and underlying models, differences in implementation of inclusion are inevitable. For example, whereas Lewis and Norwich (2005, p.220) argue that classroom teaching strategies sit within teaching programmes "determined by the school" and thereafter within national initiatives and programmes, in Saudi Arabia the national programmes are implemented at a school level. This may represent a stage in the development of the education system rather than a major long-term difference, since some countries such as the UK have previously evolved from a more centralized curriculum to one with more local control, although the tension between national requirements and local flexibilities in educational practice is ever-present.

### ***2.3 Theoretical perspectives on inclusion***

To understand the different perspectives on inclusion, it is important to trace the evolution of public understandings and views on disability through three different models, individual or deficit, social or environmental and disability rights models.

### **2.3.1 Models of disability and SEN**

Models of disability and SEN have been and remain the topic of intense debate in efforts to understand how children and their families experience education and to determine the societal framework within which education is provided. This section discusses the models of SEN as proposed by authors such as Fredrickson and Cline (2009) and Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009, p.16) who identify “three major ideological frameworks” of disability; the psychomedical or deficit model, social models and the human rights of people with disabilities. In the education field, these are often referred to as individual, environmental and rights models. The three models have different underlying assumptions about the causes and responses to the ‘problem’ of disability. The deficit model focuses on disability as the problem of the individual concerned, with the best chance of improvement coming from education and health professionals, typically in a segregated setting. Individual models tend to interpret barriers to learning as a feature of the individual child, and to compare children’s development and attainment against a series of norms, such as norms of speech, psychomotor skills and social skills. In the case of children with dyslexia, the deficit model focused on identifying causes in terms of neurological dysfunction (Macdonald, 2009) and core problems such as poor phonological skills (Riddick, 2001). This approach is accompanied by an assumption that the deficit can be remedied by physical, emotional or cognitive treatments and therapies; dyslexia, for example, could be remedied with a multi-sensory approach. Operationalization of this model has three key features; assessment, diagnosis and treatment (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). There are two main disadvantages of this

model; first, attention is focused on what the child cannot do rather than on the child, and secondly, the process itself tends to be mechanistic.

An alternative model to the deficit model was proposed, namely the social model, which attributed disability and SEN and our reactions to them to the values and actions of societies that resulted in the marginalization of the individuals affected. For example, in pre-literate societies, dyslexia “does not even emerge as a disability” (Young, 2009, p.51). In literate societies, prior to the recognition of dyslexia and efforts to support learners with dyslexia, many individuals have been excluded from much of the reading world, at school and in working life. Society structures and institutional arrangements (such as formal time-limited written examinations for children with dyslexia) are seen as being disabling in terms of posing obstacles to individuals to access them and benefit from them. In contrast to the deficit model, social models attribute much of the problem to the environment, buildings and social attitudes, with the assumption that the situation is caused by barriers erected by society. The responsibility for overcoming the barriers therefore lies with society as a whole and with those responsible for the education system in particular. These social or environmental models focus on social and political structures rather than the individual (Burchardt, 2004). As a consequence, great responsibility is placed on society to change premises, transport systems, education and employment, laws and political structures in order to remove barriers to full inclusion. Therefore one of the advantages of this model is that it reduces the burden placed on the child by the individual or deficit model. Another is that it places responsibility for acceptance on all individuals and institutions, laying a particularly heavy responsibility and duty on the education system because it attributes discrimination to attitudes learned

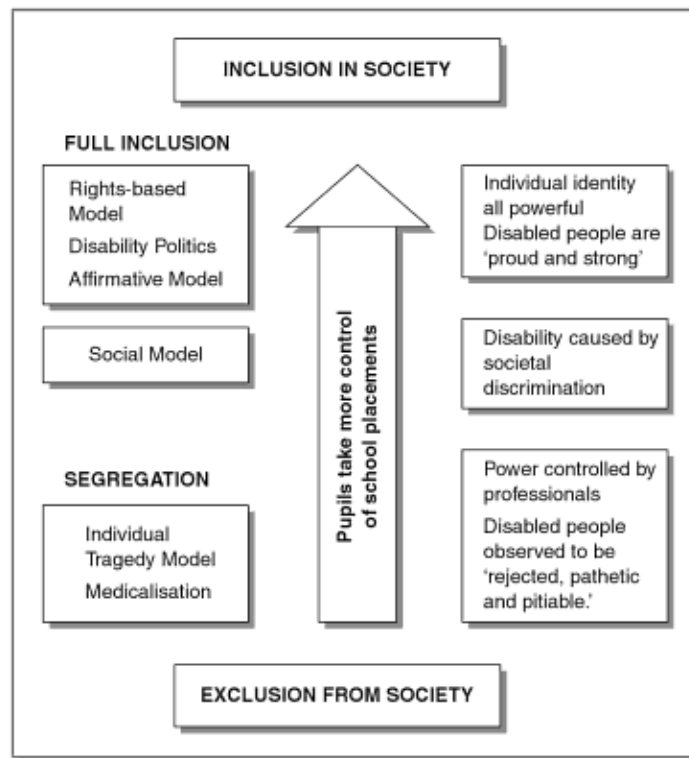
from others (Reiser, 2007). The social model firmly declares there are no 'quick fixes' and that 'ownership' of a disability or learning difficulty does not rest with the individual but with the school community or society as a whole. Social models also refer to disabled people as active agents for equality, challenging barriers to inclusion such as poverty, inaccessible transport, discriminatory employment practices, prejudice and a general de-valuing of non-able-bodied people. Frederickson and Cline (2009) proposed that full implementation of the social model would required a complete overhaul of school organization, curriculum, classroom management, indeed of the school ethos – something that is not always, or indeed not often, possible to achieve. In addition, whilst they welcome the removal of 'blame' from the individual for their condition, they criticize social models for attempting a 'one size fits all' solution, and for failing to allow for the complexities of interactions between the individual, their disability and society (Frederickson and Cline, 2009). Lindsay (2003) acknowledges the limitations of a medical model in terms of learning and participation difficulties as resting solely within the child, and comments that the rise of the social model was a necessary reaction to the worst aspects of previous practice based on deficit assumptions about individuals with disability.

The final model presented by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) is the disability rights model, led for the most part by people with disabilities who have worked to assert their human rights. The rights-based model places the responsibility for discrimination firmly on the structures, value and beliefs of society. This model, the product of disability politics, totally rejects segregation in education. A key difference between this and all other models is that disabled people themselves and those who support their agenda exert

pressure on governments to enforce the agenda through legislation. Rights should be protected and enforced by law. In terms of education, the rights-based model requires all children to be able to attend a local mainstream school, directly challenging the concept of the 'Least Restrictive Environment'. An extended idea of human rights/children's rights is that all children have the right to learn together and no child should be educated separately because of a learning difficulty or disability (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). A more radical theory is the freedom-focused capability approach advocated by Sen (1999) who argues that all human development occurs through increasing freedoms by means of "the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency" (Sen, 1999, p.xii). The purpose of education consistent with a capability approach is to support and develop individual capabilities that will enable individuals to have greater control over their own lives. In a school setting, this would require a radical rethink of physical design and curriculum as well as teaching and learning processes.

The relative positioning of these different models and SEN is illustrated in figure 2.1, in which an increasing level of participation and control by learners is associated with a greater degree of inclusion in society.

Figure 2.1 Models of SEN and inclusion



Source: Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009, p.17

Frederickson and Cline (2009) propose an integrated approach to SEN, asserting that theoretical approaches, research and practice, education provision and multidisciplinary teamwork form a holistic framework. Cole (2008) emphasizes that in inclusive educational settings the models of SEN should concentrate on the relationship between what a child can do, and what a teacher must do to promote success for the child in that particular setting. For example, dyslexic children may be surrounded by the printed word (such as textbooks, school notices and letters to parents) which reinforce their disadvantage. However, a social model may pay insufficient attention to the role of



factors such as a particular child's self-confidence and the effects of interplay between individual factors and environmental factors (Lindsay, 2003). It is argued that successful inclusion needs a more balanced approach, one which acknowledges that requirements for additional support can come about through the complex interaction of diverse influences in the child, the family, the learning environment and the wider community and societal contexts. In interactional analysis, needs result from "an interaction between their [children's] inherent characteristics and the supports, and barriers, of the environment" (Lindsay, 2003, p.5). Time is also taken into account as an influencing factor because the balance of these factors changes over time, as does the interaction between them.

### **2.3.2 The influence of the social and cultural context**

Globally, aspirational statements regarding inclusion imply that education systems are on a journey towards achieving a vision of what their country and its people should be like. The vision may be influenced to varying degrees by economic, moral, religious, social and historical factors. For example, the Saudi Arabian vision does not include Muslim men and women working together or women in traditionally male occupations, whereas the European Union has part-funded programmes which encourage men to be childcare workers and women to be plumbers and bricklayers. Most UK schools teach comparative religion as a contribution to enhancing tolerance, respect and ultimately community cohesion. Saudi Arabia teaches Islam as the rules of living. Alongside the aspirations lie different definitions of inclusion which vary in emphasis depending on whether they are legal, medical, psychological, sociopolitical or based on their practical application in educational settings. These are underpinned by a number of different perspectives on

inclusion, leading to variations in, and sometimes conflict between, definitions and interpretations of inclusion. The definition is both the words and the meaning that is attached to them, so that 'inclusion' can mean inclusion as understood within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model which posits five interacting environmental systems from detailed interactions with individuals to patterns of environmental events and transitions over the life course within sociohistorical conditions (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). It can also mean the 'least restrictive environment', a phrase which is open to interpretation depending on the needs and disability of the individual child. It can be argued that, for example, children with severe multiple disabilities may derive greater developmental benefits from attending a specialist centre with all the necessary equipment and resources to provide stimulating opportunities. In another example, some parents of children with severe visual or auditory impairment argue that the least restrictive environment for their child is one where every child shares the same communication system because they can interact more fully with their peers and support each other through their common experience of disability. The definition in use in a particular context is typically linked to the wider view of disability in a particular society or culture, for instance the notion of inclusion within the deficit model of disability (within which an understanding of inclusion as full inclusion of all pupils in regular schools and classes would be less likely to occur).

Worldwide, the terminology associated with inclusion has changed over the years and continues to change, which may account for (or reflect) the lack of a consensus about the nature of inclusion. Many definitions have been proposed depending on the underlying

standpoint and perspective but with similar elements. The preceding sections have illustrated the differences in meaning and emphasis attached to definitions of inclusion, as well as differences in the focus and aims. Schneider and Harkins (2009) illustrate the differences between meaning, focus and aims in a comparison of inclusion in Canada and France. The Canadian definition for a national summit on inclusion is given below:

“arrangements that ensure that teachers have the instructional and other supports to:

- welcome and include all learners, in all of their diversity and exceptionalities, in the regular classroom, in the neighbourhood school with their age peers:
- foster the participation and fullest possible development of all learners’ human potential; and
- foster the participation of all learners in socially valuing relationships with diverse peers and adults.

Where a student, regardless of disability, needs individualized attention and support from their teacher to address difficulties with the curriculum on any given day, it should be for as brief a period of time as possible with an active plan to reintegrate the student back into the regular classroom as soon as possible with appropriate supports for the teacher and student” (Crawford, 2005, p.6-7).

This contrasts with the French concept used in the Act of 2005 which is ‘schooling’, “scolarisation des jeunes handicaps” (Benoît, 2006) rather than education and refers openly to ‘handicaps’ rather than SEN, so the formal meanings adopted by law and policy makers and educators in the two countries are different. According to Schneider and Harkins (2009), the focus in France is on integration into the school system, which for children with disabilities is covered by four different departments and agencies, and not on integration into the regular classroom. In contrast, the focus in Canadian settings is clearly on inclusion within regular classrooms. Similarly the aims can be seen to be different. The goal in France is to ensure that all children have some form of schooling, whereas the goal in Canada is to promote human rights, considering inclusive education to be a necessary condition for child development and future adult life. Canada was in fact the first country to include the rights of people with disabilities in their constitution (Crawford, 2005). These examples not only illustrate the differences between meanings and aims of inclusion but also indicate how schooling for all can have different social outcomes. Furthermore, they highlight how interpretation and hence implementation are context-dependent. In comparison with the French and Canadian settings, the Saudi Arabian understanding of education inclusion lies somewhere in between, as illustrated by the retention of separate classrooms for pupils with SLD. The overall aim of inclusion in Saudi Arabia is inclusion into a specific Islamic society, as defined in the general goals of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the first three of which are:

“to have students understand Islam in a correct and comprehensive manner;  
to plant and spread the Islamic creed; to provide the students with the values,  
teachings and ideals of Islam; to equip them with various skills and

knowledge; to develop their conduct in constructive directions; to develop the society economically and culturally; and to prepare the individual to be a useful member in the building of his/her community.” (UNESCO, 2006)

Whereas Canada emphasizes arrangements to ensure the necessary resources are in place to create inclusive classrooms, France emphasizes the availability of schooling with less regard for the learning environment, whereas in Saudi Arabia the focus is currently on locational integration.

Regarding the inclusion debates, there is no clear consensus about the nature and scope of inclusion in education (Ainscow et al., 2000). The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) identified three levels of integration which have helped to define what inclusion is and is not. The three levels were: locational integration, i.e. children with SEN being educated on the same school site as others; social integration, where children shared extra-curricular and perhaps playground activities, and functional integration, where children with SEN and mainstream children were taught and learned together, with the same curriculum goals and activities. In 2006, the UK House of Commons Education Select Committee Report on SEN highlighted the need for a clearer definition of inclusion (House of Commons Report, 2006, section 64); agreement about a quality experience that enables progression and participation did not extend to an agreed definition of the term (section 28). Hence, in the UK at least, it is reasonable to assume that further clarity is still required.

It has been shown that none of these frameworks or models is sufficiently consistent with the Saudi Arabian context which, according to Al-Ahano (2006), combines unequivocal equality and acceptance with a traditional view of disability as a source of shame, a stigma. He further argues that acceptance of dyslexia and other learning difficulties as normal is accompanied by rejection of the idea that they could constitute a lifelong condition and hence be classified as a disability. According to Al-Thani (2006), individuals with disabilities in Arab societies are in general invisible, particularly if they are perceived to have developmental, intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. Al-Thani emphasizes the additional burden for women with disabilities in the Arab region, noting that the marginalization experienced by these women is more entrenched and therefore more difficult to overcome. In rural communities where levels of education are lower, they are more likely to be seen as a source of shame or as a curse on their families. Even though these attitudes are becoming less prevalent, awareness-raising and education are still needed (Al-Thani, 2006).

#### ***2.4 Inclusion as a process***

There is a widespread agreement, as illustrated by the references in this section, that inclusion is a process, although there are different perceptions of the purpose and actors involved in the process. For instance, Sebba and Ainscow (1996) have argued that inclusive education is a process used by schools to respond to the needs of all students as individuals, a process which contains reviews of both the organization and curriculum. Thomas (1997) and Booth and Ainscow (2002) have defined inclusion as the process during which all children, regardless of their abilities and needs, participate in the same

school. This typically involves removing the barriers which exclude certain groups and individuals: “Inclusion may also be seen as a continuing process of breaking down barriers to learning and participation for all children and young people. Segregation, on the other hand, is a recurring tendency to exclude difference” (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.1). Still in the context of the school, Smith et al. (2005) have conceptualized inclusion as a process that refers to students with disabilities becoming part of the general education classroom, receiving a meaningful curriculum with necessary support, and being taught with effective strategies. Hence the purpose may be a dynamically changing school that is responsive to individual needs or participation. The actor may be a school or, as here, undefined. It can be considered a way of working: “Inclusion is more than just an issue of school placement. It is a method for action and a way of thinking, which applies to all children in all contexts” (Norwich City Council, [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)).

The definition of the process of inclusion focused on schools and the education system can be broken down into discrete elements, as illustrated by the following text from the 2002 British Psychological Society position paper:

“Maximising the participation of all learners in the community schools of their choice;

Making learning more meaningful and relevant for all, particularly those learners most vulnerable to exclusionary pressure;

Rethinking and restructuring policies, curricula, culture and practices in schools and learning environments so that diverse learning needs can be met,

whatever the origin or nature of those needs.” (British Psychological Society, 2002, p2)

This definition is based on several assumptions, including those about the nature of knowledge, learning and the curriculum, whether it is knowledge to be transmitted, outputs to be achieved or products to be achieved, such as ten per cent of all students go on to university (Madeus and Stufflebeam, 1989), or a process of learning as an end in itself (Stenhouse, 1975). It also assumes a particular approach to curriculum theory and practice, a dynamic process which leads to changes in practice and involves reflection and adaptation. There is also an assumption about what maximizing participation means, although from the British Psychological Society extract it is impossible to tell whether it entails teacher support, co-operative learning, or a combination of all of them. Whilst this definition is very firmly child-focused and student-centred, it takes little account of financial realities and national policy requirements. National education policy and finance are inescapable facts of life. Therefore inclusion in education can be understood as forming part of a wider political agenda. In many western countries the definition given by Sebba and Ainscow (1996, p.9) applies, specifically entailing the allocation of resources to contribute to an overall Equal Opportunities policy and hence including a national as well as an individual focus:

“Inclusive education describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organisations and provision, *allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity*” (researcher’s italics).



Inclusion can hence be seen as a process of achieving equality through participation and the removal of barriers, a process that involves and affects communities and societies beyond the school. “Inclusion is the process of taking necessary steps to ensure that every young person is given an equality of opportunity to develop socially, to learn and to enjoy community life” (Norfolk Council at [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk)). This requires questioning and challenging the status quo in order to bring about the necessary changes. Indeed, Miles and Singal (2008, p.9) have described inclusive education as a process of challenging exclusion in schools and communities, highlighting the need to be alert to any threats to equity. Riddick (2006) has examined what this means for dyslexia-friendly schools, highlighting the difficulties associated with being dyslexic among literate peers.

It can be argued that a process of inclusion is under way in Saudi Arabia. Resources have been allocated in ways designed to improve equality of access to education. Special education programmes and classrooms within regular schools are targeted to maximise access to education for children most at risk of exclusion due to their intellectual disabilities or psychosocial difficulties. The gradual adaptation of the curriculum to certain groups of children is progressing in parallel with individual support through resource room sessions to help children access the existing curriculum, steps in the overall direction of making learning more meaningful and relevant for all children. However, attention has not yet turned to rethinking and restructuring teacher education and training for all teachers in order to bring general and SEN teaching closer together, nor has there been any radical rethink about classroom layout and furniture in regular classes, even though considerable finance has been set aside for introducing ICT into all

schools. Apart from the individual or small group pullout sessions for children with SEN, reading is taught through whole-class instruction and basal staged readers which consist of units corresponding to teaching weeks and hence no allowance is made for individual needs (Al-Jarf, 2007). This relates to one of the paradoxes at the heart of education inclusion in Saudi Arabia; inclusive education is child-centred in theory, but in practice, education remains predominantly teacher-centred.

Integration has been the first step towards inclusion in the UK but over time integration has not been enough because the school, the curriculum and the teaching and learning strategies and resources did not change to accommodate the new kind of pupils, so that by the 1990s the emphasis was shifted onto inclusion. Similarly, policy makers and practitioners in Saudi Arabia have been undergoing a similar process of evolution with regard to inclusion. This started with separate classrooms sharing the site of a regular school, then moved to inclusion of children with mild to moderate learning difficulties by slightly adapting the curriculum as well as providing support through pullout sessions. Next, separate classrooms were introduced within regular schools for children with severe learning difficulties, and a progressively wider range of children with SEN was catered for through Individual Educational Plans and specific programmes. This evolution in the implementation of inclusive provision is ongoing today.

## ***2.5 Inclusion as a state***

In addition to being described as a process or a right, inclusion has also been defined as a state, as in a state of mind or a state of being. For instance, Farrell (2004, p.7) has defined inclusion as “the extent to which a school or community welcomes pupils as full members of the group and values them for the contribution they make. This implies that for inclusion to be seen to be “effective” all pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school and community - that is they should be fully included”. According to the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE, 2008), inclusion is the only form of education with the capability of developing understanding, respect and friendships, and friendships have been shown to play an important part in adolescents’ sense of belonging at school (Hamm and Faircloth, 2005). This is consistent with the definition of inclusion put forward by Bayliss (1997b) as the state of belonging which is attained through a process of integration that includes location, function, social opportunities, terminology/administration and psychological factors. Inclusion as belonging is a concept further supported by Voltz, Brazil and Ford (2001), Miller and Katz (2002) and, Ellis et al. (2008). However, Bayliss’s use of ‘integration’ would be contested nowadays as integration is considered as falling short of inclusion and that more is needed to describe what lies beyond integration. Some definitions stress the quality of experience, such as the UK government; inclusion concerns the “quality of a child’s experience and providing access to the high quality education” (House of Commons Report, 2006, section 64). The state of belonging cannot be achieved without acceptance by teachers and fellow pupils; “Inclusion is the full acceptance of all students and leads to a sense of belonging within the classroom community” (Florida

Developmental Disabilities Council, 2002, p.1). The same paper gives a working definition of inclusion that states “Providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms in their neighbourhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society” (ibid.). In schools where literacy is the foundation of all learning, dyslexic children are at risk of not feeling they belong. Whether children with dyslexia and other forms of SEN in Saudi Arabia experience a sense of belonging in inclusive schools is investigated in the current study.

These perspectives not only reflect special educators’ concerns that children with SEN are not being appropriately educated, but they are also likely to shift the public’s perception of inclusion. Inclusion is promoted as a process that should be developed to the greatest possible extent. Inclusive education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, that is the realization of an inclusive society (Barton and Slee 1999; Thomas, 1997). Most of these theoretical perspectives support the idea of rights and some educators believe that inclusion is a right for children with SEN. However, less is debated about what happens once access to an inclusive setting is achieved.

## ***2.6 Inclusion as a right***

Inclusive education was heavily influenced by Civil Rights movements of the 1960s. The goal of these movements was to gain equal opportunities and equal rights for all, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or handicapping condition (Landorf and Nevin, 2007). Among the changes resulting from this broader civil rights movement in society was a change in the general conceptualization of disability towards a greater acceptance of individuals with a disability and an appreciation of social justice and human rights (Bunch and Valeo, 2004). In this view, people with disabilities should have the right to the same opportunities and options as other members of society, based on the belief that inclusion will result in stronger social and academic achievement, the advancement of citizenship and the development of a stronger community. Broadly, the human rights discourses represent a strong ethical rationale for inclusion.

This view is supported by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which clearly illustrates that the foundation of inclusion lies in human rights and the rights of children. Indeed, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), itself an important part of an overarching human rights agenda, represented a major step forward for children with special educational needs. This Statement proclaimed the right of every child to education and recommended inclusive mainstream schools as “the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO, 1994, p.11).

The Salamanca Statement proclaimed the following:

- “• Every child has a fundamental to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,
- Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,
- Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,
- Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system” (Salamanca Statement, Article 2).

Since the Salamanca Statement, to which more than 125 countries including Saudi Arabia have signed up, it has been increasingly argued that all students with disabilities should be taught completely within mainstream classrooms through full inclusion. Rather than

influencing understandings of inclusion in Saudi Arabia, signing to the Salamanca Statement has supported progress towards full inclusion and perhaps encouraged policy makers to distinguish between partial and full inclusion. Certainly, the development of the human rights agenda has contributed to the reduction in separate provision, although questions continue to be raised about whether separate education is effective for the learners. One of the key statements in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is that of the human right to education:

“Everyone has the right to education... Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.” (Article 26).

Saudi Arabia is working towards full implementation of Article 7 of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) which states that:

“(a) As of the moment of birth, every child has rights due from the parents, society and the state to be accorded proper nursing, education and material, hygienic and moral care. Both the fetus and the mother must be protected and accorded special care.

(b) Parents and those in such like capacity have the right to choose the type of education they desire for their children, provided they take into consideration

the interest and future of the children in accordance with ethical values and the principles of Shari'a" ([www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org))

In keeping with these articles and article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which states that “(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children”, there is provision for the co-existence of segregated education alongside mainstreaming. There is a paradox here regarding human freedoms; parents have a right to choose segregation in education and this is consistent with a democratic approach, but this does not necessarily give them the right to deny their children the opportunity to be educated with their peers who are not classified as having SEN. Wertheimer (1997) has argued that, in a framework for inclusion, parental preference should take second place to the rights of the child to inclusive education. This viewpoint, however, raises questions about who best represents the rights of the child – the parent, another adult, the child or the state. It also raises questions about whether another adult would accept the right of the child to attend a separate school if that were genuinely the child's wish because in UK law, as in many countries, rights are granted to adults, not to children. In a situation where a child with severe learning difficulties was unhappy and unable to cope in an inclusive setting and where children without learning difficulties reject that child, it is difficult to see what rights the different children have, also the rights of adults involved in the situation. Whilst children in Saudi Arabia have a right to express opinions freely, provided these do not contravene ethical considerations or Shari'a law, in the choice of a school, the parents would make the decision, since they are charged with responsibility for the religious and moral upbringing of their children



until maturity (Cairo Declaration, 1990). A rights perspective on inclusion raises as many questions as answers.

### ***2.7 Inclusion as an effective practice***

The lack of consensus about the definition of inclusion causes differences in policy and practice that create difficulties in attempting to evaluate whether individual children experience inclusion (Ellis et al., 2008). This section briefly considers the effectiveness of inclusion, bearing in mind potential differences in understanding, rhetoric and implementation as demonstrated among European Union countries (Muskens, 2009). From a perspective of policy implementation, governments have typically focused on the achievement of numerical targets in terms of numbers, percentages and types of children attending school (Muskens, 2008) and Saudi Arabia is no exception. Al-Mousa et al. (2008) reported findings of a mainly quantitative national evaluation study on the experience of mainstreaming in Saudi Arabia. This covered four different models of education service delivery for children with SEN: mainstreaming programmes, full-time inclusion in regular classrooms in schools with mainstreaming programmes, full-time inclusion in regular classrooms in schools without mainstreaming programmes, and special education institutes. When Al-Mousa et al. (2008) reported, just under 9,000 individuals with SEN were in mainstreaming programmes in regular schools, just over 4,000 were taught by regular teachers in regular schools with mainstreaming programmes, some 5,600 were in regular schools without a mainstreaming programme and around 4,600 were receiving their education in special education institutes. The

evaluation reported that the spatial requirements of mainstreaming programmes were sufficient, suitable and effectively utilized. In other words, school premises were adequate and appropriate for children with SEN. The evaluation further found that personnel and equipment were also sufficient, suitable and effectively utilized. In addition, there was effective integration of these programmes with schools, and evidence of good interaction and co-operation. Mainstreaming in regular schools was judged to generate better outcomes than education in institutes for pupils with autism, whilst there was no difference for pupils with multiple disabilities and for girls assessed as mentally retarded, although boys assessed as mentally retarded were judged to benefit more from mainstreaming in regular schools. It was found that the attitudes of teachers, parents and administrators towards mainstreaming were generally more positive in regular schools than in special institutes. Al-Mousa et al. (2008) drew attention to the fact that the evaluation was aimed at improving implementation of inclusion and that mainstreaming was necessary as a flexible framework for ensuring that the education needs of all exceptional children could be met in one form or another. Al Mousa's evaluation focused on early outcomes in terms of implementation rather than on how inclusion was experienced by stakeholders and children.

The UNICEF guide to Equity and Inclusion in Education United Nations in the context of girl's education (UNICEF, 2010) takes a broader view of measures of inclusion, within a rights perspective of ensuring access to education for all children. The guide, which aims to support the education sector in any country that could benefit from using it, invites all those involved in setting policy to "ask the right questions" (UNICEF, 2010, p.5) about:

baseline data on enrolment and completion, barriers to equity and inclusion, policies, strategies to promote equity and inclusion, institutional arrangement, schools, parental and community participation, teachers, curriculum, and budgets and unit costs. Specific examples of ‘right questions’ include asking about the training given to headteachers, school principals, the way in which “co-curricular activities support equity and inclusion” (ibid., p.14), the extent to which the teaching profession itself is equitable and inclusive and the mechanisms used to motivate teachers to support inclusion and equity in the classroom. Recognition that inclusion operates in a wider social and community setting is given by questions about the identification of barriers to parental participation and the development of effective Parent Teacher Associations, effective involvement of community-based organisations in schools and ways of strengthening the participation of children in co-curricular activities and in the affairs of the school (UNICEF, 2010).

It is suggested that inclusion could be identified or recognized by its impact on the community surrounding the school and the wider society. This is consistent with research that has been conducted, for example, by a 2005 Australian study exploring the nature of inclusion through “engaging participants (students, class teacher, parents, and special education teachers) in “conversations” about their experiences of inclusion” (Foster, 2005, ii), and by Stockall and Gartin (2002). In other words, the nature of inclusion is understood through the experiences of those involved in it, so that in theory two schools could have identical premises, facilities and curriculum, and have staff with the same type and level of qualifications, and yet the experiences of students and teachers could be rather different. However, little attention has been paid to the evaluation of inclusion as

experienced by children, where the success or otherwise of policy implementation is of little concern. For this reason, in this study, a case study of 5 schools in a Saudi Arabian region, the researcher has used 'belonging' as a key dimension of inclusion to assess its effectiveness, on the assumption that if children do not feel they belong, inclusion cannot be said to be happening.

The implementation of inclusion is influenced by, and may in turn influence, the models of disability and SEN that predominate in a particular society. For instance, if the aim is normalization and the model of disability is based on that view, requiring diagnosis and 'cure', effectiveness may be measured in terms of early intervention, specialist support and numbers of individuals reported as 'normal' or progressing towards 'normal'. In another example, if the aim is for all children to be educated in regular classrooms with others in their age group, statistics collected may be percentage of children in education and age groups per class. The model(s) of disability which underlie inclusion reflect a country's history and values, therefore it is important to understand the theoretical perspectives which underpin the models of disability and approaches to SEN.

## ***2.8 Reflections on theoretical perspectives***

The focus of the perspectives on inclusion varies. Although not mutually exclusive, some value children and celebrating differences, regardless of abilities or disabilities, while other definitions and conceptualizations adopt an institutional or organizational

perspective and focus on organizational arrangements and school improvement. There remains a tension between the view of inclusion as all children participating fully in mainstream settings and the view that most (but not all) children with SEN should be educated in regular schools (but not necessarily participating fully). The former is perhaps idealistic and aspirational for many countries, whilst the latter is more realistic. The definitions used may depend on personal or organisational perspective, as shown in the range presented by the Open University (OU) ([www.openlearn.open.ac.uk](http://www.openlearn.open.ac.uk)). The OU article cites the president of the National Association for Special Educational Needs (Darlington, 2003, p.2 cited in [www.openlearn.open.ac.uk](http://www.openlearn.open.ac.uk)) as saying that key principles of inclusion are “valuing diversity, entitlement, dignity, individual needs, planning, collective responsibility, professional development, and equal opportunities”. The same article cites someone who attended a special school (Aspis, 2004, p.129 cited in [www.openlearn.open.ac.uk](http://www.openlearn.open.ac.uk)) who argues that “inclusive education should create opportunities for all learners to work together. This recognizes that learning is enhanced when individuals of different abilities, skills and aspirations can work together in a joint enterprise”. The use of the word ‘should’ indicates that the learner’s own experience did not provide these opportunities and that the learner felt strongly about lacking them. Darlington’s views may be a collection of words that he thinks people should hear from someone in his position, rhetoric rather than principles which can be used to develop policy and translate it into practice. The key themes that emerge from this, and on which there is agreement, are that inclusion is about participation and removing barriers, and about belonging to an educational community, the school.

## ***2.9 Equality, difference, diversity and inclusion within Islam***

Compared with western approaches to inclusion, the Islamic underpinnings of equality, diversity and differences might read differently. Humaid (2009) stated that Islam openly declares that all people, men and women, able and disabled, poor and rich and so forth, have an equal status and value before God, and piety alone differentiates one individual from another. Islam asserts equality among people, because Islam respects a human for being a human, and not for any other reason. Also, any differences in race, colour, or language have no effect on the human dignity because such differences are signs of God's greatness and omnipotence. Additionally, such differences have their practical advantage in human life as they are the means of identification and recognition. This argument is supported with the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you” (49, 13).

Diversity in western contexts and understandings of difference within Islam recognize that individuals should not always be treated as if they were the same. Individuals' needs, strengths, abilities and disabilities have to be accommodated and considered, as opposed to subjecting everyone to a single standard that may not be suitable for all. The very

diversity is a great source of good for mankind that the Islamic religion recognizes (Humaid, 2009). Since Islam affirms the absolute spiritual and human equality of every single person, differences contain no connotation of inferiority or superiority. In jurisprudence, Islam promotes the substantive equality of men and women, able and disabled and so on, recognizing their unique strengths and capabilities. Allah has differentiated among people in terms of money, understanding, abilities and all other visible and invisible abilities and powers so that they can draw on all of these to serve and help each other. So in Islam equality is understood not as sameness, rather that although people are different they bring capabilities of equal value, and reliance on each other can promote the common good.

As such, ideas of autonomy and independence, one of the recurring themes in the American and European conceptualization of disability models and inclusion (Whyte and Ingstad, 1995), could have negative implications because they may work against the value and principle of interdependence. Murphy (1987) (cited in Whyte and Ingstad, 1995) asserted that these issues are universal aspects of all social relationships and that dependency is an issue that all disabled people must confront. However, he argued that reliance upon another person may be encompassed by love and a feeling of mutuality, a proposition consistent with inclusion as belonging and interdependence. In some cultures, including Islamic cultures, sociality (family and community membership) may outweigh individual ability as a value (Whyte and Ingstad, 1995), pointing to the importance of interdependence as a cornerstone of understanding the human condition.

Equity is therefore an important principle in Islam. Whilst equality of all human beings, indeed every living thing, is promoted through equal respect for everything created by Allah, equity is promoted through the command that the strong and wealthy must take care of the weak and poor. All human beings are instructed to help each other avoid oppression and injustice. According to Field et al. (2007), in the context of education, equity as a concept has two dimensions, one of which is inclusion and the other fairness, where fairness means that characteristics such as ethnic origin, socio-economic status and gender do not constitute barriers to educational achievement. In order to achieve fairness, equity of opportunity requires inequality of input. Children with SEN require more support and more resources to achieve their potential. Men and women alike are assumed to be capable of learning and teaching because it is the duty of every Muslim to learn and understand the Qur'an and pass on knowledge to their children. All adults are required to take special care of children who are given as a gift from Allah (Cairo Declaration, 1990).

The conceptualization of difference in Saudi Arabia is embedded in virtues of equality and equal opportunities which are inherent in Islamic religious values. Equality and difference are complicated and are culturally-based to the extent that these terms might be misleading if used out of the context in which they were constructed (Hassanein, 2010). The Islamic view is that everyone strives to be a good Muslim and that there is a single model of the person they should want to be. From a philosophical perspective, freedom is not absolute in any society; some freedoms are exchanged for others. For example, freedom to feel safe on the streets at night is exchanged for freedom to carry a



knife and fight and injure people, and biometric data is given in return for relative freedom of movement. According to Islam, in common with certain other religions, freedom to do exactly as you like without hurting other people is exchanged for the freedom of living a model life and entering paradise.

Individuals may have equal opportunities but not all are able to make something out of them. Hence, equal opportunities do not necessarily lead to equal outcomes. It is important to develop capability in individuals to ensure that they are able to act upon the opportunities they are afforded and pursue a life they value. However, this also requires society to create the conditions in which they can live the life they value (Sen, 2004). There exist different understandings of equality, with a clear contrast between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome (Curcic et al., 2011). For example, a society or education system may offer equality of opportunity, say for all pupils to take examinations, but this is no guarantee of equality of outcome which is concerned not only with similar achievements at school such as examination results but with longer term outcomes such as similar incomes and jobs. If equality of outcome were the goal of an education system, additional hours of teaching support would be more appropriate than pullout sessions, which provide ‘different’ support rather than ‘extra’ support to compensate in part for disadvantage. Also, as Sen argues, it is important to take into consideration the living conditions that surround people because they affect the opportunities they have to achieve something and also the support they receive to this end.

Another major theme in inclusion is diversity, which might be understood differently in the Islamic context. Diversity recognizes and values difference, accepting that disability is an integral and important part of an individual if that is the individual's own view – the right to be different. Valuing diversity is necessary before attempts can be made to implement a capability approach to human wellbeing. The argument for a capability approach rests on the moral and political climate of a particular society and concerns the right to a certain quality of life. Recognition of both diversity and capabilities will not automatically lead to inclusion in education or, for that matter, social inclusion. However, according to the capability approach, inclusion will not happen without diversity being valued in both society and education. Underpinning this position is a view that acceptance of diversity is not the same as valuing it. Whereas Islamic precepts recognize difference and instruct Muslims with advantages in life to help those who lack such advantages, they do not value, for example, dyslexia or other learning difficulties as an integral element of a child's identity although they strive to help the child overcome the difficulties, in accordance with carrying out the duties of self-education, education and good parenting which are aimed primarily at greater understanding of Islam and obedience to its rules for living.

Nussbaum (2006) extends what are generally sound principles of social justice to all countries and cultures, as if she is stating an absolute truth, asserting that human rights are entitlements to capabilities and that government action is essential. The researcher shares the concerns regarding Nussbaum expressed by (Truong, 2006):

“Yet I have been ambivalent towards the social order proposed by her capabilities theory. How are we to reconcile differences in the culturally-based styles of reasoning on human development, to provide new insights for social justice beyond national boundaries? It may be that as academic expertise is shared across international boundaries, tensions between styles of reasoning and meanings attached to particular words will allow a new consensus to be created.” (Truong, 2006, p.1259)

In other words, Truong proposes that continuing international dialogue may lead to a new consensus about capabilities, but not necessarily to an agreement that any one way is the right way. A fundamental theme in contemporary western discourses on disability is the assumption of the desirability of equality, understood as sameness or similarity (Whyte and Ingstad, 1995). Whyte and Ingstad (1995) have argued that intolerance of innate differences and individualism which denies the social nature of persons are possible consequences of the western pursuit of equality, in which an individualistic interpretation of equality can marginalize the importance of identity as a social construct. Another proposed consequence is a clash between medical and social models of disability, the former focusing on within-the-individual deficits, and the other on societal barriers as disability being socially constructed.

Another issue related to the dilemma of differences is the idea of humanity and personhood. Whyte and Ingstad (1995) examined explanations of how biological impairments relate to personhood and humanity and to culturally defined differences

among persons, and raised the question of whether individuals with impairments are valued differently from other members of society. They argued that being different means not only being less, but also being devalued and dehumanized. They also argued that “individuals with certain kind of impairments or biological characteristics may not be considered human in certain contexts. Or rather there may be a point at which such an individual’s humanity is in doubt” (Whyte and Ingstad, 1995, p.10). In his critical analysis of dilemmas of difference, inclusion and disability, Norwich (2008) argued that the basic dilemma of difference is whether to recognize differences or not, as either way has negative implications or carries risks associated with stigma, devaluation, rejection or denial of relevant opportunities. Such issues about the dilemmas of differences and disability should be viewed from a socio-cultural perspective. Being different does not always mean being stigmatized. For example, it is increasingly recognized in Western countries that some people with autistic spectrum disorder have become famous for their achievements in politics, science and art, although at present in Saudi Arabia there are no links between the SEN programme for children with autistic spectrum disorder and the gifted and talented programme. The current approach in Saudi Arabia can therefore be said to emphasize difference in order to address needs while at the same time undervaluing individual diversity.

Among the key factors which shape inclusion in Saudi Arabia are consideration of the social nature of persons, the Islamic precept not to comment on or ridicule difference, the promotion of equity through people who have health and/or possessions helping those who do not, and the desire of the society in general for all Saudis to be good Muslims.

Gender segregation is therefore a given, and special attention and support for children with SEN in pullout sessions or separate classes as appropriate embody inclusion as determined by these factors because they provide additional help and hence equitable provision for children with SEN.

Certain countries, including Saudi Arabia, would stop short of assuming that the existence of a 'democratic' process in society is necessary for inclusion, education or indeed for society as a whole. Islamic countries would argue with some justification that following the rules of faith requires everyone to be included but this does not necessarily demand a democratic process, as authority comes from a much higher source. All are governed by divine law. In a context which accepts divine creation, equality does not mean 'sameness': people can be 'equal but different', as in the way Saudi Arabia continues to strive to provide equal but separate opportunities for higher academic study for women. The Qur'an reminds people that women are not inferior to men but should be treated as equal but different (see for instance 16:57-59, 62; 42:47-59; and 53:21-23). Equity does not necessarily accompany equality, because whereas equality can mean that everyone receives the same treatment, this could positively disadvantage some learners such as those with learning difficulties, who may require a different treatment to those learners without difficulties. Delineating the relationships between inclusion, equity and equality are important because of the impact that they have on the school and classroom experience of inclusion. 'Equal' could mean that all children have the same chance to be in a classroom following the same curriculum, subject and activity at the same time. That would probably not be 'equitable' because the majority of children classified as having

SEN would be likely to gain less from the experience than other children, for example if they have dyslexia and no provision is made to help them overcome the difficulties associated with their forms of dyslexia. For this reason, some forms of integration, such as being in the same classroom and following the same curriculum, cannot be said to be equitable. Providing equality of opportunity to education is the first step, otherwise some children never have the chance to fulfil their potential. Equality of teaching can present barriers to some children, for instance if all children use printed textbooks and no Braille textbooks are available for blind children or if children with dyslexia receive the same literacy teaching as those without dyslexia. Some scholars therefore argue for a pedagogy of equity that adjusts what is taught and how it is taught to meet a wide range of learners needs (Leonard, 2007).

A concern with equity and awareness of individual needs may prompt consideration of distinct provision for pupils with SEN, whether or not they attend regular schools. This may take different forms in different countries. For example, in India, special schools have doubled in numbers in order to address education needs (Singal, 2006), whereas in Saudi Arabia a growing number of different categories of SEN has been identified, leading to a corresponding number of specialized programmes, some offered on a pullout basis and others provided in separate classrooms. A focus on equity leads to consideration of differences which can be seen as opposing inclusion and promoting separate provision whereas a focus on equality can result in individual differences being ignored. It should be noted that the move towards greater inclusion is not a straightforward journey to an unequivocally better place. Effective inclusion needs to

take account of the needs and differences of all children (Reid, 2005). In spite of the advances in theoretical perspectives, inclusion remains a complex and controversial issue which tends to generate heated debates (Ainscow, 2007; Farrell, 2004).

### ***2.10 Models of disability and the Islamic context***

Sen (1999) primarily admits one particular version of freedom, and associates this with specific transformations in society, namely tackling inequality through democracy. Both Sen and Nussbaum (2006) propose approaches to equality and disability that with regard to democracy are potentially in fundamental disagreement with an Islamic approach to the same issues, as the position of Islam is that freedom resides in total acceptance of the faith. In contrast, their approach to building individual capability to allow people to develop to their full potential is in accord with Islamic precepts. Whereas Frederickson and Cline (2009) highlight the roles of inclusion and special education or additional support needs in a heterogeneous society, the role of inclusion in Saudi Arabian society is aimed at preserving and strengthening religious belief that increases homogeneity and social cohesion. However, Sen (2004) argues that countries and families should participate in discussions and decisions about capability for themselves and their society which also may be within a religious framework to help them to define what they value and what capabilities to develop. This contributes towards an enabling environment for everyone in the society. According to Nussbaum (1999), capabilities can be understood within three broad categories: basic, internal and combined capabilities. Basic capabilities are those which people are born with, the foundation for developing internal capabilities

such as speech through socialization and informal learning as well as more structured education, exercise and training. The third category, combined capabilities, consists of what people can actually choose to do in life, their internal capabilities combined with external environment conditions. Nussbaum argues that public policy should both seek to promote and enhance internal capabilities, for example through education, and create the external environment conditions necessary for the exercise of functions. Hence it can be argued that educational inclusion in Saudi Arabia is aimed at developing the internal capabilities of all children and that an Islamic community can offer appropriate conditions for the exercise of functions.

A critical examination of the main models of disability in the light of considerations of equality, equity, difference and diversity, has revealed certain limitations inherent in each model. The medical model ignores or at least marginalizes the role of environmental and political factors in constituting difficulty or SEN, while the social model and the rights model deny the importance of the within-child factors. Therefore, most recently attempts have been made by western scholars to bring these many different elements together in an approach targeted on education: interactional analyses, which explore the contribution and complexity of the factors involved (Frederickson and Cline, 2009). The models of SEN proposed by authors such as Fredrickson and Cline (2009) allow for variation over time on the emphasis on different factors such as individual physiological and psychological differences, and environmental demands. They also allow for changes in the patterns of interaction between factors from different aspects of individual and social life.



Having reviewed different models of disability, it is worth reflecting on the Islamic assumptions about disability and the related issues of diversity and equality based on the assumption that all these issues lie in the heart of the debate about inclusion. The current situation in Saudi Arabia suggests that the predominant model of disability may be a contingency or eclectic model which combines duty on the part of everyone involved, in accordance with the precepts of Islam, with an individual-medical model and elements of an environmental model. Equity requires individual needs to be identified and assessed early and an appropriate programme to be offered in keeping with an individual-medical model, whereas the environmental model requires problems caused by the lack of access to education to be addressed. Such orientation may reflect the fact that the education system, including the education of children with SEN, is in a stage of major transition in Saudi Arabia. Historically, segregated special education was supported by the medical model of disability which views the barriers to learning as being within the child. It was supported by advances in psychometric and skills testing which made classification and allocation of pupils seem straightforward and assessment and diagnosis continue to incorporate similar tests. Where SEN are perceived as arising from interactions between the individual learner and features of the learning environment, it becomes more important to reduce disadvantages presented by the learning environment. The methods for achieving this in regular schools in Saudi Arabia are specific service delivery models of special education: special classes, for example for learners with severe learning difficulties, resource room pull-out sessions and programmes for those with learning difficulties, peripatetic teachers and teacher-consultants.

Article 9-a in the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) asserts that it is obligatory in Islam to seek knowledge, and that society and the state have a duty to provide education, stressing the responsibility of the state in ensuring that services are available for individuals to access and acquire education. The Declaration adds that the state is responsible for guaranteeing the diversity of education in the interest of the society, thereby helping to protect the educational opportunities for girls, women, and all SEN learners including gifted and talented. A major difference between the Cairo and the UN declaration lies in the modification of clauses with the proviso that all is in accordance with Shari'a law. The only noticeable contradiction in the Cairo Declaration is that male children have a right to circumcision in one article and in the subsequent article that children have a right to non-invasion of their body except for medical reasons.

### **2.10.1 The wider socio-cultural context of inclusion**

The interpretation and implementation of inclusion in education is affected by the wider socio-cultural context. For example, utilitarian views of education in the UK in the 2000s assert the goal of producing workers with appropriate qualifications, reinforcing the existence of league tables of school achievement with failing schools being put into 'special measures' by inspectors (Rieser, 2006). The use of 'special' in this context, linked to failure, is not helpful to the concepts of integration and inclusion of children with special needs. In addition, achievement of ever-increasing numbers of GCSE and 'A' level passes at higher grades does not sit comfortably with the inclusion of children with severe learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural disorders. This suggests a

degree of conflict between the moral imperative to include all children and the desire to maintain professional teaching standards, particularly when teachers are not trained to be counsellors, educational psychologists or behavioural or speech therapists. A result-oriented education culture promotes achievement among children who might otherwise have been allowed to fail, but can at the same time lead to greater exclusion from the whole education process of children who are not able to attain the required results within available resources.

At an individual level, the concept of inclusion also depends on the idea of what is fair and equitable, on how far the special needs of individuals can and should be taken into account and on cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, as illustrated for example by the Saudi Arabian emphasis on “the need to take account of Islamic teaching and societal values” (UNESCO, 1995, p.9). At a country level, a holistic view of an education system requires consideration of its socio-political and cultural environment and the prevailing Eurocentric concepts of inclusion, exclusion, difference and diversity do not necessarily match the social and political circumstances of every country (Truong, 2006, p.1259). In Saudi Arabia, inclusion is striving for a homogenous Muslim society to which everyone belongs, therefore in education, as in all areas of social life, every effort is made to enable every individual to embrace Islam. Any differences in race, colour, or language have no effect on the human dignity or the application of Shariah Laws. Thus in conceptualizing inclusion in SA it is important to understand the points of departure in different human rights frameworks and the differences between an Eurocentric and an Islamic view of inclusion, equality and rights. In an Islamic context, the key principles that underpin

inclusion are: individuals are equal but different; equity is a moral and religious obligation to help those in greater need; the importance of achieving cultural homogeneity through the family unit first and then the social groupings of families rather than individuated notions of a good life; and of achieving equality outside democracy.

Saudi Arabia, like other Islamic states, has a long tradition of supporting blind men who recited and taught recitation of the Qur'an and in return were supported by the communities where they taught, as a way of valuing the knowledge they received in a predominantly agricultural economy which lacked schools. This is an example of the idea of individual responsibility and obligation as a means of being included in a society of actively participating in maintaining an oral tradition. It also suggests that the concept of a social contract (that is human rights coupled with individual obligation and responsibility) also applies to individuals with disability. Nussbaum (2004) views a social contract approach as flawed because reciprocity assumes equality, but the example given here shows an application of the 'equal but different' principle in Islam where individuals with disability are supported but also contribute to society. However, this raises the issue of what happens when an individual cannot play an active part in society. Today, family support is still the dominant form of welfare support, even in the countries with an established welfare state. The notion of social contract for individuals with disability is being redefined as in many western countries the welfare state is crumbling, raising issues about the notion of individual responsibility and the role of the state in supporting disabled persons.

There are alternative and variable forms of achieving equity if not 'equality' outside of democracy, capitalism and communism. The definitions of words such as equality, inclusion and disability do vary according to culture and language. This is perhaps becoming more widely acknowledged, for instance through the increasing recognition that inclusion can have different meanings if it is to reflect the diversity and differences among children (Mitchell, 2006). Smith et al. (2003) have pointed out the role of education in creating national identity; for children to develop a sense of belonging, this starts at home and is further enhanced by education and socialization. So it can be argued that in the Saudi Arabian context inclusion is about the building of a homogeneous society and a sense of national identity, the core unit of which is the family. The Bedouin tradition in Saudi Arabia upholds the importance of the family group, within which there remains considerable pressure for family members to conform to group. Strong interdependence means that without support from the family group, the individual would be adrift. In return for conformity with group norms, support is provided. The public image of the family must be defended, and its success is measured by commitment to and compliance with norms and values (Patai, 2002), working against acceptance and valuing of difference. Within the Bedouin tradition, disability deviates from the norm and thus is associated with stigmatisation.

### ***2.11 Inclusion of children with learning difficulties/dyslexia***

Dyslexia has been chosen as the particular focus of this study for two reasons, firstly because dyslexia is the most frequently encountered type of learning difficulty in Saudi

Arabia and, secondly, because the researcher has experience in teaching children with dyslexia. Statistics regarding children with dyslexia proved difficult to obtain and interpret. Official Ministry of Education figures for 2007 indicated that in total in primary schools there were 30618 children with SEN, of whom 11518 were classified as having learning difficulties ([www.moe.gov.ksa](http://www.moe.gov.ksa)). Once a child is identified by a teacher as potentially having learning difficulties, the tests administered relate to one of dyslexia, dyscalculia or dysgraphia, but not to all three. This does not guarantee appropriate assessment and diagnosis; as noted by Henderson and Chinn (2005), some dyslexic children have specific difficulties with learning mathematics. These are often related to the early stages of learning mathematics: number recognition, learning to count, and describing three-dimensional shapes in everyday language. Other characteristics associated with developmental dyslexia which were highlighted by Reid and Fawcett (2005), were frequently mentioned by teachers during the fieldwork phase: difficulties with memory, organisational difficulties and co-ordination difficulties (in handwriting and more generally). In the one school with a specialist teacher trained in dyslexia, 10 of the 13 children identified as having SEN were assessed as dyslexia. In the other schools children with dyslexia were more likely to be assessed in one of the other categories; it was typically the mathematics teacher who identified the potential learning difficulty.

Much sensitivity surrounds the use of language employed to describe SEN in Saudi Arabia; the terminology used includes ‘learning difficulties’, ‘mild learning difficulties’ and ‘learning disabilities’. Some organizations and individuals prefer expressions such as ‘intellectual disabilities’ and ‘developmental disabilities’, indicating variations in explanations and perceptions of dyslexia. Whereas the Warnock Committee in the UK

(DES, 1978) has proposed that learning difficulties should be used to describe specific problems resulting from language impairments, or emotional or medical problems, the British Institute of Learning Disabilities notes that ‘learning disabilities’ may be helpful in referring to a general impairment of intellect and function ([www.bild.org.uk](http://www.bild.org.uk)). According to the World Health Organisation (1992), learning disabilities are “a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind”. Although it is possible to make a diagnosis of learning disabilities, they are not a disease and, as yet, appear untreatable. Learning disabilities have three aspects: they start early, individuals have adaptive or social dysfunction, and intellectual impairment is involved. IQ scores have traditionally been used to classify learning disabilities, but this has been criticized for failing to take into account social functioning and other strengths and abilities. Social functioning may be related to context, as indicated by research citing evidence that poverty and socio-economic disadvantage are important factors in MLD as a category of SEN that is “strongly associated with context” Lindsay et al (2006, p.5). Although the causes and consequences of dyslexia have been increasingly investigated and understood, some people have reading difficulties which persist throughout their life whilst for others difficulties are temporary.

In a study in Saudi Arabia, Al-Ahano (2006) observed that the concept of learning difficulties (LD) as a lifelong condition and the idea that children with learning difficulties have a disability is not readily compatible with wider views in society. These views assume that LD is a temporary condition and one that is normal rather than unusual. Identification through assessment is seen as a process of accessing additional support rather than of classifying children as having a particular type of disability. Al-

Ahano's study found that children with LD were accepted because they appeared normal and generally behaved within the limits of behaviour accepted as normal. Treating them as normal was associated with maintenance of boundaries between normal and abnormal in Saudi society which, Al-Ahano notes, acceptance of learning difficulties has the potential to disrupt. He argues that the concept of disability in Saudi society has traditionally been associated with more severe problems such as mental retardation, hence learning difficulties used not to have connotations of disability. However, he argues that the concept of disability in Saudi society represents difference and this is viewed negatively in a society that aims to be profoundly homogeneous (although accepting that people have different needs) and to not accept labelling, in that Islam teaches that it is wrong to call people names.

Al-Ahano (2006) found that for these reasons, parents rejected the concepts and the support in the initial years of inclusion in a school, although later experiences indicated some parents were insisting their children had learning difficulties so that they could be admitted to a programme (perhaps because an allowance is payable to support such children). In this context, if a child is classified as having a disability or learning difficulty and there is no accessible school nearby, a family following their faith would strive to provide not only physical and emotional care for that child, but also ensure that they actively participated in family activities. In practice, social customs have often dictated that such children do not go out into the community, but the faith exhorts people to treat everyone like a brother or sister. Acceptance of disability is required because it is commanded by the highest authority



The term 'Learning Difficulties' as used in Saudi Arabia includes dyslexia, together with dyscalculia, dyspraxia, specific language impairment and orthographic problems. Whilst dyslexia has been associated with other learning difficulties, for example ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) (Pope and Whiteley, 2003), the special education programmes targeted on these two difficulties are different in Saudi Arabia. Dyslexia is discussed briefly here because according to a lecturer at King Saud University Department of Special Needs, it the most frequently identified type of specific learning difficulty in Saudi Arabia although this identification comes from contact with schools through Initial Teacher Education programmes rather than from school-based assessments. A lack of qualified dyslexia specialists may indicate incorrect assessment, especially since initial recommendations for assessment often come from maths teachers who identify difficulties with counting and memory. One definition of dyslexia regards persistent reading difficulty at the 'word level' even when learning opportunities are suitable (British Psychological Society, 2005). The difficulties can vary in type, severity and duration (Grigorenko, 2001) and can be relatively short term. Dyslexia is also often associated with organizational difficulties. Although dyslexia has been researched for a long time, there is still no consensus on the causes, and way of assisting dyslexic learners to improve their reading skills.

Research continues with the aim of improving positive outcomes for learners with dyslexia (Sawyer, 2006). It is generally agreed nowadays that genetic and environmental

factors both contribute to dyslexia and that emotional, behavioural and social aspects interact in complex ways (Elliot et al., 2007). A deficit in phonological processing skills is considered to play an important part. Dyslexic children have been shown to experience low self-esteem, feeling “frustrated, ashamed [...] and embarrassed by their difficulties” (Riddick, 1996, p.129) which suggests that they need opportunities to demonstrate their talents and strengths. Elliot et al. (2007) identify long-term collaboration of teachers and parents as vital to enabling children to develop strategies for dealing with their dyslexia and also improve their self-perception, a view supported by Frederickson and Cline (2009) who note the importance of collaboration between the school and family in overcoming dyslexia. Elliot et al. (2007) also found that out of school activities that were both purposeful and social assisted in this process. Interestingly, they found that “knowing that other children were in similar circumstances created a sense of belonging” (Elliot et al., 2007, p.2) and that small groups were beneficial.

Their report suggested that dyslexia-friendliness could be established in schools, not only to help pupils with dyslexia but also to raise awareness of the learning difficulty. Their report suggested that dyslexia-friendliness could be established in schools, not only to help pupils with dyslexia but also to raise awareness of the learning difficulty. One study in Wales identified characteristics of a dyslexia friendly school as: a whole school approach to SEN; additional time for specialist teaching; dyslexic children receiving teaching from a highly qualified and experienced specialist; staff with training in dyslexia friendly techniques; high expectations for all children and strong leadership (MacKay, 2001). The availability of appropriate learning materials was also highlighted (Mackay,

2004). Recommended teaching techniques such as Synthetic Phonics and the Multisensory Method focus on developing phonological processing skills. ICT multimedia programs have also been proposed to have a positive impact, although there is relatively little available research evidence in view of the level of interest and commitment they have aroused. It has also been suggested that best practice in teaching children with dyslexia involves the use of classroom assistants to provide individual support in a whole-class context (Crombie, 1997; Calder, 2004). Of particular relevance to the current study, therefore, are the use of appropriate teaching methods including the use of ICT and multimedia, and collaboration of parents and teachers.

### ***2.12 Factors that shape inclusion***

Research studies have shown that inclusion can be shaped by the following factors: teaching strategies (Davis and Florian, 2004), teaching experience, knowledge and understanding, and training and teachers' beliefs, together with factors in the educational environment such as specialist support from teachers or suitably qualified assistants, suitable premises, equipment and teaching and learning materials, and additional time for planning lessons (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002), and collaboration (ElZein, 2009). Factors can shape inclusion in many ways, promoting and enhancing its development and implementation, or in contrast delaying or preventing its implementation. In a recent examination of success factors for early childhood inclusion in Turkey, Batu (2010) identified factors contributing to successful inclusion, based on a literature review of early intervention studies. Early intervention assisted children with developmental

disabilities to develop their social cognitive skills and parents were an integral part of their child's education development from the beginning. Early years inclusion enabled children with and without SEN to learn together in regular education programmes. Further key factors that shape inclusion are: teachers, school administration, students with and without SEN, parents of students with and without SEN, support services such as professionals and the physical environment (Batu, 2010). Different actors can contradict or reinforce each other. For example, parental involvement in their children's learning through specific programmes has been strongly endorsed by headteachers who found such involvement contributed to enhancing the schools' ethos (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). At the same time, parental involvement may work against the implementation of inclusive practices if parents with little or no information seek to disrupt what they see as a threatening programme or interpret their involvement as teacher weakness. Perceived barriers to implementing inclusion have included a limited knowledge of SEN associated with shortcomings of teacher training, a general lack of teaching experience, inadequate support, lack of time, parents' attitudes and insufficient collaboration between professionals as well as school-home partnerships. A more detailed examination of all these factors is presented in the next sections under the headings of teacher training; teaching strategies, resources, physical environment, school ethos and teacher and parent attitudes.

### **2.12.1 Teacher training**

There is overwhelming evidence that both pre-service and in-service training are important factors in improving teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and consequently on developing inclusive education. For example, Leyser et al. (1994) found that teachers with substantial training in special education had a significantly higher positive attitude than those with little or no training about inclusion. More recently, a review of empirical studies led Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) to conclude that Greek teachers saw successful implementation of inclusion in schools as dependent on sufficient resources, supported by professional development for mainstream teachers, combined with accessible specialist support. Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) studied the influence of teaching experience and professional development on Greek teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and found that training plays an important role in forming teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion. Their study revealed that teachers with further training in SEN and inclusion hold significantly more positive attitudes than those with little or no training concerning inclusion. These results are supported by several attitudinal studies in the literature confirming the influence of training on the formation of positive attitudes towards inclusion (Hassanein, 2010). Forlin and Chambers (2011) have drawn attention to generalist teachers' perceptions about not being fully ready for inclusion even following training, since the training did not include discussion of concerns about managing the classroom with disabled learners. Understanding of, and contact with, children with SEN allays fears about them and enables teachers to know what they need to do in the classroom. In brief, teacher training has been shown to promote positive attitudes towards

children with SEN and teachers' positive attitudes have been shown to influence inclusion.

### **2.12.2 Teaching strategies**

Davis and Florian (2004) looked in detail at teaching strategies and found that, whilst it was important to use a broad range of strategies, in practice the use of varied strategies as appropriate to meet the differentiation needs of the learners was beneficial to all learners and not only to learners with SEN. The importance of differentiation for children with dyslexia has also been highlighted by Reid (2009), both for making learning materials and school work more accessible and for ensuring that assessment is more appropriate. The types of strategies mentioned include peer tutoring, co-operative learning and other forms of peer group interaction. One of the key points here is that a broad range of teaching strategies involving varied forms of peer group interaction helps to promote inclusive teaching. However, the importance of 'high density' teaching strategies at times to provide focused and intensive support for children with SEN is also acknowledged (Norwich, 2001). One specific skill required was highlighted by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004), the ability to create equal educational opportunities for all learners in the classroom, whether or not they have SEN. Whereas it has been recognized that dyslexic people may be creative for example in art and invention (Alexander-Passe, 2010), the Saudi Arabian education system offers few opportunities for creative and inventive learning. Inclusion requires the removal of barriers in the classroom, whether these are physical or attitudinal. Attitudinal barriers may be unintentional, for example lack of

understanding of dyslexia, or intentional, such as emotional bullying by teachers or pupils, as in treating dyslexics as incapable of learning or calling them 'stupid'. It has been suggested that tutor group sessions can be used effectively to create positive attitudes towards inclusion in the classroom, provided sufficient time is allowed within the timetable.

### **2.12.3 Resources**

Another factor that has consistently been found to be associated with developing inclusion is the availability of physical and human support services at the classroom and the school levels. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) indicated that regular teachers feel that implementing inclusive education programs would involve a considerable workload on their part, as a result of increased planning for meeting the needs of a very diverse population. Therefore, human and physical support can be seen as important factors in generating positive attitudes among mainstream teachers towards the inclusion of children with SEN. The importance of professional support, for example physiotherapists or speech therapists, has been repeatedly highlighted (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2004)). There is also considerable evidence in the literature that providing schools with adequate and appropriate resources and materials, and adapting teaching materials, are instrumental in the development of teachers' positive attitudes and in enhancing inclusive education (Koutrouba et al., 2006).

Furthermore, since it is argued that teachers are perhaps the most important agents affecting the success of inclusion (Elhoweris and Alsheikh, 2006), if the teachers are positive with regard to inclusion, the probability of successful inclusion is higher

(Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). Research indicates that teachers are positive and more likely to be actively involved when they have sufficient support and adequate resources (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002) as well as information before and during the implementation phase (Florian and Rouse, 2009). Batu (2010) stressed the importance of a learning environment that encouraged the development of social skills and self-confidence in order to assist acceptance by regular pupils. He recognized that resources, including human resources, extended to the role of the school administration in ensuring smooth implementation at all levels. Furthermore, he acknowledged the role of regular pupils in making inclusion work, their need for information and their potentially important contribution to helping children with SEN to develop social skills. In short, teachers require sufficient and appropriate resources (both educational and human resources), administrative support to ensure a smooth implementation of inclusion at all levels and with a school ethos that encourages regular pupils to actively participate in promoting inclusive practices.

#### **2.12.4 Physical environment**

The contribution of the physical environment to inclusion was also acknowledged, including the appearance of classroom and learning materials; an organized layout is important for pupils to find their own space and work in the classroom, as well as for their safety. In a survey of 135 student teachers, Avramidis et al (2000) found that almost 7 out of 10 wanted a different classroom layout to accommodate children with disabilities with more teaching and learning resources as well as human resources. Appropriate



classroom layout should be accompanied by control over the number of SEN pupils in a class, depending on class sizes. This relates not just to physical space, but also to the teacher's capacity for giving individual attention to each child, with or without the support of a teaching assistant in the classroom. Batu (2010) points to the role of the school administration in preparing the environment, ensuring that classrooms, educational equipment and necessary resources for learning are available before implementation of inclusion begins and on an ongoing basis thereafter. In summary, school infrastructure, the number, size and location of schools, learning spaces and the equipment with which they are supplied, also plays an important role in supporting teachers to provide an inclusive learning environment.

The absence of any of these factors acts as a hindrance to inclusion. Negative attitudes of teachers and other staff, in particular the headteacher, and of the parents can be a powerful barrier, especially if they believe that the education of their 'normal' child is likely to suffer. A study by Pivik et al. (2002) looked at barriers to inclusion from the point of view of parents of children with disabilities and identified three different categories of barriers: the physical environment (such as stairs and doors), deliberate attitudinal barriers (for instance bullying) and unintentional attitudinal barriers (such as lack of knowledge and understanding of disability). The Index for Inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) offers one way for schools to measure their progress towards inclusive education, providing a framework for identifying both positive factors and remaining barriers. For most countries, particularly in times of economic recession, funding constraints on an inclusive programme are likely to hinder inclusion, whether that is

funding for improvements to buildings, additional teachers or support staff, or professional development of teachers. On this score, Saudi Arabia has been relatively fortunate because oil revenues have helped to reduce the impact of the global recession in comparison with countries like the UK and Spain.

### ***2.13 School ethos, teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion***

School ethos is mainly shaped by common perceptions and attitudes of all stakeholders. Therefore, it is argued that teachers', parents', and peers' attitudes are very important in constructing an inclusive school culture.

#### **2.13.1 Teachers' and parents' attitudes to inclusion**

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) agreed that the teachers' beliefs have a considerable influence on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion which, in turn, are translated into practice. Moreover, teachers who are willing to accept responsibility for teaching a wide diversity of students and feel confident in their instructional and management skills can successfully implement inclusive programmes. Specifically, it has been argued that teachers' favourable attitudes are critical for the successful inclusion of students with disability or SEN in regular schools (Bradshaw and Mundia, 2006; Forlin et al., 1996; Ward et al., 1994). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion have been studied from the 1950s onwards in many parts of the world, (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996 carried out a detailed review) and continuing to the present day as in Anthony (2010), Arif and Gaad (2008) and Nayak (2008). Generally, the results from studies examining teachers'

attitudes towards integration/inclusion are inconclusive and provide a mixed picture (Hassanein, 2010). Internationally, research findings vary, either supporting inclusion or not, yet reflecting common awareness of the importance of studying teachers' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions in order to develop inclusive practices.

Regular teachers have been found not to hold supportive attitudes towards inclusion (Kalyva et al., 2007), while other studies have reported favourable attitudes (Avramidis et al., 2000; Dupoux et al., 2005; Ward et al., 1994), and a few have found neutral or uncertain attitudes to inclusion (Leyser and Tappendorf, 2001; Yuen and Westwood, 2001). Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) reported Greek teachers to hold positive attitudes towards the idea of inclusion in general but positive attitudes were modified by perceived practical problems in accommodating certain types of disability in regular classrooms. The attitudes of teachers with experience in teaching pupils with SEN were more positive than those lacking such teaching experience. Ireland (2002) investigated attitudes towards inclusion in a New Jersey middle school, administering an attitude survey to a sample of forty-nine regular classroom teachers, ten special education teachers, and twelve specialists (71 in total). This study found that special education teachers considered inclusion to lead to more positive effects on children and the classroom setting than did regular and specialist teachers. The length of experience was correlated with less positive attitudes towards inclusion, linked to pupil attainment and their own workloads, due to conflicting pressures in results-driven settings. In addition, Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) identified the important part played by extended training in the development of positive attitudes. However, in one study in Saudi Arabia, teachers perceived children with

learning difficulties as normal (Al-Ahano, 2006), consistent with the wider social perception of disability because children who look normal and mostly sound and behave like other children are accepted as normal. This may lead general teachers to assume that dyslexic children are normal learners once they have been helped by SEN teachers to overcome their difficulties, which in turn may lead to assumptions that no adjustments need to be made to teaching strategies in the regular classroom.

One early study in Saudi Arabia by Alsaratawy et al. (1988) investigated headteachers' and teachers' attitudes towards including children with SEN in regular schools in Riyadh. The results of the study showed that the majority of the participants held negative attitudes towards including children with intellectual disabilities. This was attributed to the low IQ of those children which would not assist them in understanding the difficult curriculum of the regular schools. However, participants showed slightly more positive attitudes towards including children with visual, audial or physical disabilities. This study also found that female participants in general exhibited more positive attitudes than did the male participants. The findings showed that the type and possibly the extent of disability affected headteachers' and teachers' attitudes. Ten years later, in another study, Alsaratwy (1995) investigated the attitudes of teachers and student-teachers, showing that general teachers tended to have negative attitudes towards inclusion. In contrast, special education teachers and student-teachers showed positive attitudes towards inclusion. It is proposed that special education teachers' positive attitudes could be due to their teacher education about SEN or their actual experience of teaching children with SEN or a combination of both. Student-teachers' attitudes could be due to the fact that as yet they

had not confronted the difficulties of practical teaching which made them more optimistic. In this study, as in the earlier one, teachers' attitudes varied according to disability type; whereas most teachers were supportive of the inclusion of children with mild disabilities such as partial visual impairment, and partial audial hearing impairment, they rejected the inclusion of children with severe disabilities. Attitudes also varied depending on experience of education system, knowledge of SEN and idealism about the teaching profession.

In a later study by Abduljabbar and Masoud (2000), the attitudes of teachers and headteachers towards inclusive education were explored. A questionnaire was administered to 447 headteachers, regular and special education teachers. The results showed significant differences of opinions towards inclusion programmes, these differences being attributed to positions held, education level, type of disability and inclusion programme. Again, the type of disability was seen to affect attitudes, with teachers showing reservations about the inclusion of children with SLD and behavioural disorders. Positive attitudes to inclusion programmes were associated with specialist training and qualifications related to SEN. Al-Faiz (2006) examined Saudi Arabian teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with disorders on the autistic spectrum and, like Al Zyoudi (2006) in a small sample of private schools in Jordan, found teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education to be broadly positive. This may indicate that early fears concerning inclusive education have in some cases been discovered to be without foundation, reinforcing results from studies that identified the importance of experience in shaping teachers' attitudes (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; El-Ashry, 2009). Key

factors influencing teachers' attitudes can be summarized as: training (especially training in SEN), experience, type and extent of disability, a results-driven educational setting and the wider sociocultural context.

Further, the importance of parents' experiences and perceptions of inclusion, like those of other stakeholders, is highlighted by Chmiliar (2009). As with teachers' attitudes, the research literature indicates that there is a wide range of opinion amongst parents related to inclusion. Some parents prefer and advocate for inclusive placement, while others favour separate placement (Grove and Fisher, 1999; Elkins et al., 2003). As the trend towards inclusion continues to grow, one of the chief concerns of parents is access to support services for their child. Daniel and King (1997) found that parents were more concerned about the degree to which their child's individual education plan (IEP) actually addressed the needs of their child when the child was being educated in an inclusive setting, as opposed to a segregated setting. It may be difficult for parents to find schools with personnel who are sufficiently knowledgeable about inclusive educational goals in order to provide appropriate services to their child (Grove and Fisher, 1999).

Some other studies indicated that parents showed positive attitudes towards inclusion (Palmer et al., 1998; Elkins et al., 2003). Elkins et al. (2003) argued that many parents favoured inclusion, and more would do so if additional resources were provided. However, a small group of parents favoured special placement. In their Australian study involving just over 350 parents of children with disabilities, Elkins et al. (2003) found that most parents attached importance to having smaller classes with teaching assistants,

specialist advice and services, and adequate consultation time. The factors they rated most important were positive attitudes on the part of teachers and the headteacher. In a study in Greece, Kalyva et al. (2007) found that parents of primary school children without SEN were similarly positive irrespective of whether there was a child with SEN in their child's class. Based on responses to a 12-item questionnaire based on behavioural components of attitude, parents' own educational level did not appear to influence attitudes, a finding later shared by a study using a different questionnaire (De Boer et al., 2011). However, earlier studies had found higher educational levels to correspond with more positive parental attitudes towards inclusion (Leyser and Kirk, 2004 and Balboni and Pedrabissi, 2000). Variations in findings could be explained by differences in survey instruments, country cultures and dissimilarities in education systems. However, parents' socio-economic level together with the type of disability have consistently been shown to affect attitudes (de Boer et al., 2010).

A study of home-school relationships regarding children with dyslexia by Norwich et al. (2005) found that most parents felt positive about their child being categorized as dyslexic because they understood what was wrong and could get help for their child. Indeed, many parents had paid for professional help to specify the nature of the difficulties experienced. Teachers, on the other hand, believed that categorization could have a negative impact on learners. Interventions with children were found to be more effective when teachers made contact with parents and were well received with parents. The findings of ElZein (2009) were similar. In a qualitative study involving 15 parents of children with special needs in Lebanon, parents were shown to have a positive attitudes generally towards using the resource room approach to include children with "mild

mental retardation and motor handicaps” (ElZein,2009, p.169). They were also generally positive about the elements of social development, academic improvement, and teacher collaboration. Education provision for children with special needs started in the 1980s as a result of their parents’ demands, and although by 1993 only 61 schools were involved, 54 of them private, it was considered that collaboration between teachers and parents assisted a successful implementation of inclusion. Parents’ perceptions of inclusion varied from fulltime participation in regular classrooms to a resource room approach, with 13 of the 15 parents supporting the resource room approach, perhaps because they knew it. ElZein (2009) also proposed that for a philosophical approval of inclusion to be converted into enthusiastic acceptance of inclusion in practice, parents probably needed more information to reach greater understanding.

As societal values and structures affect parents’ attitudes, so does having a child with SEN in an inclusive setting that meets their needs. Awareness about disability and SEN is also an important factor in determining whether parents’ attitudes are likely to be positive or negative towards inclusion.

### ***2.14 Children’s perspectives***

Children are important stakeholders in inclusion, since they are the intended beneficiaries of any inclusion programme and experience first hand when they are included. Norwich and Kelly (2006) singled out the ethos of the school as the main determinant that facilitates direct participation by children with SEN in meeting their needs. They also



highlighted the role of non-verbal communication as a means of giving these children a voice. Smart and Bayliss (2000) investigated the part played by children's attitudes to SEN in successful inclusion. A programme of raising awareness about disability and inclusion involving mixing children with and without SEN from two neighbouring schools found that there were positive outcomes when the children worked together. The activities concerned included sharing breaks, writing a newsletter and doing art. Teachers from both schools were co-operative, which may have facilitated the process, and both groups of children wanted to continue to work together after the research ended. Children, like teachers and parents, developed a positive attitude to inclusion and children with disabilities through experience and understanding.

Chmiliar (2009) adopted a case study approach involving key stakeholders; each case comprised a learner with LD, a parent of the student and the inclusive classroom teacher. The findings confirmed the individuality of the children, some of whom enjoyed separate lessons while others felt this led to their missing out on regular classroom activities. It also confirmed that parents, teachers and children could have very different opinions about the same situation. The importance of preparing children for inclusion was highlighted by Frederickson et al. (2008, p.81):

“rather than leave classmates to make their own (often rather negative) attributions, more positive outcomes are likely to result if adults provide advance information, ongoing explanations and appropriately structured and supported opportunities for contact”.

Vignes et al. (2008) found that negative peer attitudes can create a significant barrier to the inclusion of students with disabilities, raising the importance of gauging children's attitudes. This led them to review existing instruments to measure children's attitudes towards their peers with disabilities, and found that 16 of the 19 instruments reviewed addressed only one of the three dimensions (affective, behavioural, and cognitive) of attitudes. They cautioned that all but one of the instruments were developed in English, and used predominantly in studies in English-speaking countries. The review identified The Acceptance Scale and CATCH as the only instruments capturing all three attitude components but the authors accepted that the selection of the most appropriate instrument was directly related to the objectives of a particular study. Although the means of assessing children's attitudes are not generally sufficiently robust or culturally appropriate for use in all countries, it can be said that research evidence indicates that children's attitudes are affected by their own experiences, their teachers' attitudes and how the school prepares children for inclusion. However, there remains a shortage of research into children's experiences and perceptions regarding inclusion and relating to children with SEN and disability from the children's point of view.

### ***2.15 Conclusion***

It has been shown that the meaning attributed to inclusion and understandings of its benefits may vary according to individual or organisational perspectives (i.e. inclusion as process, inclusion as a right, and inclusion as a state). Models of disability and SEN were critically examined, noting the links between the medical or deficit model of disability

that emphasizes assessment and diagnosis and the individual model in education that places responsibility for the condition and the improvement on the child. Such views map onto notions of equity within Islam which requires disadvantage to be identified before it can be appropriately addressed. In contrast, the social or environmental models which place the responsibility on the school and structures in the wider society are reflected in the drive to give every child access to education, as far as possible in the neighbourhood school. Although the rights models are particularly associated with a Eurocentric or western approach to inclusion that involves political change and pressure groups in a march towards ever greater democracy, it has been shown that conceptions of human rights within Islam share common concerns for the child with the western human rights model. In Saudi culture, inclusion is less concerned with recognizing diversity than with encouraging and supporting all children to become as close to the ideal Muslim as possible. Together with Bedouin traditions of the family which emphasize conformity and compliance, social and educational homogeneity is valued which may work against acceptance of disability as difference.

Whilst any definition of inclusion is inevitably arbitrary and culture bound, the key elements are nevertheless non-negotiable. Interestingly, different conceptualizations of inclusion have been suggested, such as securing active participation in mainstream schools to active participation in all aspects of life in the society, or a set of principles that organize work in schools to social, political and ideological commitment. Al Mousa (2008) preferred the term 'mainstreaming' to 'inclusion' when reporting progress in Saudi Arabia; the special education service delivery models still include special classes and specialist institutes. Conceptualizations of inclusion reflect a broad understanding

rather than providing a technical definition of the process and the long journey towards full inclusion. However, the arguments between human rights discourses and organizational issues could result in persistent tensions. The human rights discourse argues that every child has to be given an equal opportunity to be educated in a regular school. In contrast, the organizational discourse argues that the school should be organized in a way that could meet the needs of most children. In this sense, there will always be some children who cannot be accommodated in a regular school. It has further been illustrated that the influence of a variety of factors can enhance or constrain the implementation of education inclusion and that these factors interact in complex ways. Although there is a plethora of studies on inclusion, issues related to the contested nature of inclusion in terms of meanings and implementation of inclusion within the specific cultural and religious framework in Saudi Arabia are less researched. Also, despite the emphasis on international initiatives to promote inclusion globally, there is less on inclusion policies and practices in non western countries especially with regard to the attitudes of parents and teachers and other stakeholders, as well as perceptions of children as to what inclusion is and what makes it work.

## **Chapter Three METHODOLOGY**

### ***3.1 Introduction***

This study aims to examine the issues that surround the translation of inclusion policy into practice in girls' primary schools in Saudi Arabia. In doing so it investigates the factors that facilitate or hinder inclusion, teachers' and parents' attitudes to inclusion and classroom-based provision for children with SEN. The specific research questions generated by this aim are

- What are the key factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of inclusive practices in Saudi Arabia?
- What are Saudi teachers' attitudes towards including pupils with SEN?
- What are Saudi parents' attitudes towards including pupils with SEN?
- How is inclusion understood and practised in schools within the cultural and religious framework of Saudi Arabia?

This chapter sets out the research methods that were employed to answer these research questions, explaining how the methods generated the data needed to “answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible” (De Vaus, 2001, p.9). The problem situation in this study concerns how inclusive policies translate into practice within the education system of Saudi Arabia, in particular in primary schools where the initiative is first being implemented, starting with the inclusion of children with learning difficulties. Research objectives linked to these questions were: identify factors that help or hinder the

implementation of inclusive practices (e.g., organisational factors, curriculum, school ethos), explore teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion, and identify school and classroom practices (such as teaching strategies and curriculum differentiation) and professional collaboration that assist the translation of inclusive policies into practice. Most crucially, this study was to map understandings of inclusion in education within an Islamic context and explore what it means to be inclusive in Saudi society.

In order to take into account teachers', parents' and pupils' voices and to triangulate the data, the methods selected for this study were: structured interviews, a documentary review, direct observations and, for children, two additional methods of a 'hands up' whole-class activity and drawings. The way in which these methods were determined is described, following the outline of the sample selection and research design process as it occurred.

### ***3.2 Sample size and selection***

The sampling strategy is equally important for qualitative and quantitative research (Patton, 2002, p.46), although it tends to be very different: "What would be bias in statistical sampling, and therefore a weakness, becomes intended focus in qualitative sampling, and therefore strength" (Patton, 2002, p.230). The sample population, together with the sample criteria, sample size, sampling frame, sampling and analysis techniques, data collection methodology, research objectives, resources available and detailed

planning including interview length, all contribute to the design of a qualitative sampling strategy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Qualitative research typically uses non-probability sampling as its intention is not to produce a statistically representative sample or draw statistical inferences but to contextualise and understand a phenomenon in depth. The overall sampling strategy for this study is purposive sampling, a technique often employed in qualitative investigation, and falls within the type of purposive sampling that Patton (2002, p. 236) terms “typical case sampling”. With a purposive non-random sample, the number of people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them (Patton, 2002 and Cohen et al., 2007). The characteristics of individuals are often used as the basis of selection, typically in order to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population (Cohen et al., 2007).

### **3.2.1 Sample criteria**

It is important to decide the appropriate sample selection criteria, not only their nature but also their number. The number of selection criteria needed is a consideration that affects the outcomes of the research and should therefore be related to factors such as the intensity of the study, any requirement for multiple samples to generate sufficient evidence, the need for a control sample and the resources available to conduct the study. Determination of the appropriate sample size is not always straightforward (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

In this study, the criteria were prioritised in order to ensure that the purposive sample provided answers to the research questions and fulfilled the research objectives. In addition to pragmatic considerations of geography, there were three selection criteria for schools, namely primary schools, schools from contrasting socio-economic environments and schools which had an active learning difficulties programme for children with dyslexia and other mild to moderate learning difficulties. The two main sample criteria were the influence that individuals have on inclusion (in terms of policy and practice), individuals such as education supervisors who were influential in informing and enacting inclusion policies, and the influence they had on children with and without SEN in fully inclusive settings, for example special education and general teachers. The third criterion was the requirement for the sample to contain a range of perspectives on inclusion, by involving generalist and specialist teachers, parents of children with and without dyslexia or other learning difficulty, and children with and without dyslexia or other learning difficulty. The reason for selecting children with dyslexia was that, in the absence of statistics, dyslexia was said by a special education lecturer to be the most frequently encountered special educational need and therefore maximized the number of children with SEN in the sample. The fourth criterion, which applied to children only, was that they should be old enough to be able to adequately express their views and feelings and should therefore be recruited from among final year primary pupils.

A strategic selection of the cases to be studied is important (De Vaus, 2001), therefore criteria were drawn up for selecting schools. In Saudi Arabia, all primary schools, unlike secondary schools, are required to comply with the national policy concerning inclusive education, therefore the first criterion was primary schools. The average size of a primary



school in Saudi Arabia is 150 children, ranging from twenty in isolated villages to over two hundred and fifty in major cities. Some differences were to be expected between schools due to differing socio-economic contexts, although the majority of differences were likely to arise from facilities, individual teachers and head teachers, since the curriculum, teacher education policy and procedures are determined centrally, with little scope for variation. The second criterion was to include contrasting modern city and small country town schools in the study in order to explore potential relationships between inclusion and the socio-economic setting of the school. Teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion required investigation of the factors that influence those attitudes, such as observed practice and individual teachers' experience of general and SEN teaching, as well as the content of policy documents. The exploration of attitudes was required to account for possible differences in perceptions of parents of children with and without SEN and the perspectives of children themselves, whether assessed as having SEN or not. Therefore the third criterion was to include schools that had potential participants in all these categories. In addition, there were serious logistical and practical considerations involved in conducting this study in Saudi Arabia: sociocultural, logistical (with the problems of logistics closely linked to sociocultural norms and expectations), and the position of a female researcher. Firstly, the study focuses exclusively on girls; at the time of writing, only women are permitted to teach girls because schools are segregated by gender. This makes it impossible for a female researcher to interview anyone in a school for boys. Since it is not allowed for women to travel alone or drive cars, a female researcher must be accompanied by a brother, husband or father when carrying out a field visit. This evidently cannot be done unless a male close family

member has the time to act as chauffeur or the researcher has the financial resources to pay a male family member to undertake this work, which in this instance was not possible. In practice, this means fieldwork is constrained geographically and logistically as well as having to comply with the sociocultural norms and thus in this study the selection of the case studies was determined not only by the research focus but also by a realistic evaluation of what was achievable. A summary of selection criteria for participants is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Summary of selection criteria for participants

<b>Sample criterion</b>	<b>Applied to</b>
Influence on inclusion	Education supervisor (general and SEN)
	Headteacher
	General teachers
	SEN teacher
Influence on children with SEN	Headteacher
	General teachers
	SEN teacher(dyslexia and/or other categories of SEN)
	Parents of children with SEN (dyslexia and/or other categories of SEN)
	Parents of children without SEN
	Children with SEN (dyslexia and/or other categories of SEN)
	Children without SEN

<b>Sample criterion</b>	<b>Applied to</b>
Influence on children without SEN	Headteacher
	General teachers
	SEN teacher
	Parents of children with SEN (dyslexia and other categories of SEN)
	Parents of children without SEN
	Children with SEN (dyslexia and other categories of SEN)
	Children without SEN
Range of perspectives	All of the foregoing plus
	Education supervisor (general and SEN)
Children with dyslexia (specific subgroup)	Children with SEN (dyslexia)
Old enough to be able to adequately express views and feelings	Children with SEN (dyslexia and other categories of SEN)
	Children without SEN
Primary age group	Schools
Had a learning difficulties programme	Schools
Contrast of socio-economic environments	Schools
Geographically accessible (realism)	Schools

### **3.2.2 Saudi Arabian socio-cultural context**

The document entitled "Educational Policy in the Kingdom" describes education as a duty for every individual in Saudi Arabia, as specified by the precepts of Islam. The policy hence clearly sets out the rights of disabled children for education, encouragement, support and care in accordance with their capacity and potential. The policy document states that support services such as health, social and psychological and services have an important role in improving the adaptation of disabled children and students to their society and in informing them about their rights and obligations, although, at this point in time, this statement remains largely aspirational. Implementation of the policy has proceeded in recent years with significant investment in premises, equipment and educational materials, although the initial focus was on separate institutes, with resource rooms in general schools being greatly increased in the last decade. Another strand of the implementation has been teacher training to undertake the role of special education teacher, leading to great expansion and improvements of the special education sector in the Kingdom. Early assessment at a widening network of centres has been a feature of the policy so that children can benefit from early transfer to special education institutions where appropriate, in order to develop their capacities to the fullest possible extent. There are extensive and generous financial incentives to families to keep disabled students in higher education and employment. To implement the goals of Education for All and ICT literacy, the King Abdullah Project for the Development of Public Education was started in February 2007 to enhance teachers' skills in the areas identified by UNESCO (2007): updating teaching methods such as active problem solving methods, increased class participation and small group work. Culturally, it is still not wholly acceptable for girls of

primary school age to be educated in the same school as boys and many ordinary people consider severe learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural disorders to be dangerous types of mental illness, pointing to the complexity of disability issues and cultural practices.

Information about the socio-economic background of schools selected for this study is provided in Appendix 1 while numbers of teachers, pupils and classes are shown in Table 3.2 which gives the number of pupils with SEN, with dyslexia and in total, and numbers of SEN teachers and general teachers as well as classes.

Table 3.2 Information about numbers of pupils, classes and teachers in the schools

<b>School</b>	<b>Number of pupils with LD/SLD</b>	<b>Number of pupils with dyslexia</b>	<b>Total number of pupils</b>	<b>Number of classes</b>	<b>SEN Teacher</b>	<b>General Teacher</b>
<b>School 1</b>	<b>10 LD 16 SLD</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5 (1 LD, 4 SLD)</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>School 2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1 LD</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>School 3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1 LD</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>School 4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1 LD</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>School 5</b>	<b>SLD 16</b>		<b>140</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4 SLD</b>	<b>24</b>

**Key: LD learning difficulties; SLD severe learning difficulties; SEN special educational needs**

In total, there were 162 participants in the study, consisting of 4 headteachers, 23 general teachers, 10 SEN teachers, 105 children including 25 children interviewed (10 assessed as having SEN and 15 assessed as not having such needs), 9 parents of children with SEN and 11 parents of children without SEN. Eight of the children with learning difficulties (LD) had been assessed by the school with the remaining 2 diagnosed with severe learning difficulties (SLD), all assessment in accordance with official policy and assessment procedures in Saudi Arabia. A summary of participants by school is shown in table 3.3

.

Table 3.3 Summary of participants by school

<b>School Number and location</b>	<b>Head Teacher</b>	<b>General teacher</b>	<b>SEN (SEN) teacher</b>	<b>Pupils assessed as having SEN</b>	<b>Pupils assessed as not having SEN</b>	<b>Parents of children assessed as having SEN</b>	<b>Parents of children assessed as not having SEN</b>
1 Large city	1	5	5	2	3	5	5
2 Village	1	5	1	2	3	0	0
3 Town	1	5	1	2	3	2	3
4 Town	1	5	1	2	3	2	3
5 Town	0	3	2	2	3	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>

Additional information about the teachers in the sample is shown in Table 3.4, indicating which school they came from, whether they were general or special needs teachers and how many years of experience they had.

Table 3.4 Teachers in the sample by school, general/special needs teachers and years of experience.

School number	Under 5 years		5 to 15 years		More than 15 years	
	General teachers	SEN teachers	General teachers	SEN teachers	General teachers	SEN teachers
1	0	2	2	3	3	0
2	1	1.5	2	0	2	0
3	1	1	3	0	1	0
4	1	1	2	0	2	0
5	1	2	2	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	4	7	11	3	8	0

As inclusive education is a relatively recent policy, many SEN teachers have been trained only in the last few years, therefore it would be impossible to find many with a long experience of teaching outside of the special schools for blind and deaf children. Of the 10 SEN teachers in the sample, 7 had less than 5 years experience, although 3 had between 5 and 15 years. In contrast, 11 of the 19 general teachers had between 5 and 15 years' experience. School 1 had the greatest number of special teachers (5), including the 3 with over 5 years experience. SEN teachers in school 5 were working with children with severe learning difficulties (SLD).



### ***3.3 Methods of data collection***

Grix (2004) states that a research design adopting a case study approach typically employs a range of methods and techniques for collecting and analyzing data, such as surveys using interviews, observations, documentary reviews and action research techniques and “do not rely on, but can involve, numerical measurements” (Grix, 2004, p.120). Yin (1994) considers six sources of evidence are appropriate to what he terms the protocol for a case study protocol; archive records, documentation, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. The following sections examine and justify the research methods selected for the case study in this research.

#### **3.3.1 Research methods**

The study employed structured interviews (with some open questions), direct observations, a documentary review and two additional methods for collecting data from children, a ‘hands up’ exercise and drawings. (Copies of data collection instruments are in Appendix 2). Structured interviews were used with parents and teachers, including specialist teachers, and with pupils, while a ‘hands up’ exercise and drawings were also used with pupils. A summary of the data collection methods used with the different groups of participants is shown in Table 3.5. Together these methods provided triangulation of data together with different participant perspectives on the focus of the research. Each data collection method used in the current study is justified in the following sections, with full copies of all the data collection instruments provided in Appendix 2.

Table 3.5 Types and number of participants, data collection methods and research questions addressed

	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Data Collection Methods</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>1</b>	What are the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of inclusive practices in Saudi Arabia?	Structured Interview	Headteacher	4
		Structured Interview	Teachers (23G, 10S)	32
		Semi- Structured Interview	District education supervisor (G)	1
		Semi-Structured Interview	District education supervisor (S)	1
		Structured Interview	Pupils (10 with SEN, 15 without SEN)	25
		Drawing (individual)	Pupils	47
		Whole class 'hands up'	Pupils	105
<b>2</b>	What are Saudi teachers' attitudes towards including pupils with SEN?	Structured Interview	Teachers (23G, 10S)	See above
		Observations	Pupils –Teachers	8
		Structured Interview	Pupils (10 with SEN, 15 without SEN)	See above
		Drawing (individual)	Pupils	See above
		Whole class 'hands up'	Pupils	See above

	Research Question	Data Collection Methods	Participants	Number of Participants
3	What are Saudi parents' attitudes towards including pupils with SEN?	Structured Interview	Parents	20
4	How is inclusion understood and practised in schools within the cultural and religious framework of Saudi Arabia?	Structured Interview	Headteacher	See above
		Structured Interview	Teachers (23G,10S)	See above
		Semi- Structured Interview	District education supervisor (G)	See above
		Semi-Structured Interview	District education supervisor (S)	See above
		Structured Interview	Pupils (8 with SEN,12 without SEN)	See above
		Observations	Pupils –Teachers	See above
		Structured Interview	Pupils (8 with SEN,12 without SEN)	See above
		Documents	Policy documents at national and school level (inclusion and SEN)	
		Documents	School records: Relevant school procedures, minutes, pupil assessments and action plans	
		Observations	Classroom practice and break times	8

## **Interviews**

Five different interview schedules were employed: semi-structured interview schedules for the education supervisors, and structured interview schedules for headteachers, teachers, parents and children. Major advantages of structured interviews are the consistency of responses and the organisation and analysis of the data, as such data is easier to organize, unlike unstructured interview data (Bruce, 2001 and Patton, 1980).

### **Teachers' interview schedule**

The key dimensions of the teachers' interviews were identified in the literature review and were themed as: understanding of inclusion, training and experience, resources and support, perceptions about the barriers to inclusion and required changes and outcomes of the implementation of inclusion thus far together with suggestions for future improvement. A combination of question types was used to help avoid interviewee boredom and encourage concentration. Open and closed questions were used, as were some questions based on a Likert scale. Typical open questions were "What does inclusion mean to you?" and "What are the challenges of including children with severe learning difficulties?". Examples of the use of closed questions followed by a further probe are "Do you think all children can be included? Why/ why not?" and "Does the severity of disability make a difference? How?".

Likert scales were employed when it was considered particularly desirable to be able to directly compare responses from different groups of participants, such as

perceptions about the suitability of inclusion for all children, barriers to inclusion and required changes were also investigated using Likert scale responses. Even allowing for the fact that some respondents will always tend to answer more positively than others, across different groups it is still possible to detect overall variations in their views about inclusion.

In the teachers' questionnaire, a sequence of three questions was designed to elicit data about teaching strategies use with children with dyslexia, starting with a general question, then focusing on SEN children and finally asking how the teacher used different strategies to accommodate varying literacy levels:

“What teaching strategies do you use?” followed by “What kind of teaching strategies do you think could work well with SEN children? And why?” and then “How do you differentiate your teaching strategies to accommodate all children, eg in literacy?” Teachers were also asked “How have you adapted your teaching methods to meet the needs both general education pupils and those with special needs?”.

The use of the word ‘dyslexia’ was avoided because the term was rarely used by general teachers who formed the majority of teacher participants (23 compared with 10 SEN specialists) and all teachers' questionnaires contained the same set of questions in order to be able to compare responses between general and SEN teachers. Moreover, the pilot phase confirmed that attempts at explanation beyond ‘SEN’ resulted in concerns being expressed about the time the interview was taking and a consequent loss of interest.

Further questions which provided opportunities for teachers who were aware of dyslexia were: “Do you use individual educational planning? And how

challenging is this process for you?”, “Do you think the current curriculum is suitable for all children? Why/ why not?”, “How can the curriculum be changed? How can the examination system be changed to meet all students’ needs?” and “Could you please list the educational resources available in your school that support inclusion?”. These questions were framed in a way that allowed teachers with knowledge or experience of any category of SEN other to respond.

To understand teachers’ perceptions, it was necessary to explore their characteristics, education and background to examine the extent to which these influence their perceptions. Examples of factors that could affect teachers’ perceptions are age, teaching experience and training, as well as the institutional context of schools. The latter includes premises and facilities, whether for instance the school was designed to have fully inclusive classrooms or separate classrooms for pupils with SEN. Other factors within the institutional context, such as the availability of specialism in teachers qualified in SEN or other professionals, can vary from school to school, as can headteachers’ perceptions about disability and inclusion.

### **Parents’ interview schedule**

A similar mix of question types was used in the parents’ interview schedule, with the section on training and experience omitted and greater exploration of the perceived benefits of inclusion for their own child and other children, together with their experiences of communications with the school. Examples of open

questions from this schedule are “How do you think inclusion helps pupils with SEN (for your child for example) to improve their school work?” and “What communication exists between the school and your family?” An example of the use of Likert scales is given by “In your opinion, is inclusion a good idea?”.

### **Children’s interview schedule**

Children’s experiences of an inclusive school reflect the school’s ethos and the extent to which inclusive policies have been translated into inclusive practices in that school. In order to ensure that dyslexic children were not at a disadvantage compared with their non-dyslexic peers, it was decided to avoid written answers to questions and to interview them using a friendly conversational approach. Interview schedule questions were written in a friendly way and were simpler than the questions for parents and teachers. They were mainly aimed at triangulation of the data collected from parents and teachers to check what they were saying about relationships between pupils and teachers. They were also intended to confirm or otherwise the overall impression of inclusion in the school. Most of the questions were closed in order to keep the answers easy for the children, especially those with learning difficulties. For instance, asking about relationships with teachers: Do your teachers listen to your ideas? Do your teachers help you with your work (to what extent do teachers help you, a lot or little?) Do you like your teachers? Do they like you?

One of the main disadvantages of structured interviews, as compared with questionnaires, is that often respondents do not have enough time to think unless

they are prompted to spend a few moments thinking (Bruce, 2001). However, it was considered more important to obtain the essential data than to have to abandon interviews for lack of participants' time; participants were invited to add more later.

### **Headteacher interview schedule**

Some of the questions were the same as for teachers, such as "What does the term inclusion mean to you?" and those concerning the meaning and benefits of inclusion. Some were similar such as "Have you received any pre or in-service training relative to special educational needs? If yes, what exactly?", while others were specific to the headteacher role, such as "What is the management's role (for example in allocating resources and training staff) in this programme?" and "How would you describe collaboration between teachers and other professionals in the school? What are the factors that affect collaboration and what can you do to enhance it?" Current and potential roles of other partners were explored through questions such as: "What do you think about the role of teaching assistants?", "What sort of support would you like to have to implement inclusion successfully?" and "What do you think about the role of the other professionals such as speech and language therapists? And how does it work in the school?". Headteachers were also asked about their perceptions of barriers, challenges and what more could be done to assist the implementation of inclusion.

### **Education supervisor interview schedule**

Again, many of the questions in this interview were similar to those put to teachers and headteachers, for example those concerning the meaning and benefits



of inclusion. However, a greater emphasis was placed on the role of the Ministry of Education and the administration system in terms of securing and providing resources, with particular prompting for data related to resources and support, teacher training and policy. Questions were also asked about the role of the general and SEN supervisors. The role of the special education adviser involves working with inclusive schools to identify resources to meet requirements for children with SEN, approaches to schools which might become inclusive schools, arranging in-service training for SEN teachers and providing ongoing support and advice to inclusive schools and SEN teachers.

Questions were included which gave education supervisors opportunities to comment on dyslexia and any other categories of SEN, in particular:

“Do you prefer certain teaching strategies (methods) for inclusion? If so, why?”

“Do you think that the current curriculum is suitable for all children? Why/ why not?”, “How can the curriculum be changed?” “How can the examination system be changed to meet all students’ needs?” and “How have you adapted your teaching methods to meet the needs of both general education pupils and those with special needs?”

## **Observations**

Additional layers of thick, rich description of case studies were collected through observations of the school premises, facilities, organization and general atmosphere and specifically from observing teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions in the classroom and at break times. Observations were consistent

with an approach which deepens understanding regarding participants' perceptions of inclusion. Additionally, data gathered through observations of participants can provide a cross-check with participants' responses in interviews (Cohen et al., 2007). A further benefit is that observation may reveal factors relevant to the research that may have not been previously considered (Cohen et al., 2007). Although concerns have been expressed about the consistency of observations and the reliability of data obtained in this way, on the grounds that observations are "subjective, biased, impressionistic and idiosyncratic" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.407), for this study they offer an important method of investigating the extent to which policies of inclusion are translated into practice in classrooms and the wider whole school setting which includes informal contacts and pupil friendships.

Observations were conducted during breaktime and in classrooms. The breaktime observations specifically aimed to establish whether there was any separation or segregation of children with and without SEN in the playground or indoor play areas. They also aimed to identify whether friendships between these pupils could be evidenced through conversations and games, sharing lunches and other activities. The classroom observations were intended to identify whether teachers' expressed attitudes to children were evidenced in body language, choice of words and tone of voice, as well as time spent helping individual pupils. Data was classified into practices which supported the implementation of inclusion and those which hindered it. For example, in classroom observations, pictures which helped understanding of lessons were classified as helpful, whereas bare walls in a resources room and writing without accompanying pictures were seen as

unhelpful to the implementation of inclusion for children with learning difficulties in accordance with multi-sensory teaching methods.

### **Document analysis**

There are statutory instruments that describe the educational options, curriculum and standards, and there are set requirements and standards for teachers. There are also standard policies and procedures for individual schools. All available relevant documentation was reviewed: school instructions and procedures, plans, minutes of progress meetings, and any additional data relevant to the research topic. These were compared with practices of inclusion as it was implemented in the schools. Documentary analysis needs to be carried out systematically, with clear criteria for both the selection of documents and their subsequent analysis (Cohen et al., 2007). One of the criteria for document analysis in this study was the occurrence of the terms “inclusion”, “special educational needs” and “learning difficulties” and references to initiatives, programmes and implementation in those fields because those terms would indicate whether the documents were directly relevant to this study. References to implementation were important because they provided an opportunity for triangulation or at least another viewpoint on inclusion practices. Whereas a policy or procedure referred to implementation of inclusion, interviews with teachers or observations generated data on the extent to which implementation takes place. Minutes of school meetings could have illuminated this area. The key themes from the literature review and interviews provided the keywords for the analysis of content. It should be noted that whilst documentary analysis is useful and can be carried out without interfering with the regular work

of research participants, documents may have been produced with aims that are different from the aim of the research (Robson, 2002, p.358) and any such differences need to be highlighted. The criteria for document analysis are shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6. Document analysis criteria

<b>Document analysis criterion</b>	<b>Applied to</b>
National education policies and procedures containing the word "inclusion"	Ministry of Education policy documents
National education policies and procedures containing the words "learning difficulties"	Ministry of Education policy documents
National education policies and procedures containing the words "SEN"	Ministry of Education policy documents
National education policies and procedures containing the words "dyslexia"	Ministry of Education policy documents
Instructions and procedures containing one or more of; "inclusion, SEN, dyslexia", also combined with "implementation"	School instructions and procedures
Containing one of more of ; "inclusion, SEN, dyslexia", also combined with "implementation"	Minutes of meetings, documents from training sessions
Pupil records	Assessment documentation, Individual Educational Plan, updates of plan and homework books for pupils' progress and attainment
Had a learning difficulties programme	Schools
Contrast of socio-economic environments	Schools
Geographically accessible (pragmatism)	Schools

Although the researcher is confident that the selection of methods for the current study was appropriate and fully justified, it is important to recognize that research methods do not stand alone. In this study, important issues regarding translation were raised, as well as issues of data analysis methods and ethics which were also essential

to the research process and which have been fully addressed in the thesis. It is essential that methods form part of a consistent and coherent whole.

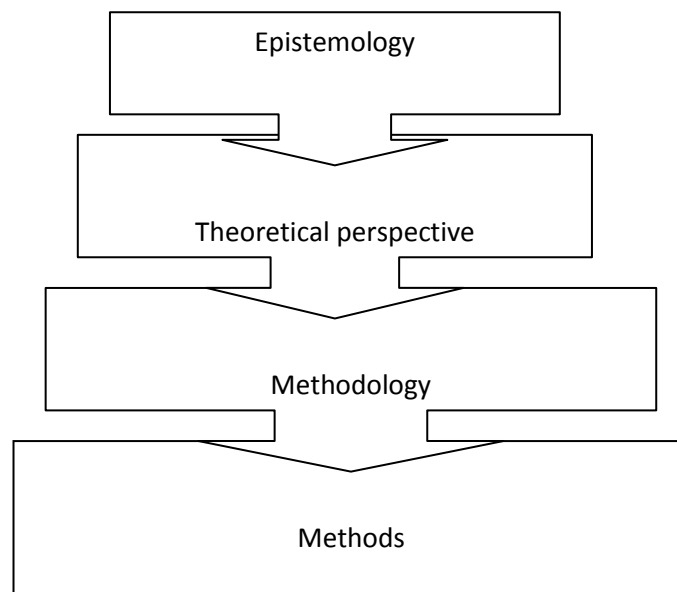
### **Children's drawings and 'hands up' exercise**

The main purpose of these activities was to make sure that children had the opportunity to be participants and to achieve this through inclusive methods. These two methods gave dyslexic children with SEN the opportunity to express themselves without the constraints of either written or spoken language, an important consideration for dyslexic children. The 'hands-up' exercise also provided an opportunity for children to feel part of a wider group if they were shy or lacking in confidence about drawing or being interviewed. The drawings were intended, in addition to providing a non-verbal opportunity for self-expression, to offer the researcher a general idea of whether children felt included as indicated by whether they identified a friend or friends and by whether there was any noticeable difference in drawings done by children with and without SEN.

### ***3.4 Research design***

It is important for the credibility of any research that the epistemological stance and theoretical perspective are appropriate and explicit; "Without unpacking these assumptions and clarifying them, no one (including ourselves!) can really divine what our research has been or what it is now saying" (Crotty, 2007, p.17). "Without it, research is not research" (Crotty, 2007, p.17). The unpacking and clarification of assumptions in this assignment is organized under the headings in Crotty's (2007) model of research methodology shown in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Crotty's four elements of research methodology



Source: Redrawn from Crotty (2007, p.4),

Crotty's model has four levels, each of which informs and influences the following level, namely epistemology (ways of knowing), theoretical perspective (underlying philosophy), methodology and methods.

### 3.4.1 Epistemology

Epistemology concerns the study of ways of discovering reality or knowledge. It refers to the relationships, or lack of them, between a researcher's own assumptions and preferences, the nature of knowledge, and how and where to access the information i.e. data sources, methodology and data collection methods. "Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge, a system of thought that articulates specific beliefs about the nature of knowledge, what it means to know, what is knowable and the methods of the knowing" (Hartas, 2010, p.16). A range of

epistemological positions has been identified by Cresswell (1994) and Crotty (2007): Constructionism was selected as the most appropriate epistemological position for this study. Constructionism assumes that meaning is created through the researcher and research participants engaging with the information gathered and with multiple realities. The constructionist stance (also referred to as constructivist) argues that the knowledge and the knower are created together. In a constructionist epistemology, the researcher and research participants actively build meanings as they emerge from social events and situations (Cohen et al., 2000). Data do not exist in a vacuum but are located in a particular social situation. According to Cohen et al. (2000), data are context-related, context-dependent and context-rich. This applies to the current study which requires the collection of factual information in addition to engaging with pupils, parents, general teachers and specialist teachers of pupils with SEN and head teachers who will bring a range of different perspectives to the study. This is consistent with a constructionist epistemological position. Furthermore, the researcher's own experience as a teacher and head teacher in a primary school means that the data gathered is unavoidably viewed through the lens of that experience as well as from the multiple perspectives of diverse participants in the study. To a certain extent, the researcher explains why things happened from the insider's point of view (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). At the same time, "social constructivism emphasizes the culture and the social context that surround people's life" (Hartas, 2010, p.9).

In recognition of the complexities of educational research, which involves a broad range of influences at the individual, social, institution and societal levels, Hartas argues for "a research epistemology that explores possibilities by giving voice to people who are directly affected by social and educational situations", advocating the use of integrated worldviews through a mixed-methods approach (2010, p.15).



### **3.4.2 Theoretical perspective**

The theoretical perspective, or ontology, concerns the nature of reality (Thompson and Perry, 2004) or, as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), assumptions about the reality that is being investigated. These assumptions can be the researcher's own or those of a society or culture, or indeed a combination of both. As with epistemology, assumptions or beliefs about the nature of reality lie on a spectrum (Crotty, 2003). A community of practice may also adopt and endorse a particular ontology; "Each scientific field has its own preferred ontology defined by the field's assumptions, worldview and canonical formulation of its theories (Hartas, 2010, p.15).

This study accounts for both the external and internal definitions of reality. Some of the factors such as appropriately trained staff or limitations in premises and equipment that help or hinder inclusion are external realities, Others, however, such as teachers' and pupils' attitudes, are produced by how people see and understand aspects of a situation, which can depend on their beliefs, values and life experience prior to encountering a particular event or situation. For example, a teacher's personal experience of a family member or friend with SEN could result in a positive attitude towards that individual and to others with SEN. A contrasting example of a parent disliking inclusion could arise from her child having problems at school with a child with SEN. Over time, teachers' and parents' views could influence each other's so that they agreed that it is generally unusual for children with SEN to cause problems for other children, provided that the necessary facilities and equipment is available, and a positive ethos defines interactions and relationships in schools. Therefore, the ontological position of this study which supports a constructionist epistemology is one

which admits elements of an external reality in taking account of multiple, constructed and holistic realities (Lincoln and Guba, 2000), that of interpretivism.

Having established that a constructionist epistemological stance and theoretical perspective are appropriate to the current study, the third stage in the process according to Crotty (2007) was to determine an appropriate methodology. Krauss (2005, p.761) cited Cavaye (1996) as asserting that the methodology should depend on the purpose of the research rather than on commitment to one paradigm or another: “the methodology employed must match the particular phenomenon of interest” (Krauss, 2005, p. 761). In the context of the current study, methodology refers not only to the use of a case study but also to whether that approach is, broadly speaking, qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods (Creswell, 2009).

The research design draws the overall picture of the study components that work together to answer the research questions. De Vaus (2001) identifies ‘case study’ as one of four different kinds of research design. He argues that a clear focus on the research objectives and questions is needed to determine the most appropriate type of design and stresses the importance of defining the scope of the core concepts, location, timescale, and unit of analysis (De Vaus, 2001, p.27).

### **3.4.3 Methodology**

A case study methodology was selected for a range of reasons. According to Bell (1993), one way of measuring the usefulness and value of a case study is to assess the

extent to which a teacher working in a similar situation could relate to the case study, in terms of whether the information is both appropriate and sufficient for their own decision making situations. In other words, for a case study 'relateability' is more important than 'generalisability'. This is appropriate for the current study which was being conducted during the period of transition to inclusive education in Saudi Arabia and which aimed to offer many primary teachers in that country insights and points of comparison and contrast to inform their own responses to the transition and to assist them in reviewing their own attitudes. It is also intended through its 'relateability' to be of use to officials and academics working on issues arising during implementation of the inclusion policy in primary schools.

Answers to the questions concerning teachers' and parents' attitudes involve a reality and knowledge generated in the minds of participants through the interaction of the objective reality, for example curriculum and equipment such as computers, and their view of that objective reality in light of their subjective experiences. Their views depend on many factors such as the way a school operates and ideas that participants bring from outside the situation, for example from home or their initial teacher education. This research also required in-depth understanding of what 'inclusion' means to different participants, and in the case of children needs to be investigated differently. Answering the research questions required identification of the factors that help or hinder inclusion based on the literature review and as they are seen by the participants. The latter involves using the language of the participants rather than jargon because specialist teachers and parents were likely to use quite different words to describe the same situation. It was also considered necessary to look at possible differences between parents of children without SEN and parents of children with SEN. It was further considered of interest to collect opinions from children with and

without SEN because little research has been done into how children think and feel about inclusion, especially in Saudi Arabia. Few studies have been conducted involving the perceptions of children, although their attitudes could be key to the success of inclusion policies and the views of both children classified as having SEN and others need to be taken into account to understand the picture more fully.

The case study generated data which “goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings [...] In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (Denzin, 1989, p.83). Exploring the perspectives of different participants (parents, teachers, head teachers and pupils) revealed the voices and identified the web of relationships in specific primary schools. The interrelationships among teachers were; general teacher-general teacher, SEN teacher-SEN teacher, general teacher-SEN teacher and whole teaching team collaboration. Relationships between parents and teachers were; parent-class teacher (generalist or SEN) and parents-whole school. Relationships involving pupils were; pupils-their teacher, pupils-other teachers and pupil-pupil.

Bryman (2004, p.48) has confirmed the suitability of a case study where “the case is an object of interest in its own right and the researchers aims to provide an in-depth elucidation of it”, in particular the “unique features of the case” (Bryman, 2004, p.50). It is suitable for investigation of a research subject in its natural and complex context, such as the current study; this also conforms to Denscombe’s assertion that it is

relevant where the situation is of special interest and unique (Denscombe, 1998). What Bryman calls an “exemplifying case” (Bryman, 2004, p.51) provides an “apt context for the working through of these of these research questions”; the newness of inclusive primary schools in Saudi Arabia offers just such a case. A case study also assists in developing a concentrated body of knowledge about one example (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) and in facilitating strength in depth of understanding (Bryman, 2001; Denscombe, 2003), both of which are relevant to the current study.

In sum, the reasons for using a case study for this research were: to offer an in-depth examination of the factors that influence the implementation of inclusion in primary schools in Saudi Arabia in a context of the perceptions of different participants; shedding light on a unique situation in terms of bringing together a highly traditional Islamic and cultural setting with the newness of educational inclusion, thereby meeting the criterion of Bryman (2004). Also, the social context in Saudi Arabia was relevant and a case study approach could reveal how events and actions are situated in a particular cultural and social setting. It is essential to understand inclusion-related “actions and meanings in their social context” (Bryman, 1998) and to this end, this study hoped to achieve an in-depth, detailed understanding of how inclusion is perceived in primary schools in Saudi Arabia. It may be of interest to educators in general as interpretations of inclusion in Saudi schools may be different from western interpretations and this may promote an understanding of transition towards full inclusion in a different socio-cultural context. As such, “the form of case study adopted was determined by the research focus” (Wyness, 2010 in Hartas, 2010, p.161).

### ***3.5 Data collection process***

As planned, documents were collected, including the Guide for Learning Difficulties teachers, and school records examined for the documentary analysis. However, it was not possible to conduct all the interviews on a face-to-face basis and therefore telephone interviews were carried out with a number of parents who agreed to participate in the study and with one of the two education supervisors in order to include them in the sample. During telephone interviews, the same questions were asked as with the face to face interviews and comparable data was collected. Teachers and headteachers were interviewed face-to-face. With the children, data was collected face to face in both class and individual settings.

### ***3.6 Data Analysis***

Template analysis was selected as the data analysis method for this study because it offered an appropriate combination of flexibility and systematic analysis that enabled adaptation to fit the research focus (Cassell and Symon, 2004). King (2003) highlighted the importance of developing codes appropriate to the data in order to produce a template. This allowed data to be analysed by themes that emerged from the text and was essential to revealing what research participants really thought and felt (King, 2003). The template for this study is shown in Appendix 5. In order to avoid everything being classified under 'inclusion', it was decided to retain the broad categories used to structure the interview schedules and their clusters of questions. The resulting overall categories were: inclusion, training and experience, collaboration between home and school, resources and support, relationships and

attitudes, and barriers and ways of overcoming them. The production of an initial template to assist data analysis is supported by King (2004) who asserts this can help with the initial organisation of large quantities of qualitative data. The data analysis involved coding data into broad categories using key words from the interview responses. Themes were developed from the data as they become clear through transcription and subsequent translation. Coding followed several steps; first, in line with best practice, the researcher decided the initial categories of information according to the answers given by respondents within an overall framework based on categories that emerged from the literature review. The coding frame was developed from these categories together with key words or concepts in participants' responses, using a main category and subcategories as appropriate, for instance 'resources' as a main category and 'computers' as a subcategory if a respondent comments that more resources are required, especially access to computers: access to the internet would have a different subcategory. This analytical technique may be of particular importance to the encounters with the children in the study where it was important to avoid oversimplification and generalization of categories in order to hear the voices of the children in preference to the researcher's voice.

### ***3.7 Translation***

The quality of translation can be affected by the linguistic competence in languages, the background and personal interests of the translator, their knowledge of the culture in which the research is conducted and the relationship between the translator and researcher (Temple, 1997). The researcher carrying out this study met almost all the requirements but needed to involve a native English speaker to ensure that the

translated data were as meaningful in English as in Arabic where, for instance, a translation made sense grammatically but might have lost its original meaning.

One of the commonly used techniques is back translation, which entails finding equivalents through initial translation into the target language, in this case Arabic, then separating translated documents and doing an independent translation back into the original language (English), followed by comparing the two versions until ambiguities or discrepancies in meaning are clarified or removed (Ercikan, 1998). However, back translation can cause its own problems because the agreement reached may not be exactly what was said in the original or in the translated form but a compromise between the two.

The current study sought to overcome potential translation-related difficulties in four ways; firstly, the researcher is a native Arabic speaker who was thoroughly conversant with the research topic and sufficiently fluent in English to translate into Arabic and accurately record findings in Arabic. Secondly a bilingual Arabic-English speaker permanently resident in the UK was to corroborate or challenge the translation, and thirdly, a native English speaker was asked to check whether the meaning was clear, checking with the identified bilingual Arabic-English speaker that no distortion of meaning had occurred during translation.

Fourthly, at the start of the process, the questionnaire and structured interview guides were piloted to ensure that respondents understood the question with the meaning intended by the researcher and that the answers yielded the expected type of



information. Whilst it would have been possible to analyse the information pre- and post-translation, the researcher's own role as a primary headteacher in Saudi Arabia could have then led to questions about the validity of the findings in either language and so it was more academically robust to involve independent people in the process while keeping cost down. As a minimum, initial data analysis was performed before the data were translated, and then analysed again afterwards. The key to the analysis of data gathered from the children's structured interviews lies in the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the children's communicative and educational world through observations and other methods used. This has been evidenced by direct quotes and examples from the children themselves.

### ***3.8 Credibility of the research***

Whereas quantitative research typically uses statistical techniques to measure reliability, qualitative research seeks to assess whether the results would be the same if the study was repeated in a similar context with the same or similar research participants. Building on previous development by Guba of criteria of trustworthiness which aimed to provide for qualitative research alternatives to the criteria of objectivity, internal validity, external validity and reliability, Guba and Lincoln (1989) proposed trustworthiness criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) as a means of establishing authenticity. Over time, greater importance has been attached to criteria for assessing the overall impact, relevance, significance, and usefulness of qualitative research. In qualitative research, verification of the research process and findings is demonstrated by documentation of the research processes. When the term internal validity is used in qualitative research, it refers to

the correspondence of participants' perspectives with those of the researcher. Confirmability and credibility is typically demonstrated by cross-checking data from different sources in a technique known as triangulation. In the current study, triangulation of data sources and methods was employed, using questionnaires, interviews and observations with teachers, parents and pupils as well as headteachers and education supervisors. Findings from the engagement with children were considered essential as a cross-check on data from adults. Guba and Lincoln (1989) identified six further ways of assuring credibility: involvement over time (prolonged engagement), persistent observation, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, peer debriefing and member checks. The current study employed sufficient variety and depth in using research methods to meet the criterion of persistent observation. Appropriate detail and depth of data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews with a range of different types of participant, observations and general presence on site during the data collection period.

It can be argued that the current study meets the criterion of negative case analysis because data from each participant group in each school was analyzed independently before attempting compilation of the findings. The data analysis stage involved several revisions and refinements of the original results. The requirement for progressive subjectivity is to monitor researcher bias, which in this study was achieved by the researcher discussing emerging findings and their interpretations with some of the participants and later by the researcher's interpretations being challenged by the research supervisor. During the analysis stage, the researcher frequently checked with a number of adult participants that the data was accurate and that the researcher's interpretations corresponded with participants' own interpretations. Since

it is not possible when investigating a unique phenomenon to generalise the results, qualitative research can be assessed for transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to a similar but different context, although the assessment of transferability largely resides with the person wishing to apply the findings to a different situation.

### ***3.9 Ethical considerations***

There are many ethical principles that should be taken into account while conducting any kind of research. Research ethics are very important and provide researchers with guidelines on how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way (Pring, 2000). The main ethical considerations include negotiating access, gaining informed consent from participants, offering the right to withdraw, protection of identity and confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2000; Christians, 2000; Pring, 2000).

First of all, access to schools to conduct research was arranged with an official letter from the relevant section of the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia. This was done via the Cultural Bureau of Saudi Arabia in the UK and permission was in place in December 2010. This process, however, did not involve ethical approval, nor was there any other process in Saudi Arabia requiring ethical approval. Additionally, letters explaining the purpose of the research together with individual letters of consent were given to all proposed participants including parents (copies are provided in Appendix 4).

#### **3.9.1 Collecting data from children**

There were specific ethical considerations concerning the young children participating in this study. First and foremost, there was the question of child protection which was addressed by the researcher establishing whether a CRB disclosures check was necessary, in compliance with the Institute of Education's ethical framework, for

research in Saudi Arabia; such a check was not required. Next, there was the question of making young children feel comfortable in the presence of a researcher by getting to know the children and to be accepted as an adult who can be trusted as they would trust a teacher before explaining the aims of the research in a language they could understand. Ensuring that children feel they are really being listened to is essential: "genuine and sincere engagement in attentive listening and looking" (Christensen, 2010). Children were asked if they want to take part, even after parental consent was obtained, and were free to withdraw from the process anytime they wanted. All the other usual ethical considerations applied; respect for the individual and the research community. Respect for the individual means confidentiality (information shared only with the thesis supervisor) and all responses coded to assure as far as possible anonymity, explaining to participants exactly how their information will be used by the researcher and how their identity will be protected. Respect for the research community means ensuring that the research is conducted with due regard for research principles, a robust methodology, integrity of data collection and analysis. Finally, respect for participating schools will be assured by sharing findings with them, giving individuals the opportunity to comment on their responses and emerging findings.

One issue relevant to children is that they are not typically given the opportunity to speak with their own voice (Alderson, 2000). Particular attention therefore was given to researching children's views and experiences in a culture where the education system and family setting concentrate on children as vessels into which information is poured and who are not generally entitled to express views and opinions other than to say 'the right thing'. The researcher drew on her own experience as a primary

headteacher in Saudi Arabia and also consulted with practising teachers during the pilot phase to evaluate methods of data collection.

Further issues relevant to children's participation include the fact that adult researchers cannot see the world through the child's eyes and therefore differences in how children say and see things needs careful analysis. Yin (1994) asserts that research with children requires a multidisciplinary approach involving a range of strategies and an innovative approach. Christensen and James (2002, p.2) take a different view: "research with children does not necessarily entail adopting different or particular methods – [...] children can and do participate in structured and unstructured interviews; they fill in questionnaires; and, in their own terms, they allow the participant observer to join with them in their daily lives [...] there is, we would argue, nothing particular or indeed peculiar to children that makes the use of any technique imperative". The current study adopted this viewpoint, which is further supported by Scott (2002) and Christensen (2010), provided that methods are adequate and appropriate. Together with the researcher's personal experience, this indicated that the most appropriate overall data collection instrument for children was structured interviews, supported by additional methods as required to ensure participation, fill gaps or increase numbers of children participating in the study.

Gathering information from pupils in Saudi Arabia presents specific problems in view of their learned approaches to adults, especially in a formal school setting. Cultural constraints mean there is no alternative to the formal context and although it is still essential to develop a relationship of trust with the children the research methods need

to reflect the specific socio-cultural context: “it is important that the way of communicating links with children corresponds to their own cultures of communication” (Christensen, 2010). Research needs to be participant friendly rather than specifically child friendly (Christensen, 2010). Two particular challenges in the current study were the fact that many children were likely to be very shy of communicating with any adult in a manner different from what they have been rigorously taught to date, and the involvement of children with SEN (dyslexia) who may feel uncomfortable due to being perceived as ‘different’ by other children by teachers or by their parents. These potential difficulties were overcome by the use of observations in classrooms and at break times, further supported by a class exercise (‘hands up if you think that...’) which was familiar to the children as a way of responding, and individual children’s drawings of their school friends showing their friends’ names or as a basis for conversation with the researcher. Each school has a mentor (‘pupil guide’) who assists children to overcome any non-educational problems that pose barriers to their learning and achievement and who can help all children to participate. These research methods for the children are consistent with Christensen (2010) who writes about the role of research “composed of encounters that require the researcher to meet the persons (participants) where they are and what they are at”, where the researchers’ closeness to the behaviour being investigated aims to reach an authentic understanding. Moreover, Christensen (2010) highlights the importance of carrying out research *with* children (not *on* children), the role of participant observation and the importance of the researcher as a research tool, including interpretation of data in the light of attentive listening and observations. It should be noted that, in accordance with accepted practice that women should not be recorded because there can be no certainty how those recordings may be used and

women are to be protected from any potentially offensive persons, permission to record interviews was refused. The researcher therefore wrote answers, word for word in Arabic, on the interview guide, one guide for each interviewee, using space available in the margins if there was not enough space allowed for answers.

In practice, access to schools to conduct research can be arranged with an official letter from the relevant section of the Ministry of Education which acts as an instruction to participants to take part. However, this is not sufficient or appropriate to meet ethical standards required of research. Letters explaining the purpose of the research and offering people the opportunity to voice their views on inclusion in primary schools, together with individual letters of consent, were given to schools for copying and distribution to all proposed participants including parents. In addition, letters were given to parents seeking consent for their children to participate. Careful wording of the letters of explanation was necessary in order to promote rather than discourage participation.

Research involving children is not recommended except where the research question is important to the well-being of the children (UCL Research Ethics Committee, <http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/forms/guidance1.pdf>) as the researcher believes was the case here. Inclusion is intended to benefit first and foremost the children but also the wider society. Informed consent by all participants means that the children and their parents had to understand what the study is about and to give consent, parents signing a consent form for their child or children to participate in the study. This meant not



simply issuing a letter for all adults but finding a way of communicating directly with the children, through the headteacher at a school gathering, for example.

All other standard ethical considerations were applied and especially that of respect for the individual and the research community. Respect for the individual required confidentiality (information shared only with the thesis supervisor and thesis assessor) and all responses coded to assure as far as possible anonymity, explaining to participants exactly how their information would be used by the researcher and how their identity would be protected. Respect for the research community meant ensuring that the research was conducted with due regard for research principles, a robust methodology, integrity of data collection and analysis. Finally, respect for participating schools was assured by sharing findings with them, giving individuals the opportunity to comment on their responses and emerging findings to ensure that participants' views had not been misrepresented.

### **3.9.2 Researcher's positionality**

In terms of the researcher's position, being a teacher in Saudi Arabia was helpful to be familiar with the culture and context of the research, although this also raised issues of objectivity and validity. However, some scholars argue that research cannot be free of values and even that the researcher inevitably plays a part in analysis of findings (Bryman, 2004 and Denscombe, 2003). The suggested solution is that the researcher should make their position clear and record where their own comments and interpretations differ from the general findings derived directly from respondents (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000). In this study, the researcher's interpretations

are made clear and professional and emotional challenges faced are reported. For example, on one occasion the researcher was approached by a headteacher for help on an issue related to a teacher, posing an ethical dilemma. As the headteacher was a friend from the researcher's own days as a headteacher, and in view of the cultural expectations that 'a sister will help a sister', it was not appropriate to refuse the request. Furthermore, Bell and Bryman's (2007) ethical principle of reciprocity, an ethical standard regarding the balance of power between the researcher and researched, directly involves the quality of interpersonal relationships in the fieldwork phase because it raises questions about benefits received by participants in return for giving their information and time to the researcher. The researcher's resolution to the dilemmas encountered was found by consideration of the reciprocity principle.

The logistics of data collection were somewhat problematic in respect of planning and timescales. It was understood before starting the fieldwork that selection of schools was not straightforward because the number of inclusive schools was limited as the inclusion policy was still being implemented. It had therefore been planned to discuss and agree suitable schools with the special needs education supervisor. However, although the researcher interviewed the general education supervisor, no special needs education supervisor was in post when the fieldwork started. When the researcher asked the general supervisor to recommend inclusive primary schools for data collection, the supervisor stated that all inclusive schools were helpful and therefore if she recommended one, she would be damaging another school, so told the researcher to choose. Following a short period of confusion in the face of this unexpected reply, the researcher decided to look at the websites for each inclusive school in geographical locations that could be reached. One school stood out as particularly

suitable, at least as a starting point, a school in Buridah city. Buridah had the added advantage of being the area where the researcher was still registered as a teacher, therefore gaining permission to undertake fieldwork was uncomplicated. However, the researcher was staying in her family's city of Alhafer, so had to travel daily to Buridah city, in between caring for her children in the early morning and again when she returned in the late afternoon. This in itself was a challenge. Finding a school to provide the planned contrast between an urban and a rural school presented a different kind of challenge. Although a possible school had been identified in a village about 20 Km outside Buridah, it was extremely difficult to physically find the school. It took two hours, with the help of a caretaker from another girls' primary school before the researcher and her husband managed to actually locate the school due to the absence of road names and signs on schools. After finishing collecting data from these two schools, the researcher had to identify further suitable schools. It was decided to identify a school in another city that could be compared with the first school in Buridah. Alhafer was chosen because it could both provide the desired comparison and minimise travelling time. In sum, challenges related to geographical distance between schools and between school and home (up to 20 Km each way) where no public transport is available and lack of road names and school signs in the village were compounded by Saudi Arabian women not having permission to drive and hence being dependent on the availability and goodwill of male family members.

One of the greatest challenges was collecting the data within the 26 days absence from the course in the UK that is permitted by Saudi authorities. The researcher spent two weeks in two inclusive schools in Buridah city which left only two weeks to collect data from inclusive schools in Alhafer city. At this point, she did not have permission to conduct fieldwork in Alhafer city. The researcher's husband helped her

to get the necessary permission by travelling to Riyadh city to obtain permission quickly and directly from the Ministry of Education (in order to avoid a three week wait). However, the general education supervisor did not know the location of the inclusive schools so the researcher had to use a family contact working in an inclusive school to find out the locations of all the inclusive schools in Alhafer. It is typical in research in Saudi Arabia to use informal networks to support the process. Having identified two potentially suitable schools, the researcher waited a further three days to obtain permission to conduct the necessary fieldwork. In the end, the visits to schools were completed just one day before the date of return to the UK. In other words, time management was made very difficult by a combination of protracted permission procedures, a lack of information about inclusive schools in one town and strict time limits for data collection determined by the Ministry of Education.

### ***3.10 Conclusion***

This chapter has set out the epistemological stance (constructionism), the theoretical perspective, the methodology (case study) and the research methods that were employed in the current study. The choice of research methods has been described and justified: structured interviews which contain a number of open questions were used with all but one group of participants, a semi-structured interview was used with the district supervisor of general education, two additional methods of a class activity and individual drawings were employed with children to take account that children with learning difficulties might need alternative ways of expressing themselves, documentary analysis was undertaken and observations of classroom practice and break times were used to confirm, reject or supplement data generated by

the other methods. The research design has been shown to exhibit coherence across the levels identified by Crotty (2007) and to have an appropriate choice of research methods for the current study. In addition, the sample selection criteria have been explained and data collection methods justified, together with the approach to data analysis. Finally, careful consideration has been given to the ethical issues involved.

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## **Chapter Four RESULTS**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

This chapter presents the results from qualitative data analyses under four key thematic headings; inclusion, teaching strategies and the curriculum, school ethos and collaboration, and leadership, training and resources. The themes were based on key concepts identified in the literature review, with additional themes being added as they emerged from the thematic analysis. Each theme is divided into sub-themes, outlined at the start of each section. The Saudi Arabian context presented in chapter 3 assists understanding of the findings. It should be noted that initial analysis took place in Arabic before translation into English to ensure that meaning was not changed due to language translation issues. This and other challenges faced by the researcher are discussed towards the end of the chapter. In conclusion, a brief summary of the most important findings sets the scene for the discussion in the following chapter.

The analysis process began by transcribing interview responses in Arabic, during and immediately after the interviews. When data collection was complete, individual transcripts were divided into chunks of meaning. This was done systematically by groups of participant, from education supervisors through headteachers, general and SEN teachers to parents and children. Following analysis of all responses, coded responses

were compiled by theme. Table 4.1 sets out the analysis framework (on 4 pages) by themes, participants and data collection methods.

**Table 4.1 Themes by participants and data collection methods**

Theme	Subtheme	Participants and Method of data collection
<b>INCLUSION</b>	<b>The meaning of inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of inclusion</li> <li>• Access to general education and accessing the same curriculum with additional support</li> <li>• Catering for individual differences</li> </ul> <b>Perceptions of ideal model of inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus understanding of inclusion</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Availability of specialist human resources and inclusion as a gradual and learner responsive process</li> </ul>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd-GT-ST-GS-SS- parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) - children (with SEN- without SEN). <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground <b>Interviews:</b> Hd-GT-ST-GS-SS - parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) - children (with SEN- without SEN). <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
	<b>Teachers' and parents' attitudes to inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' attitudes</li> <li>• Parents' attitudes</li> </ul>	<b>Interviews:</b> GT-ST <b>Telephone Interviews</b> parents (of children with SEN-and without SEN) <b>Children:</b> (with SEN- without SEN) – hands up exercise – drawings.
	<b>Benefits of inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-esteem and sense of belonging</li> <li>• Social interaction and friendships, soft skills development, learning through modelling of appropriate behaviour</li> </ul>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd-GT-ST-SG-SS- children (with SEN - without SEN) <b>Telephone Interviews</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN)
	<b>Suitability of inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education suitability</li> <li>• Emotional and social suitability</li> </ul>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd-GT-ST-SG-SS <b>Telephone Interviews</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN)
<b>Key: Hd= headteacher GT= General teacher ST= SEN teacher SG = General supervisor SS= SEN supervisor</b>		



**Table 4.1 Themes by participants and data collection methods (continued)**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Participations and Method of data collection</b>
<b>TEACHING STRATEGIES AND THE CURRICULUM</b>	<b>Classroom strategies</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd-GT-ST-GS-SS <b>Telephone Interviews:</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
	<b>Curriculum</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd-GT-ST-GS-SS <b>Telephone interviews:</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
<b>Key: Hd= headteacher GT= General teacher ST= SEN teacher SG = General supervisor SS= SEN supervisor</b>		

**Table 4.1 Themes by participants and data collection methods (continued)**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Method of data collection</b>
<b>SCHOOL ETHOS AND COLLABORATION</b>	<b>School ethos</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd-GT-ST-GS-SS and children (with SEN and without SEN). <b>Telephone Interviews:</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
	<b>Collaboration</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd- GT-ST-GS-SS – children (with SEN and without SEN). <b>Telephone Interviews :</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
	<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd- GT-ST-GS-SS– children (with SEN and without SEN). <b>Telephone Interviews:</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
<b>Key: Hd= headteacher GT= General teacher ST= Special education needs teacher SG = General supervisor SS= Special education needs supervisor</b>		

**Table 4.1 Themes by participants and data collection methods (continued)**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Method of data collection</b>
<b>LEADERSHIP, TRAINING AND RESOURCES</b>	<b>Leadership</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> GT-ST-GS-SS <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
	<b>Training</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd- GT-ST-GS-SS <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground
	<b>Resources</b> <b>(Physical environment, human resources and infrastructure)</b>	<b>Interviews:</b> Hd- GT-ST-GS-SS <b>Telephone interviews:</b> parents (of children with SEN and without SEN) <b>Observations:</b> classroom + playground

## ***4.2 Inclusion***

The theme of inclusion comprised five sub-themes; the meaning and practices of inclusion, teachers' and parents' attitudes and views concerning inclusion, benefits, suitability of and barriers to inclusion. Inclusion was mainly conceptualised in terms of physical location, as access to general education and the same curriculum with additional support. Participants highlighted that an ideal model of inclusion would be based on a consensus about what inclusion is and how it should be implemented, be a gradual and learner responsive process supported by specialist human resources and with appropriate training for everyone involved. Teachers and parents were found to hold attitudes which were generally positive towards inclusion, and they shared headteachers' and education supervisors' views about the benefits of inclusion for children with SEN, i.e. increased self-esteem and a stronger sense of belonging, social interaction and friendships, soft skills development and learning through modelling of appropriate behaviour. In other words, inclusion was considered suitable for children with learning difficulties in terms of both education and emotional and social suitability.

### **4.2.1 The meaning and practices of inclusion**

Headteachers, teachers, parents and education supervisors were asked to reflect on the multiple meanings of inclusion (for example through questions such as "What does inclusion mean to you?"). The responses from teachers contained words 'general education', 'access' or 'accessing', 'learn' or 'learning' which were all grouped together after several readings of the texts into 'access to general education'. Some

responses with these words also contained 'all children', 'SEN [and/with] other children', while other responses contained these words but also 'same classroom' but not 'general education' and vice versa. It should be noted that the term SEN was taken by most participants to mean children with learning difficulties, of whom the majority were either assessed or taught as dyslexic, and/or children assessed as having SLD if the school had special classes for these children. No assumption was made that sitting in the same classroom was the same as accessing the general curriculum. Individual responses that contained distinctive words or phrases not repeated by any other participant were coded separately, for instance 'same curriculum [...] with support' and 'catering for individual differences'. An analysis of all responses from all groups of participants except the children showed there were seven broad meanings attached to the definition of inclusion. These were: physical inclusion (all children learning in the same classroom), access to general education, partial inclusion, catering for individual differences, accessing the same curriculum with additional support, reducing the educational deficit caused by learning difficulties and normalization.

Both education supervisors, 5 of the special needs teachers and five general teachers stated that inclusion meant all children learning in the same classroom at least some of the time. One general teacher said "including pupils who have learning difficulties and difficulties to get information from their teachers with other pupils in the normal classroom" (S3GT2). This view was shared by 2 of the 5 parents whose children were assessed as having special needs, for example "including SEN pupils with pupils without SEN in the regular classroom, and SEN pupils sharing classroom activities" (S1PS4, School 1 parent of child with SEN 4) and 3 of the parents of children in

general education, as in "enrolling SEN pupils in the general classroom to learn and participate with pupils without SEN in social, psychological and academic aspects" (S1P4, School 1 parent 4). However, the headteachers understood inclusion as physical location in general schools rather than in classrooms.

The headteacher of school 1 limited inclusion to "all children whose IQ ranges between average and more than average in general schools" (H1).

Other responses were "including pupils who have SEN in normal school to take the academic and social benefit" (H2), "including pupils with SEN in general school" (H3) and "including pupils who have SEN in general school to develop their abilities and skills like pupils without SEN and to work to include SEN pupils socially through being in general school" (H4).

Whereas just over half of general teachers stated that inclusion meant access to general education, one-fifth of special needs teachers agreed on this point. Numbers of parents are too small to draw conclusions, but parents whose children were assessed as having special needs may see this as less immediately relevant, perhaps because this is the first and only opportunity their children may have had to access any education therefore the type of education is of a lesser consideration, or because they particularly value the individual help provided by the special needs teacher. The two education supervisors interpreted the meaning of inclusion as giving SEN pupils opportunities to learn in a general school. "According to my knowledge, inclusion means including SEN pupils in general schools to meet their needs and take their chance in general schools like general pupils" (GS, General Education Supervisor) and "For me, inclusion means educating pupils who have SEN through the

opportunity to learn in a general school” (SS, Special Education Supervisor). However, whilst some general teachers were enthusiastic about having all pupils learning in one classroom, others were reluctant to go this far. The importance of support provided in pullout sessions was recognized, for instance in describing inclusion as “including pupils with learning with pupils without learning difficulties in a normal classroom, taking into account that LD pupils will have support from LD teachers” (S3GT1, School 3, General Teacher 1). Some were concerned for the pupils with SEN, saying for example “include SEN pupils just in activities lessons to avoid embarrassing them in front of other pupils when they learn in an inclusive classroom” (S3GT4), while at least one general teacher was concerned for herself and her teaching. In school 1, the resource room was also used by other children; “sometimes we use this room for watching a video telling a story for all my pupils” (S1GT1), a practical example of translating theory of inclusion into practice by using the space as a resource for all pupils and not only those with special needs.

The concept of inclusion as catering for individual differences was raised by only one general teacher: “Inclusion means including pupils who have learning difficulties with their peers in the general classroom, taking into account individual difference” (S4GT2). This may be perhaps due to a widespread unfamiliarity with differentiation among experienced in-service teachers at the present time, as initial teacher education has only recently introduced within-class differentiation as distinct from streaming and setting by ability in a system where children could repeat a year once or more with younger pupils until they reached the standard for the year. In contrast to general teachers, special needs teachers work mainly on Individual Educational Plans (IEPs),

using group plans where two to four learners have the same objectives and needs on their IEPs. For more than 1 in 10 of all teachers, inclusion meant “reducing the educational deficit due to learning difficulties” (mentioned by three general teachers and two special needs teachers), a more child-centred view than that of the normalization of pupils mentioned by one special needs teacher. The latter is firmly focused on making the child fit into the norms of school and society, a viewpoint which indicates that there remain traces of the deficit model of SEN applied in schools. The foregoing quotes suggest that some teachers lack a common understanding of the meaning of inclusion. However, all participants understood inclusion in terms of children with SEN, as in “from my view, inclusion means inclusion in general school between SEN pupils and pupils without SEN” (S4GT3, School 4 General Teacher 3) and “inclusion means for me that there are SEN pupils in my daughter’s class to learn in regular school” (S1P5, School 1 parent 5). This type of response suggests they automatically discounted co-education, gifted and talented children and children from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds, either because of their own socially constructed assumptions or because they were influenced by the researcher’s interest in girls assessed as having learning difficulties which led to bias in their responses. It is interesting that most participants used SEN and LD interchangeably much of the time, possibly because they had had more exposure to children with learning difficulties than any other category of SEN, or perhaps because they were much less comfortable as well as less familiar with other forms of SEN. Specific unprompted responses related to dyslexic pupils were given by a single teacher in school 1 (S1ST1). Responses may also reflect the simple fact that only one general teacher in all of the five schools had received any training about inclusion or SEN pupils.



#### **4.2.2 An ideal model of inclusion**

In order to investigate how practices might differ from aspirations, participants were asked about their ideal model of inclusion. Responses generated five subthemes: consensus on inclusion, training, availability of specialists, human resources and inclusion as a gradual and learner-responsive process. Shared meaning was most frequently mentioned (by 7 out of 10 teachers), closely followed by gradual process, the latter illustrated by:

"For me, ideal inclusion begins with the inclusion of pupils who are similar in their abilities and skills and age regardless of their disabilities in a special class, providing this class with everything such as special teachers, education materials, and then include SEN pupils in inclusive classrooms, to ensure that all pupils in the school will accept them" (S4GT1, School 4 General Teacher 1).

Resources and availability of specialists were mentioned by just over half of both general and special needs teachers, and training by one quarter. "We should have all the skills, abilities and special teachers required" (S2GT4). General teachers highlighted the importance of the school being ready in every respect to educate all pupils. "Teachers [need to be] prepared already for inclusion" (S2GT3) with "all the support they need for inclusion, development of pupils' abilities, skills with different activities" (S5ST2, School 5 Special Needs Teacher 2). The availability of specialists to support all staff was mentioned by a larger proportion of special needs than general teachers, suggesting that they too feel less prepared for the challenges that inclusion brings.

"Ideal inclusion should develop for all pupils and cultivate all skills, abilities and important knowledge with participation of all pupils in different activities, and everything should be enhanced by professionals to develop inclusion for all pupils in different activities" (S1ST3).

This interpretation is supported by the fact that 9 out of 10 special needs teachers, compared with just under 4 out of 10 general teachers, saw sufficient education aids as an essential component of ideal inclusion: "having everything like education aids, specialist teachers, to encourage inclusion to enhance teachers to do their best to implement successful inclusion" (S3ST1). There was more frequent mention of education for stakeholders in an inclusive school than of training for teachers in particular. A typical response from teachers was "For me, ideal inclusion is where all participants in inclusion have been educated and have raised awareness of inclusion to ensure that ideal inclusion operates in practice" (S1GT1). Two further ideas were associated with ideal inclusion, namely resources including human resources and premises, as illustrated in the following quotes:

Ideal inclusion means, provide the school with all the education aids, materials, to help teachers do their work, and provide them with full staff such as specialist teachers, professionals, helping teachers to all work together, collaborating as a full team to help SEN pupils" (S5ST1).

"Ideal inclusion... includes all pupils in a suitable school building and provides them with all the various supports they need for inclusion, development of pupils' abilities, and skills in different activities" (S5ST2).

Findings from observations and encounters with children shed further light on the practices of inclusion in the sample schools. There had been problems in some

schools when inclusion was first introduced. As one teacher said, “one of the pupils with learning difficulties refused to go to the resource room. When I asked the pupil why she did not want to go there, she said ‘all pupils tell me "you are a stupid pupil because you always you go to the resource room" so I do not like to go to the resource room [...] I really struggled with my pupils, but nowadays everything has changed’”. Preparation and careful introduction of inclusive practices were seen as key to reducing negative feelings by general teachers. Some teachers recognized that inclusion would require a major shift towards learner-responsive education. Observations indicated areas where practices would benefit from further development, in particular concerning the availability and use of education aids and the need for a learner- and school-responsive process of inclusion. Although the official procedure is for a school to be invited and to formally respond in writing to become an inclusive school, in one instance inclusion had been implemented without this, leaving the school with no chance of being prepared for inclusion. Underlying the comments about resources were concerns about the speed and appropriateness of response on the part of education supervisors and the Ministry of Education (MoE) to requests for training and resources. The next section reports the findings concerning teachers’ and parents’ attitudes to inclusion.

#### **4.2.3 Teachers’ attitudes**

Most teachers understood inclusion in their school as a sense of belonging, educationally, socially and academically, typically expressed in terms of family values and expectations in statements such as “As for my class, they feel like a big family, as I always I advise them to help, share, respect each other, all the pupils in

our classroom” (S2GT1, School 1, General Teacher 1). In another statement, “I encourage my pupils to feel like a big family”(S2GT1). “I advise my pupils to deal with each other kindly, especially with LD pupils, also I encourage them to feel like family members" (S1ST5, School 1 Special Needs Teacher 5). However, it was evident that this approach to inclusion among teachers would probably be described as a form of integration by British academics and teachers because the education policy of Saudi Arabia specifies separate classes some or all of the time for many children with SEN. Although general teachers accepted that pupils with dyslexia needed separate classes in the resource room at least some of the time, they were doing their best to enable pupils with learning difficulties to participate in lessons in the inclusive classroom and were keen to create and promote further opportunities for social and educational interaction between pupils. One asserted “Teachers will help LD pupils to develop their skills, and to participate in education activities in the classroom to develop their skills and abilities like other pupils” (S2GT1). Another general teacher said "I encourage inclusion by encouraging all pupils to collaborate with LD pupils, I usually use simple meaning strategies, and use strategies addressing dynamic mental abilities to make my lesson easy and understandable” (S3GT4). General teachers who considered that pupils with severe learning difficulties should be taught separately were a minority. However, reservations were greater regarding children with more severe learning difficulties and disabilities, as in the following quotes. Both these quotes can be seen on one level as providing logical explanations based on protection of the majority of pupils, although on another level they can be seen to be based on the teachers’ fear of failure in the classroom.

"My view is, inclusion is for all pupils, with SEN or without SEN, but the nature of some SEN categories prevents us from including them, like SLD pupils who have aggressive behaviour, or epilepsy" (S1ST3)

"Based on my experience, it depends on their disabilities, for example pupils who have severe disabilities - we cannot include them because their effect will be negative - however we can include pupils who have simple, moderate disabilities" (S4ST1)

The teacher who considered that inclusion meant normalization, in other words minimization of behaviours obviously different from that of most children, was in a minority of one.

All teachers were asked to reflect on the effect an SEN child's presence had on the classroom as a whole and how positive they personally felt about teaching children with SEN. Overall, teachers felt the SEN children's presence had a positive impact on both behaviour and academic attainment as shown in Table 4.2. Regarding academic attainment, these tables indicate, perhaps unsurprisingly, slightly more concern from general teachers, compared to more 'very positive' responses from special needs teachers.

**Table 4.2      Effect of inclusion on behaviour and on academic attainment**

<b>Question</b>	<b>very positive</b>	<b>fairly positive</b>	<b>I do not know</b>	<b>fairly negative</b>	<b>very negative</b>
<b>What effect does the SEN child's presence have on behaviour in the regular classroom?</b>	<b>10 GT</b>  <b>4 ST</b>	<b>9 GT</b>  <b>6 ST</b>	<b>3 GT</b>  <b>0</b>	<b>1 GT</b>  <b>0</b>	<b>0</b>  <b>0</b>
<b>What effect does the SEN child's presence have on academic attainment in the regular classroom?</b>	<b>10 GT</b>  <b>6 ST</b>	<b>8 GT</b>  <b>3 ST</b>	<b>2 GT</b>  <b>1 ST</b>	<b>3 GT</b>  <b>0</b>	<b>0</b>  <b>0</b>
<b>Key: GT = General teacher ( 23) ST = Special needs teachers (10)</b>					

Half of the special needs teachers thought that the "regular classroom is an important place for all pupils to develop and improve education achievement for all pupils" (S1ST5, School 1, SEN Teacher 5), in particular aspects of formal education (S2ST1) and academic achievement (S3ST1). Asked directly how positive they felt about teaching children with SEN, most of the general teachers and all of the special needs teachers said they were very or fairly positive. Observations of classroom and playground supported the findings regarding positive attitudes among general teachers (school 4) and special needs teachers (school 1).

Teachers recognised that expectations played a role in pupils' achievements. Although not measured in any systematic way, some general teachers believed that the academic attainment of pupils with special needs improved in an inclusive classroom, provided they had additional support, individual support in school and support in developing study habits at home

"In inclusive classrooms, children with and without disabilities are expected to learn to read, write and do maths. With higher expectations and good instruction, children with disabilities learn academic skills" (S3GT1). Children with SEN are more likely to "develop their abilities and skills like other pupils without learning difficulties" (S4GT2). If "they attend general school every day, they are gaining good education habits" (S5GT2).

The important influence of teachers' attitudes on pupils was highlighted by some of the teachers, as in these two contrasting responses:

"I think the attitudes of other pupils depend on their teachers, because some teachers in our school accept pupils with severe learning difficulties in their classroom, and I notice that their pupils liked our SLD pupils, and in general SLD pupils would say whether they enjoyed a lesson in an inclusive classroom. If they did not, a typical reply was "it was not exciting, the teacher shouted at us 'do that, do not do that'" therefore "pupils' attitudes from my point of view depend on their teachers' attitudes" (S1ST3, School 1 special needs teacher 3).

"Including the severely disabled is too difficult, I cannot teach them, so I will not accept them, this would affect the class in two ways. On one side, if I do not accept them, this will affect my pupils' attitudes, then all pupils in my classroom will not accept them, so this will impact on their [children with severe disabilities] psychology, maybe they will hate the school. On the other side my teaching would be affected, I would not be able to teach them in a regular classroom" (S5GT3, School 5 general teacher 3).

Supporting evidence for teachers' influence came from school 2, where relationships were less straightforward, with some pupils complaining about their teachers. During interviews with pupils, it was said that teachers dealt with them as if they were "a table without feeling"; some children (the whole class) wanted to change some teachers, especially one teacher who, in their view and in their own words, hated them. Despite the overall positive attitude towards pupils with learning difficulties, there remained reservations about accommodating pupils with severe learning difficulties in regular classrooms. One general teacher said "I do not like to teach SLD pupils in my classroom" (S1GT2). Although teachers accepted that pupils with dyslexia needed separate classes in the resource room at least some of the time, they were doing their best to enable pupils with learning difficulties to participate in lessons in the inclusive classroom and were keen to create and promote further opportunities for social and educational interaction between pupils. One general teacher stated "skills we should use in inclusive classrooms are for example sensory aids and thinking aids, or anything to develop a pupil's abilities" (S2GT4) while another maintained that "to try to include LD pupils with pupils without LD in the



classroom, teachers should read and educate themselves about how to teach classes with LD pupils” (S3GT1). Observations in all schools indicated that more training and resources at the right time to prepare for inclusion would strengthen teachers’ positive attitudes.

Through observations, lack of collaboration was noted between general and special needs teachers, which the researcher attributes in great part to the 30% salary incentive paid extra to special needs teachers. Whilst this has been praised for helping to attract sufficient specialist teachers and acknowledging the value of their work (IBE-UNESCO, 2007), it is causing resentment among general teachers who are expected to manage inclusive classrooms with more pupils, more lessons, no training and lower salaries. In every school, several general teachers sought an opportunity to speak to the researcher about these issues, at the end of an interview or observation, or informal exchange during a break. In contrast, during the whole period of data collection, the researcher saw few instances of collaboration between general and special needs teachers and almost all concerned a specific pupil. In the researcher’s view, by creating a permanent salary differential between general and special needs teachers, this financial incentive now acts as an additional barrier to further progress with inclusion and the resentment felt by general teachers carries a risk of negatively affecting their attitudes toward inclusion.

#### **4.2.4 Parents' attitudes**

The parents sample was very small because, out of the 20 parents identified, only 10 agreed to be interviewed in person or by telephone. Five parents of children without SEN and 5 parents of children with SEN participated in the study. All participating parents had children at school 1, the school in the area of highest overall level of parental education and household income out of the three school locations in the study. Parents were asked to reflect on how important inclusion was for their own child: twice as many parents of children with SEN said inclusion was very important for their child.

The consensus view was positive, as indicated in Table 4.3. As a parent stated, "My attitude toward inclusion is very positive, I like inclusion, because inclusion helps SEN pupils, so I would like to participate in this helping process" (S1GP3, School 1, parent of child without special needs). Another parent affirmed, "My attitude towards inclusion is very positive, I like inclusion, inclusion helps my daughter to change for the better" (S1SP4, School 1, parent of child with special needs). Parents' comments on their daughters' relationships with their teachers and elements of the school ethos substantiated this and are reported under relevant themes. However, it should be noted that in 4 out of the 5 schools, parents declined to take part in the research. This means that the results are not representative of how all parents approached feel about inclusion. It is a snapshot of how mainly middle class, educated parents feel about inclusion. Within this snapshot, one of the parents of children without SEN was concerned that inclusion would negatively affect other children stating "from my point of view, inclusion does not help LD pupils, I think we should have special

classes for LD pupils, because there are individual differences between pupils, so including LD pupils will take time from teachers in inclusive classrooms. Other pupils will not have their opportunities in the class" (S1GP1).

**Table 4.3 Teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Very positive</b>	<b>fairly positive</b>	<b>I do not know</b>	<b>Fairly negative</b>	<b>Very negative</b>
<b>Teachers' attitudes</b>	8 GT 8 ST	11 GT 2 ST	1 GT	3 GT	
<b>Parents' attitudes</b>	2 GP 4 SP	2 GP 1 SP		1 GP	
<b>Key: GT = General teacher ST = Special needs teachers GP = parent of child without SEN SP = parent of child with SEN</b>					

In the researcher's view, the refusal of many parents to participate in this study may be due to a non-acceptance and a sense of stigmatisation that disability brings in a homogenous society. Among Saudi nationals, this is strongly reinforced by the traditional Bedouin value of conformity within and outside the family grouping (Patai, 2002) and further reinforced by a lack of education in general and lack of understanding of SEN and inclusion in particular. Among non-nationals, concern to blend into Saudi society without attracting unnecessary attention is also a prime consideration.

#### **4.2.5 Benefits of inclusion**

The benefits of inclusion for pupils with special needs were widely acknowledged. However, little was said about the perceived benefits for pupils without learning

difficulties, so it is likely that most teachers consider inclusion to be a one way street. Teachers were asked in what ways a child with SEN benefits from regular education, while headteachers were asked whether they thought inclusion helps pupils with SEN to improve their school work and whether they have noticed any other effects. Responses indicated that some teachers viewed the benefits holistically. Social interaction in the classroom could improve academic attainment and life skills. Social and emotional benefits could derive from reducing apparent differences between SEN pupils and others. In sum, responses on the benefits of inclusion are reported under four headings; self-esteem and sense of belonging, social participation and friendships, soft skills development and learning through modelling of appropriate behaviour.

### **Self-esteem and sense of belonging**

A sense of belonging in Islam promotes a balanced view of self-esteem, referred to as the self-concept in most participant responses, which avoids both undervaluing and overvaluing oneself. A strong sense of belonging to a specifically Saudi Arabian Islamic society is inculcated firstly through family life and then through education, the two being mutually reinforcing. A sense of self-worth was seen as an important factor for promoting inclusion. Headteachers considered the main social and emotional benefits to SEN pupils to be that they “develop an acceptance of self” (H1, Headteacher school 1), while SLD pupils gain self-reliance (S3ST1, School 3 Special Needs Teacher 1). “Pupils with severe learning difficulties are gaining self confidence from pupils without SLD” (S1ST4, School 1 Special Needs Teacher 4). Similar

responses were given by the education supervisors, who incorporated a number of perspectives into a single reply, stating:

“There are many educational benefits for pupils with SEN in general schools, such as developing their personality to be like normal pupils... it helps SEN pupils to feel like regular pupils. Inclusion will give SEN pupils the chance to do similar things to regular pupils at school” (GS, General Education Supervisor).

Psychological benefits identified by general teachers included "LD pupils develop a positive understanding of themselves and others, when pupils attend classes that reflect the similarities and differences of pupils in the real world" (S5GT3, School 5, General Teacher 3). Special teachers also emphasized the psychological benefits of inclusion, saying it helps “pupils with SEN to improve their self-concept” (S1ST2). Even the special needs teacher who referred several times to normalization of pupils with severe learning difficulties observed that inclusive education “improves interaction and development of the self-concept” (S1ST5). The education supervisors stressed the importance of the psychological benefits. The general education supervisor commented “There are a lot of psychological benefits like developing self-confidence in SEN pupils, and increasing their self-esteem” (GS, General Education Supervisor). Belonging was seen in terms of feelings as well as participating in shared activities: “pupils with learning difficulties feeling like members of a group inside their classroom or outside their school in social activities” (S4GT2, School 4, General Teacher 2). One point of interest is that all the children interviewed thought that everyone in their class should learn the same things at the same time, highlighting the

importance for children of ‘fitting in’ and ‘belonging’ through a process of reducing difference.

### **Social participation and friendships**

Important elements of fitting in and belonging were social interaction and friendships, soft skills development and learning through modelling of appropriate behaviour. Links were often made between psychological and social benefits, as in the following response: “for example, they learn from other pupils how to accept foreign pupils and make friends with them, all pupils without SLD like the SLD pupils and accept them” (S1ST4). Communication and collaboration, both of which were highlighted, can be seen as part social skills and part psychological development. General teachers believed there were clear social benefits for children with SEN, “taking [SEN pupils] away from isolation” (S1GT1) and helping them to gain acceptance from other pupils, although “in the beginning, they do not accept them, but they do over time. Pupils without SEN improve in their interactions with the SEN pupils through collaboration” (S1GT2). Opportunities for social participation and development were seen to include working together on homework, even improving their speech difficulties in their efforts to communicate with others (S2GT3). “The social benefits are for example, increasing the normalization of SLD pupils, and improving interaction and development of their self-concept, also SEN pupils will learn social skills when participating with other pupils, such as how to deal with pupils or school staff” (SS, Special Education Supervisor). One special needs teacher referred to the importance of helping pupils with SEN to “become pupils active in school and real life” (S5ST1), although another spoke of “increasing the normalization of SEN pupils, by pupils learning from being together” (S5ST2, School 5 Special Needs Teacher 2). Another

special needs teacher noted the interaction of social and academic benefits, suggesting that SEN pupils were spurred on by their friends: "learning difficulties pupils are getting all worked up like their friends. I think this is the biggest motivation, to learn as quickly as their friends" (S1ST4). Possibilities of making friends, with children in their class and other classes, were mentioned by more than half of the special needs teachers. There were no major differences between general and special needs teachers' views of the social benefits of inclusion. Headteachers described the main benefit as "their contributions to social activities". When headteachers were also asked "what effects on children without SEN do you notice? (academic, psychological, social)", responses focused on the positive effects of inclusion on children with special needs. Both education supervisors also emphasized the social benefits of inclusion. However, observations in the playground recorded that whilst almost all learning difficulties pupils talked and played together with general pupils at break times, almost all pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) were left out, perhaps because these pupils were more readily identifiable as 'different'. This could be because they have lessons in separate classrooms, and because their socialization skills are relatively less developed, or because of underlying bias against 'stupid pupils' which some of their peers have gained from their own families' traditional views and the value of conformity in Saudi society.

### **Soft skills**

It was felt that all pupils could benefit from soft skills development as a result of inclusion. Statements made by general teachers included "pupils learn from each other

about how to deal with other pupils, and help the SEN pupils to learn life skills" (S1GT2), such as "how to respect other pupils in their class" (S2GT4). Special needs teachers strongly emphasized the benefits of inclusion regarding soft skills development for all children, stating

"Because the philosophy of inclusive education is aimed at helping all pupils - with and without SEN - to learn, everyone in the class benefits from inclusive classroom, also all children learn by being together, pupils with SEN and without SEN learn with and from each other in inclusive classes" (S1ST1, School 1 Special Needs Teacher1).

Children with SEN were seen to be the main beneficiaries of inclusion. They learn how to "deal with teachers, other pupils, the head teacher, so they learn everything from other pupils, and they get attainment in life skills by attending inclusive classrooms" (S1ST2). "They develop and cultivate their skills, abilities, and level of education" (S1ST3). Much of their soft skills development was attributed to a behaviour modelling process, in terms of observing and modelling the behaviour of their typically developing peers.

### **Modelling appropriate behaviour**

Another benefit of inclusion is exposure to teachers and regular pupils as role models. The modelling of behaviour is associated with views such as "Education benefits for SEN pupils in a general school [...] improvements in behaviour, gaining skills, participating with other pupils in educational activities" (S1GT1). Another general teacher said "gaining good habits from pupils without SEN inside the school environment" (S2GT4). One parent stated "the LD pupils learn some of basic skills



from other pupils for example, how to keep themselves and their clothes clean, also they learn life skills like how to greet their friends” (S1GP5). Modelling behaviour could also extend to educational activities. This is evidenced in some of the drawings collected from the children, where there was very little difference between the pictures produced, see examples in figures 4.1 and 4.2.

Figure 4.1 My friend



Figure 4.2 My friend.



It can be seen in terms of the detail (features) that the two drawings are similar, despite differences in choosing to use colour or giving more attention to some features than others.

A teacher working with children with severe learning difficulties added that her pupils were “trying to study similarly to pupils without SEN” (S1ST5). This view was echoed by the SEN education supervisor who said,

“The educational benefits are SEN pupils gaining education skills from pupils without SEN. Learning difficulties pupils are learning like their friends through educational activities and from the advice and help from general teachers” (SS).

Recognition was also given to the critical role of the general teacher in “helping them to overcome their difficulties and improve their achievement” (S5ST1, School 5, Special Needs Teacher 1). Headteachers held similar views: the main educational benefit was that inclusion into regular classrooms “Improves their [SEN pupils’] level of academic attainment” (H2). The majority of general teachers perceived they had a clear role to play in providing appropriate support and model ways of engaging with school activities (S1GT1, S2GT1, S2GT2), for instance by “teaching them how to study at home” (S2GT5) and setting higher expectations.

#### **4.2.6 Suitability of inclusion for all children**

When headteachers and teachers were asked to rate the suitability of the regular school environment, from educational, psychological and social perspectives, for children with SEN, most teachers felt that the regular classroom environment was very or fairly suitable in all respects. Teachers were also asked to justify whether they thought all children could be included. In addition, they were asked if the severity of a

child's disability made a difference to including them and, if so, how. The education supervisors were specifically asked whether they considered inclusion to be a viable practice for all categories of SEN. The general supervisor whose role is to oversee all aspects of general education in a particular district, felt it was "difficult to include for example deaf, blind and physically disabled because they need special care from their teachers" whereas the SEN supervisor agreed that "it depends on their disabilities and the provision which we have to meet their needs such as special teachers, professionals, premises etc. If we can meet the SEN pupils' needs, we can include them". The challenges of including children with severe SEN were articulated along with concerns about general teachers' capacity to provide for these children, stating "teachers will struggle to teach and accept SEN pupils in inclusive classrooms", premises (SG), "school staff, provision for SEN, also the parents of pupils without SEN" (SS). Taken together, these views suggest that inclusion is seen as suitable when it is relatively straightforward, as it might be for children with learning difficulties, and that, in contrast to the general supervisor, the special education supervisor sees inclusion as suitable for children with a wider range of disabilities. It is telling that the general education supervisors sees general teachers as facing challenges to including children with SLD and other severe SEN, reinforcing the need identified earlier for awareness raising and training programmes, as well as for wider cultural changes regarding disability and how persons with disability are perceived.

Two of the four headteachers considered that the regular school environment (understood as 'atmosphere' or ambience rather than physical environment) was quite suitable for children with special needs and two considered it to be very suitable. The

majority of general and special needs teachers said it was very or quite suitable. Nobody felt that the regular school environment was not suitable for children with SEN. Responses regarding the psychological suitability of regular education for children with special needs were very slightly less positive, with one headteacher saying it was not very suitable, although it was recognized that many children with special needs were improving their self-concept and that the inclusive school provided a socially suitable environment.

#### **4.3 Teaching strategies and the curriculum**

The suitability of regular education for children with special needs depends as heavily on the content and methods of teaching and learning as on the type of disability (the individual-medical model versus the social model). This section reports findings on the teaching skills, strategies and the curriculum for teaching in the inclusive classroom, as well as reflections on the education policy and curriculum, morals and religion in Saudi society. Whilst some general teachers knew what teaching and classroom management strategies were required for effective teaching and learning in inclusive classrooms, they were typically finding it difficult to put into practice. Some of the general teachers knew what they needed to do to teach effectively in an inclusive classroom but struggled to actually do it.

"For myself, I have the skills, but there is not enough time to do everything for LD pupils, and I have a lot of pupils without SEN in my classroom, so I have to give all the pupils their chance in the lesson"

(S1GT4)

"I have skills but not from training, rather from my experience in general teaching - we can do the best if we have a suitable environment, small numbers of pupils and enough education aids" (S4GT2).

Furthermore, many of the more experienced teachers have not been exposed to modern and flexible teaching strategies.

#### **4.3.1 Classroom strategies**

There was a broad consensus among general teachers that the essentials for teaching in an inclusive classroom were a wide range of simple teaching methods, variety in the use of educational aids, strong differentiation and cooperative learning, in addition to an understanding of the needs of pupils with SEN. Also highlighted were "continuous follow up of all their pupils", "management of the inclusive classroom" (S1GT1), consulting the appropriate specialist teacher, and using various forms of groupwork. Some general teachers used a variety of teaching strategies in the classroom: "I use strategies like, exploration activities in which pupils learn how to explore and work as a team" (S2GT3). Teamwork was raised in terms of collaboration by one teacher, for instance "doing some exercises in the school book as a group, each pupil in the group should participate, their participation does not necessitate them being right" (S4GT2). Using a variety of teaching strategies "help[s] in dealing with some psychological difficulties experienced by pupils like their embarrassment when they participate with their friends in an inclusive classroom" (S2GT1). The importance of encouragement and praise was also recognized. Particular reference was made to strategies such "group dialogues" (S4GT3), "cooperative learning groups

[... and] group activities” (S5GT3), although the researcher’s classroom observations found that traditional desk-and-chair furniture and class sizes could make it very difficult to employ such strategies. Further detailed suggestions were the use of “sensory aids” (S2GT4), "classification" (S4GT2) and "repetition” (S2GT5). Flexibility was specifically mentioned by one teacher who saw this as benefiting all pupils (S5GT1), while linking classroom education with daily life was mentioned by another. The importance of “taking into account the individual differences between pupils” (S3GT1 and S3GT3) through "individual teaching, [...] based on my knowledge and practice with LD pupils in inclusive classrooms" (S2GT3) also featured in responses. Reading and self-development on the part of the teachers were mentioned by three of the general teachers as a way of gaining the skills to teach effectively in inclusive classrooms.

Special needs teachers held similar views even though their teaching was limited to the context of the resource room or separate classroom for pupils with SLD, and stressed the importance of relating to individuals and “taking full account of individual differences” (S2ST1). Also acknowledged as important were “educational aids which meet all pupils’ needs regardless of whether or not they have SEN” (S4ST1, School 4, Special Needs Teacher). Two of the three specific comments concerning dyslexia made by a single teacher referred to teaching strategies. These show a focus on using a particular strategy for each learning difficulty.

“I decide how many lesson they should take, depending on their difficulties, and how many difficulties to deal with. For example, if an LD pupil has two difficulties like dyslexia and dysgraphia, then I have to teach her in the right way for both those difficulties - each difficulty has

special lessons to help LD pupils, but every pupil should have 3 lesson in resource room maximum" (S1ST1).

"My teaching strategies are... I use different strategies which depend on the LD pupils' difficulties. I cannot use one strategy for all LD pupils in the resource room, so I use the special one for dyslexic pupils" (S1ST1).

In the resource room, one teacher used fishing for letters in a bowl as a particularly effective way of engaging and maintaining interest while teaching specific letters of the alphabet. In addition, one special needs teacher used a board to encourage children with learning difficulties: children added a part of a face when they did well in a lesson and once the face was complete, the child received a small gift from the teacher.

Parents endorsed the general views. They suggested hands-on activities, learning from experience and practice through concrete activities. "I think collaborative learning would help pupils to learn together" (S1GP2, parent of child without SEN) and "Any lesson taken outside the classroom would help all pupils to learn together, also teachers could sometimes use workshops, and make more educational use of school trips" (S1GP3). The choice of vocabulary in these comments indicates that at least some of the parents may have been education professionals. One less confident parent suggested "I have no idea about that but I think that pictures, science experiments .... could help pupils to learn" (S1SP5, parent of child with special needs). Parents of children with SEN highlighted collaborative learning: "Different resources to help

pupils to learn together, like education visits and trips, I think it breaks down barriers between pupils, also helps them to make friends" (S1SP1) and "I think that trips, pictures, watching educational films, workshops, all those could help pupils to learn together" (S1SP3). Their comments represented a consensus view.

Some parents saw pullout sessions as beneficial. For example, the parent of one child with speech and literacy problems said:

"I notice my daughter's academic level has completely changed, she has a new academic level. Now she can read words and her speech is also improving. My daughter now uses a computer to learn the letters of the alphabet, and she can read better, even though not quickly. I think the problem is not in my daughter, but was her old teacher who did not care what my daughter was learning in her class, but over time we can fix this problem" (S1SP5).

This reveals not only the benefits of resource room sessions but also the parent's unwillingness to accept that her daughter had learning difficulties.

However, some parents were less certain about the benefits of pullout sessions because children were separated from their peers and missing other lessons, leading them to raise the possibility of additional rather than replacement lessons. One said:

"The timing of the resource room lessons is not flexible enough. Sometimes when my daughter has a lesson in the resource room, others



pupils in her class have a new lesson in another subject like history, so then the teacher sends me a letter 'Your daughter has not done this lesson' and I am surprised, so I would prefer additional lessons for LD pupils in the resource room" (S1SP3).

This viewpoint was supported by parents of two other SEN children. The first said:

"Lessons in the resource room are not suitable for my daughter. The lesson takes her out of some lessons which she likes to take with her class" (S1SP4).

The second parent also stated:

"The time of the lesson in the resource room does not suit my daughter. When she has her lesson in resource room, other pupils have new lessons, so my daughter loses the chance to take this lesson with her classmates, so I would rather change the time of this lesson" (S1SP5).

These comments suggest that while parents may feel their child is losing as well as gaining opportunities, some children prefer to be with classmates, reinforcing the importance of a sense of belonging.

The SEN education supervisor was more confident about teachers and teaching: "I think almost all of them have the necessary skills for teaching SEN pupils but still we need to train them as much as we can" (SS). The general education supervisor highlighted the importance of continuous professional development: "I do not like 'the one way' without developing. Every year we have new plans and ideas for inclusion which have come from the previous year's experience" (SG).

Observations in the resource room revealed that some teachers were using traditional or minimum effort teaching strategies. For instance, one did not use a variety of methods or aids to improve the pupil's reading, simply working from paper. Sensory aspects such as audio or visual aids were not used, when in particular the pupil needed more help to speak a little more loudly. Although this particular teacher knew about this pupil's speech problem, she did not use any activities to improve the pupil's speaking ability. It seemed the teacher taught in a traditional way aimed at catering for the needs of the majority of pupils rather than focusing on the individual SEN pupil's needs and engaging in differentiated teaching. Further, this teacher did not modify her classroom-based language to facilitate the SEN pupil's comprehension in that she was observed to speak to the pupil as if she were at middle rather than primary school level. In this lesson, reading and writing skills were too closely interwoven. The number of pupils with learning difficulties (6 currently and 3 on a waiting list) meant that with her existing teaching strategies and methods the teacher was unable to help all the pupils. The importance of extending individual teachers' range of teaching strategies, perhaps by concentrating first on differentiation together with small group teaching methods, cannot be overstated. In addition, this would help to make teaching more learner-centred while becoming able to support a larger number of pupils. In a second example, an individual lesson for a pupil with dyslexia, the teacher wrote some sentences on the board, asked the pupil to read them very carefully, then read single words one letter at a time when real difficulty was encountered. This was followed by two paper-based reading exercises and a writing exercise, ending with a further reading exercise. However, there was overall a noticeable lack of teaching strategies aimed at helping dyslexic children, whether in

the resources room or the regular classroom. For example, there was no initial overview or holistic view of what was to be presented in the session, neither were any strategies offered for seeing and understanding the whole word. Strategies were concentrated on improving the phonological processing deficit rather than on promoting alternative coping strategies.

In summary, whilst some general and special needs teachers were aware of a variety of appropriate teaching strategies, they were not all using them or not always using them appropriately.

#### **4.3.2 Curriculum**

General and special teachers alike drew attention to curriculum issues. There was a general consensus that inclusion involved using the same curriculum with some support, as specified in the national policy, “accessing the general curriculum with extra support” (S2GT3 and S1ST1). However, just over half of the general teachers and just under half of the special needs teachers considered the curriculum to be a barrier to some extent. Opinions about the curriculum varied, with the majority of general teachers feeling that the existing curriculum was broadly appropriate but required modification for pupils with learning difficulties and others saying that it was not so suitable. In general, the SEN teachers considered it needed to change or be greatly adapted while the general teachers were more likely to consider it suitable for all pupils. According to general teachers in school 3, the current curriculum “does not help teachers to develop the abilities and skills of [special needs] pupils” (S3GT3), “It does not deal with the needs of SEN or LD pupils” (S3GT4) and “It does not help pupils” (S3GT5). The special needs teacher in school 3 agreed: “It is very difficult.

Learning difficulties pupils cannot understand it very well” (S3ST1). Although school 3 had a learning difficulties programme for stages 1, 2 and 3, there was no support available for the final three stages. Two general teachers stated that the number of subjects taught should be reduced (S3GT2 and S5GT1) and one commented that if the number of subjects was not reduced, “teachers should be given freedom to teach it or not or choose any subject they like” (S5GT1). Those who disagreed emphasized the time taken to master so many subjects, two highlighting its failure to help pupils develop thinking skills. “It does not help pupils to think” (S2GT4). Suggested improvements included reducing the number of subjects and “making them close to the pupil's environment and helping teachers to explore their pupils’ interests” (S2GT2). Two general teachers felt that the curriculum could be changed through teaching “by modern electronic education aids [...] developing the abilities of pupils by using computers” (S2GT4). Two expressed the view that schools should be free to set their own curriculum: “The curriculum should be changed depending on the school, staff, pupils and learning aids in the school” (S3GT1) and “I suggest every school proposed different plans such as a general plan for all pupils and a special plan for SEN or LD pupils because each school knows what their pupils need. All those plans should be different because every school has different needs for their pupils regardless of whether they have SEN or not” (S3GT4).

More starkly, one teacher stated “The curriculum needs to change” (S4GT3). For pupils with severe learning difficulties in particular, it was felt a separate curriculum should be drawn up (S1ST3). “From my view, the curriculum is suitable, kind of, but MoE should modify it” (S5GT2). Some schools had taken matters into their own hands by creating a book to assist pupils with learning difficulties to access parts of

the curriculum. A number of teachers wanted more freedom to set their own curriculum: “Give teachers freedom to choose any subject they want or when they see a subject is necessary for their pupils” (S2ST1), “to choose any subject that would be useful for our SLD pupils” (S1ST4) and “Develop the curriculum” (S2GT4). Teachers working with children with severe learning difficulties felt particularly strongly about the need to establish a curriculum to suit the pupils’ needs. One school had done so: “We have created new books for our SLD pupils [in reading and mathematics] and when we gave them out we noticed that our pupils understand our books and do well with them. We used our special financial allocation to do that” (S1ST3). Changes to the curriculum “should contain subjects related to their everyday life, also relate to how they deal with life problems” (S1ST5). The need to develop materials to support pupils with SEN in accessing the curriculum was also highlighted by both education supervisors. Others wanted improved opportunities for social interaction and broadening horizons, as in “Increase [...] weekly social activities” (S5ST2) and “Permission for educational trips outside the school” (S1ST3). Overall, the special teachers concurred with the general teachers on these points, although a higher proportion of the special teachers felt that the curriculum required modification or major change, perhaps because 6 of them were specialists in working with children with severe learning difficulties. Restrictions on educational visits are largely related to the requirements for women travelling outside the house to be accompanied by male members of their family, combined with the role of the teacher as moral guardian of his or her pupils.

Although over half of all teachers thought the general curriculum was suitable with adaptations and appropriate support from special needs teachers, key issues included

insufficient use of ICT, the need for teachers to have more freedom to choose subjects and for schools to have more local control over the curriculum. The general curriculum was less suitable for pupils with SLD as demonstrated by schools creating their own workbooks for these children. Closer links between the curriculum and real life were needed for all children with special needs to enable them to enhance skills for everyday life and social interactions.

#### ***4.4 School Ethos and Collaboration***

The third theme that emerged from the analysis was school ethos, with its subthemes of collaboration and relationships. Relevant data were derived from the observations, and engagement with children as well as interviews and questionnaires. Ethos is defined here as school policies and practices with regard to inclusion and manifestations of perspectives towards difference and disability observed by the researcher and commented on by pupils, teachers and parents, the school's expression of itself to stakeholders and the wider community. Collaboration and relationships are two significant ways in which a school's ethos and cultural climate reveal themselves.

##### **4.4.1 School ethos**

Islam is ever-present in the ethos of every state-run school in Saudi Arabia, with daily life in schools run according to its precepts and education aimed having the goal of bringing individuals ever closer to understanding of Allah and what they are required to do, know and think to be good Muslims. The accompanying separation of males and females in education is, for the most part, a given which causes no questions or

anxieties among parents, teachers or the society as a whole. The policies and procedures of the Ministry of Education are similarly accepted and ever-present, including the range of programmes for pupils with SEN. Since, however, the ethos of a school is as much about how it ‘feels’ as about stated philosophy or policy, this section begins with the children’s perspective. In total 105 children participated in a ‘hands up’, ‘hands down’ whole class activity, 50 from school 1 and 55 from school 2. Children were asked to put their up their hands in response to specific instructions such as “Hands up who doesn’t like this school” [Count hands. ‘OK, everybody... hands down’] and “Hands up who likes this school” [Count hands. ‘OK, everybody... hands down’]. Not all children put their hands up or down to all the questions, but the replies are interesting. Almost all the children had always been at the school they were at currently (90 of the 105). No children who had moved schools, including one child who had been at a school for mental retardation [sic] before moving to her current school, reported liking their present school better than the previous one. Three children in school 2 did not like their present school, 52 liked their present school, leaving 10 who were neutral. Of the 52 who liked their present school, 38 said they liked their school very much. When asked if teachers make the lessons easy to understand, 27 said yes and 28 said no. Whether this is a reflection on the teachers, the curriculum, the economic and social factors in the wider school environment or some combination of all these factors, it is not possible to determine.

Most SEN children interviewed said they found the reading lessons helpful, that their teacher was very helpful and that their teachers thought them “clever” or “hardworking”. This indicates that teachers’ and headteachers’ comments about

improvements in confidence and sense of self were well founded. The special needs pupils were positive about their relationship with their teacher, saying that they liked each other. This suggests that the problems identified in the 'hands up' exercises related to general teachers. A very different example of how inclusion did not work quite as well as it could came from an interview with a child in school 1, who, in reply to the question "What help do you get outside the classroom?" said "Sometimes if we have free time we can go to the difficulties room to watch an educational film". The positive aspect is that children without learning difficulties were using the resources, while the negative aspect is their use of the term 'difficulties', indicating separateness and difference. This child and another pupil, neither of whom had SEN, said they thought teachers should use more resources and educational games to help them learn better. (This child's aunt was a teacher in the school.)

The children's drawings of their friends were interesting, in that there was very little difference between the pictures by children with and without SEN as illustrated in figures 4.1 and 4.2. This was perhaps one of the strongest indications that most pupils felt comfortable with each other and also that children with and without learning difficulties may be perceived as very similar by members of the wider community as well as teachers and parents. It would be wrong to analyse data from the drawings as this exercise was included with the aim of ensuring that children with learning difficulties had the opportunity to express themselves in more than one way as an individual as well as in a whole class setting. However, there were one or two notable points. Some children drew a cartoon or stick figure without features, more in school 2 than in school 1. This may have been for one of two reasons. The first reason is that in traditional Islam, it is wrong to paint or draw a representation of a human figure



and school 2 was located in a rural area where stronger traditions prevail. Secondly there were some unusual features in one or two of the school 2 pictures which may have indicated strained relationships among some pupils. One child without special needs who had few friends, showed herself looking miserable and the girl sitting next to her also drew her looking miserable. Appendix 3 contains a selection of the drawings.

An ethos of caring and development was reflected in how safe parents felt their children were in school 1, whether parents of children with SEN ("Everyone in the school takes care of our daughters, even when our daughters are naughty", S1SP1) or not ("Everyone in this school takes care of all the pupils, I really like this school, I would like to thank them for doing this job so well", S1GP2).

#### **4.4.2 Culture and social stigma related to disability**

Although culture and religion were not seen as a barrier at all by the great majority of participants, some special needs teachers felt that unnecessary constraints could at times be imposed on pupils with SEN, although none of the teachers offered further comments or elaborated on this other than the restriction on educational trips already mentioned. The researcher attributes this to the strong underlying Islamic approach which urges all Muslim people to help disabled people because everyone who helps them will be rewarded by Allah. In support of this statement, the researcher observed that almost all teachers were very sympathetic towards pupils with SEN in their non-

verbal communication as well as in their expressed views, with the two or three exceptions as noted earlier saying they did not want to teach SEN pupils. Parents also said they must help their daughters and be more patient with them until they learn. Nowadays, in general, Saudi society knows the importance of inclusion and there are no cultural objections to pupils with SEN learning in regular schools and in more inclusive settings. However, changes are slower in rural environments and those where relatively few parents have themselves been educated. As teachers in schools 3 and 4 said, “Some parents can’t read or write”. Parents who have not been to school themselves may not see the need for their children to attend school. Problems still persist as in the village school where some parents refused to sign the letter for their daughters to enrol in a learning difficulties programme because they associated the programme with notions of being ‘stupid’ and ‘mad’, ideas which they rejected completely where their own child was involved. Parents in school 2 were said by teachers not to reply to any letters, although they attend annual parents’ meetings, but when any mother felt her daughter had a problem with another girl or with a teacher, she would go to the school to complain. In one case, the researcher heard one mother shouting angrily at the deputy headteacher. One teacher at school 2 stated that a girl who had spent 3 years in the first class was refused permission to receive more appropriate education by her grandfather. The grandfather also refused to allow the girl’s mother to be in direct contact with the school. It was alleged by the headteacher that both her parents had learning difficulties. In the town, at school 3, one parent was contacted by telephone. After checking that her daughter was attending that school, the researcher introduced herself and the research, at which point the mother said “No, none of my daughters go to that school”. This denial associated with social

stigma is a feature of traditional Bedouin culture in Saudi Arabia rather than the Islamic religion which promotes respect and equality.

Another cultural factor is the sensitivity of non-nationals in Saudi Arabia. For example, parents in school 4 did not distinguish between the role of the researcher and that of the policy inspector body or organisation. The deputy headteacher advised the researcher not to call the parents because they would think the researcher was part of the inspection team. Reasons given by the deputy headteacher were: parents' illiteracy; no knowledge, understanding or experience of research or researchers in a school context; and, critically, great sensitivity about their lack of Saudi nationality and their fear of being discriminated against. The deputy headteacher added that if their telephone numbers were given to the researcher and she made contact, the parents would come the next day to express dissatisfaction with the school. The deputy Headteacher added that "Even if you have the permission to call them, I am sorry but they won't understand you". These factors contribute to uneasy relationships between home and school.

#### **4.4.3. Home-school collaboration**

The literature review showed that collaboration between home and school has been an important factor in a successful implementation of inclusion (Elkins et al., 2003; Nutbrown and Clough, 2006) especially for children assessed as dyslexic (Elliot et al., 2007). Collaboration implies parents and teachers working together to improve

development and progress. However, teachers and headteachers in 3 of the 5 schools cited 'parents' as a barrier, with more than 9 out of 10 general teachers and 8 out of 10 special needs teachers saying parents were a barrier to a great or some extent, more than half saying 'to a great extent'. Only three felt that parents did not present a barrier to inclusion.

The first step towards collaboration is communication with parents, about education in general, SEN and help available to support the development and attainment of children with SEN. The MoE prescribes a meeting for parents shortly before inclusion is introduced to a school, written correspondence using standard letters and forms concerning assessment and participation in SEN programmes, and a meeting at the start of each year and a termly meeting for parents of children starting such a programme. Thereafter contacts between teachers and parents of children with SEN focus on the child's development and learning. In view of the importance of parent involvement, the type, frequency and effectiveness of communication were explored, as was the role of the school administration in facilitating collaboration. Information about home-school collaboration was collected mainly from parents, confirmed by teachers and supported by the researcher's observations and own experience of the difficulties involved in communicating with some of the parents. Parents were asked about the communication channels between the school and their family, how often communication took place, and the extent to which communication helped their child and their family. They were also asked whether parents' meetings with the classroom teacher and/or headteacher were held on a regular basis and how effective staff were in responding to their queries. In addition, they were asked about any changes they had noticed at the school that had been made as a result of inclusion. Finally, they

were asked to describe the roles taken by the school administration towards inclusion and whether they were encouraging or discouraging.

The reasons for, and modes of, communication that parents reported covered a range of methods of communicating with the school: letter, mobile phone, homework book, meetings with the classroom teacher, parents' meetings and parents paying a visit to the school. How often these communications took place varied considerably according to the mode and reason for the communication, individual parents and children, and the school. The 10 parents who answered this question, often in the form of 'as and when necessary', used different forms of communication as appropriate. By custom and practice, teachers communicate in writing with parents in order to avoid problems that could develop from misunderstandings over the telephone. Parents respond in a variety of ways. The regular passage of the homework book between home and school may be supported by teachers' letters: "My daughter's teacher sends me weekly to sign which tells me about my daughter's progress in her class, and tells me what the weak points are in my daughter's academic attainment" (S1GP4, School 1 parent of child without special needs) and "Sometimes teachers send me a letter asking me to help my daughter with a particular point" (S1GP4). Parents of children with SEN also receive a letter if "something happens to [their] daughter" or to tell them about progress (S1SP1, School 1 parent of child with special needs). There is clearly evidence of positive communication and collaboration, one parent stating "All the teachers sent me a letter to thank me for my daughter's level" (S1SP2). The news is not always good, as is to be expected. One parent stated "Teachers always send me a letter when my daughter has failed to reach expected standards of academic achievement" (S1SP3). Telephone contact is less common, although in this study

parents of children with SEN tend to use it much more frequently than other parents. “I phone the teacher there because I have the mobile number for the classroom teacher” (S1SP5). “I cannot go to the school, because I have other children, and my husband is a doctor, so I cannot go to the school every month. I always call the school” (S1SP2). Those parents who were engaging with the school found the contacts valuable and praised the school, but there were many who refused to engage with their daughter’s school and teachers as well as with the researcher, mainly due to their own experiences and levels of education, as well as the fear of being stigmatised or of being perceived as not part of the mainstream Saudi society.

A majority of the general teachers and almost half of the special needs teachers considered parents to be a significant barrier to inclusion. In school 3, located in a town, the headteacher, general teachers and special needs teachers alike expressed their concern about the lack of collaboration between home and school. “We have uneducated parents in our school” (headteacher) and “Parents do not help us to improve the level of their daughters’ educational attainment” (S3GT3). Specifically, parents were considered by the teachers to be uneducated about learning difficulties and willing to remain so. The special needs teacher in school 3 emphasized the fact that “parents do not give us their correct mobile number”, despite it being a legal requirement in Saudi Arabia for parents to give their number to the school. “Some parents refuse to let their daughter have lessons in the resource room” (headteacher, school 3), meaning that some children not only struggle with a curriculum that is too difficult for them and fails to meet their needs, but are also denied support in accessing that curriculum. School 4 had similar experiences, reporting that they

suffered from what all the teachers termed ‘uneducated parents’, in particular when “Some parents refuse to allow their daughter to learn in the learning difficulties room” (S4ST1), making it more difficult for both general and special needs teacher to do their job. The headteacher reported “we struggle to collaborate with the home”, a view shared by all teachers in school 4 and by staff in school 5. The issue of home-school collaboration is more difficult to tackle because of the cultural expectations of normality and the rejection of difference. In contrast, there was the story of one child without learning difficulties who claimed she in fact had learning difficulties because she had been told by her mother to get the same money from the MOE that learning difficulties pupils were entitled to receive “so all our pupils want to become LD pupils” (S4GT1, School 4, General Teacher 1). Money is a strong incentive. Like the earlier example of incentives for special needs teachers, this allowance does not necessarily have the desired effect but can produce unwanted consequences.

Almost all teachers agreed that there should be some form of educational or training programme about the meaning of SEN and inclusion for parents. Statements such as “Educate parents about inclusion and LD” (S2GT1), “Give parents training about inclusion” (S2GT3) and “Develop the relationship between home and school” (S2GT1) send a clear message regarding this need. Although collaboration between home and school was greater in school 1 than in the other schools, understanding was limited, as revealed by comments such as “The school administration does their best for every pupil, as I know, but I do not about the roles for inclusion, as far as I know, everyone in the school is helpful, friendly” (S1P1, School 1, parent of child with special needs).

In Saudi Arabia, organisations such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) or parents as school governors are absent. Teachers are viewed in one or more ways by parents: they are respected as experts in educating their daughters, they are transmitters of important knowledge (especially about Islam) and are responsible for providing education (particularly when parents themselves have not had the benefit of education), being advocates of the right to access education for every child. Whilst all schools and teachers encourage parents to participate as a minimum in the assessment process according to official procedures (via a written invitation to attend a meeting at the school), some parents believe the implementation of these procedures is the responsibility of the school, or refuse for one reason or another to accept that their child has SEN. Some teachers recognize the need for additional permissible action, such as small parties for parents of children with special needs, but when they talked about ideal inclusion as involving the education of everyone involved, parents were not mentioned although their children were. Education targeting parents is necessary to shift negative attitudes towards disability and SEN. It can be seen from the lack of contact with parents during the research and, according to teachers, more generally with the schools, that collaboration with parents was a weak area. This is a cause for concern in view of the importance attached in the literature to parental involvement with regard to child learning and developmental outcomes.

#### **4.4.4 Effectiveness and challenges of communication**

The preferred method of collaboration and communication by most teachers and parents was the homework book which passes from school to home and back on a



daily basis and is felt by both parties to be the single most effective means of keeping in close touch about progress and problems. There is a sense, as in many schools, that parents' meetings are routine and that other forms of communication are more useful. One parent summed up the differences in usefulness and effectiveness of the various types of collaboration and communication by saying "I come to the school for parents' meetings. I am a teacher in another school, so I cannot go to the school every day, but I communicate with the school as necessary. I also communicate with the school or my daughter's teachers by letter or phone, but I always write to my daughter's teachers in her homework book, and all teachers write to me in this book. I prefer to communicate with the teachers in this book, because it really helps me to know my daughter's level in education, her academic attainment" (S1GP4). These comments by a parent of a child without SEN were supported by those of a mother with a daughter with SEN: "This communication helps me, to know my daughter's level, also what my daughter did in her class, also shows me my daughter's progress in all lessons, also this book tells me if my daughter did her homework or not, as well as if my daughter forgets to bring her books or not" (S1PS4).

There was no evidence for the dimension of 'changes made' in inclusion policy as a result of home-school collaboration. Although there were clear lines of communication reporting on pupils' progress and achievement, collaboration between home and school did not appear to extend to changes in inclusion policy and practice at the school. However, the education supervisors commented that individual categories of SEN each had their own policy and that these were continuing to be extended. Implementation of the policy in individual schools was the responsibility of

the education supervisor concerned, who identified the difficulties as “the greatest difficulties are special teachers for LD pupils, also parents if they do not collaborate with the school” (SS, Special Education Supervisor). Critically, the SEN supervisor considered that a ‘one size fits all’ approach was not appropriate with regard to engaging with parents: “The key points for successful inclusion are making the policy suitable for each district, therefore some points of policy cannot be generalized to all schools” (SS). However, the researcher’s observations suggest a ‘one size fits all’ approach is what is attempted in practice, probably because of the strong central role in developing special needs programmes and associated policies and procedures.

Questions about the role of the school administration in home-school collaboration elicited positive responses, expressed in terms of helpfulness and friendliness rather than inclusion. All parents interviewed in the sample found the school administration to be helpful, although in three out of the five schools it was impossible to gain the cooperation of parents and the schools were struggling to establish collaboration. Where communication was good, parents of children without SEN noted “everyone in the school is helpful, friendly” (S1GP1), “all staff in this school are making great efforts for all pupils, from my own experience and from what I have heard from others parents” (S1GP4). Parents of children with SEN in school 1 felt supported by the school administration, reporting that “the role of the administration is a cooperative one [...] and for LD and SLD pupils, they are helpful for all their parents, and doing their best to help inclusion in their school” (S1SP4). All parents were positive about the role of the school administration in inclusion. “As you know, my daughter is a regular pupil. From what I hear from other parents, everyone in this

school is doing very well for inclusion, and for SEN pupils in the school, from my notes in the parents meeting, there are some presentations for SLD pupils. I note that their teachers like them, and ensure they participate in the parents' meeting" (S1GP2). Two parents, one of a child with SEN and one of a child without, made exactly the same comment: "The school administration staff are very cooperative for all pupils, all of them are doing their best for the pupils, I would like to thank them for their hard work" (S1GP3 and S1SP5).

#### **4.4.5 Relationships**

This section reports findings concerning relationships among teachers, between teachers and pupils and among pupils, areas identified by Nutbrown and Clough (2006) and Batu (2010) as important for successful inclusion. Collaboration between teachers was highlighted as a barrier by the headteacher of school 3: "There is no collaboration between the [general] teachers" and "Teachers also do not collaborate with the learning difficulties teacher". The special needs supervisor in school 3 also stated "There are a lot of barriers for LD categories like the cooperation between school staff". This reflects the fact that general and special needs teachers are separately trained and supervised and that unless the headteacher is a special needs teacher, it is unlikely that efforts will be made at an early stage to encourage all staff to work together for the benefit of the children. There were however examples of good collaboration between some general and special needs teachers centred on individual pupils. In addition, the researcher's observations also identified particularly good relationships between general teachers in school 1.

Findings concerning teacher-pupil relationships were seen as important because it has been widely acknowledged in the literature that teachers' attitudes can make a major difference to pupils' educational attainment. When asked if they liked their teachers and thought their teachers liked them, there were clearly problems from some children's point of view. 85 children (50 in school 1 and 35 in school 2) said they liked their teachers, and 82 (50 in school 1 and 32 in school 2) thought their teachers liked them. However, all children thought that teachers treated all pupils the same, although 46 out of the 105 children thought their teachers tried to help all children, which clearly suggests that some children felt they were not getting the amount or type of help they needed. They may have been treated the same, but the implication is that they may have wanted more or different help. When asked if teachers wanted to help children a lot or a little, 60 of the 105 felt teachers wanted to help them a lot, and 45 felt teachers wanted to help them a little. This suggests that pupils are not as positive about teacher-pupil relationships as are the teachers and may be related to the limited teaching strategies in use which do not include whole word recognition for dyslexic children and fail to take sufficient account of individual learner needs.

In school 1, the researcher's observations indicated very good relationships between teachers and children, characterised by family values with a headteacher who clearly liked and cared for all the pupils in this school. General teachers in school 1 treat the children with learning difficulties like daughters, helping them with patience to improve their abilities, as observed by the researcher. Parents confirmed the quality of the relationships, saying "teachers in this school are lovely, my daughter likes her teachers" (S1GP1), "The relationships between my daughters and their teachers, is

very good" (S1GP1) and "all pupils in my daughter's class like their teachers, as does my daughter, also from my observation, when I visited my daughter's class" (S1GP3). The positive views about teacher-pupil relationships were also supported by responses from parents of children with SEN. Statements such as "see my daughter loves her teachers, she always cares about her homework, therefore she does not get cross with her teachers" (S1SP1), "My daughter really loves her teachers, all teachers help my daughter to improve her level in all aspects, academic, education, social" (S1SP2) testify to this. The atmosphere in school 2 was not as good: although the relationship between administrative staff and children was one of a family, some of the pupils complained about some of their teachers. During interviews with some of the pupils it was said that teachers dealt with them as if they were "a table without feeling" and some children wanted to change some teachers, especially one teacher who, in their view and in their own words, hated them. (One whole class felt like this.) School 3 had good relationships, although not as warm and friendly as either school 1 or school 4, and teacher-child relationships in school 5 were also very warm.

The relationships among pupils were considered by the researcher to be an important indicator of the extent to which inclusion was successful. The effect of special needs pupils taking part in regular lessons on pupil relationships was judged to be very or fairly positive by 21 general teachers (8 very and 13 fairly positive). However, one general teacher felt that the effect was fairly negative and one stated she was unsure; although no reasons were given, it can be surmised that classroom experiences explain these views. All the special needs teachers in the sample judged the effect on pupil relationships to be either fairly positive (5) or very positive (5). Most general teachers worked to encourage a family feeling and kind, collaborative relationships

between pupils, as in “All teachers advise all pupils to interact with learning difficulties pupils, to collaborate, play, make friends, because they are like us” (S5GT3, School 5, General Teacher 3). Special need teachers saw relationships between pupils as characterised by helpful exchanges such as the following example.

“One of the learning difficulties pupils was absent for one week, she did not know about what we had done all week, but when she came back to school all her books were completed, and she knew about everything we had done the previous week. At the end of the day I asked her "Who helped you to do that?" and she told me she did her homework at home because her friend had helped by phoning her every day and in addition her mother had been helping, so this shows the effects of positive attitudes, pupils learn how and when to help and collaborate with each other without feeling any difference between whether a pupil has learning difficulties or not" (S1GT1).

A general teacher reported “all pupils like and accept LD pupils, like helping them, making friends, playing with them. Once, two pupils came to me when I was correcting the pupils’ books, a pupil without LD asked me "Can I give my school book to the LD pupil? I feel sorry for her; her school book is not completed, so I would like to help her." I thanked this pupil, gave her gifts for her helpfulness, and I advised all my pupils to act like this with all pupils” (S1GT4). However, peer

relationships are not always so amicable. Some children are scared of pupils with severe learning difficulties.

“One of them shouts loudly in the classroom. One day, when I was teaching art in an inclusive classroom, I found out that a pupil with severe learning difficulties had cut another pupil’s hair. The pupil cried all through the lesson because she had lost her hair and the next day, her mother came to the school and begged us not to include pupils with severe learning difficulties again, so some parents have negative attitudes towards SLD pupils. I do not like to teach SLD pupils in my classroom” (S1GT2).

In one case, a pupil had run away from school because she hated her class, as there were learning difficulties pupils and she hated them; according to a teacher “this pupil was in her first year in primary school, so we put the LD pupils in another class to solve this problem” (S2GT4). There had been more problems when inclusion was first introduced, for example with negative attitudes, as illustrated by:

“One of the learning difficulties pupils refused to go to the resource room. When I asked the pupil why she did not want to go there, she said ‘all pupils tell me “you are a stupid pupil because you always you go to the resource room” so I do not like to go to the resource room [...] I really

struggled with my pupils, but nowadays everything has changed”  
(S1ST1).

Such change could not always be attributed to inclusion, but sometimes simply occurred over time. In school 1, one particular pupil had problems with pupil-to-pupil relationships: A parent stated, "my daughter had problems with all the pupils, all the pupils in her classroom call her unkind names, I always say to her "forgive every pupil who calls you unkind names, do not do anything to them, just say for them, just say for them, my God forgive you" but she did not do that" (S1SP3). This situation was very much the exception in school one, although in the schools in the current study it was noticeable that pupils with severe learning difficulties tended to have fewer friends.

Most of the children interviewed reported having four or five friends and there were clearly friendships between pupils with and without SEN, including friendships between pupils with severe learning difficulties and ‘regular’ pupils. Pupils said they helped their friends with homework, telephoning each other after class if a friend had been absent from school to make sure they knew the work they had to do and some pupils worked together to complete the homework. Overall, pupil to pupil relationships were very good, with one or two exceptions. In school 2, one pupil without SEN spoke for almost all those interviewed when she said: “we feel in our class as one family”. Another child attending the same school, without SEN, said “I like my teachers and my friends”. She had five friends and they all helped each other with schoolwork: “I help them every day in every lesson. Last time was in the last lesson in science homework” and “they help every time I want them to help me. Last time was in the reading lesson”. This pupil thought that all teachers helped all pupils



equally as well as treating them all equally. The views expressed by this pupil were repeated in a second interview with a child without SEN. In the other school where interviews were conducted with children, a child with learning difficulties had transferred from a holy Qur'an school without any apparent problems, had made friends and settled in well. Her group of five friends helped each other with schoolwork. The last time she had received help "was last week when I was absent. They phoned me and gave me the homework".

Interviews with individual children (10 with SEN and 15 without) were at times illuminating. One child had "come from mental retardation school", had grown "over time [to] love my school" but had no friends. "None of the pupils play with me and no-one plays with me and no-one likes me". "None of my class likes my help and they are sarcastic with me", "they always refuse to help me if I ask them about the homework, they do not want to give it to me. Also they do not reply to me". This particular pupil said others called her unkind names 2-3 times a week. However, she liked the "difficulties room. I like it because it always helps me to improve my academic level". She thought that if she had a problem the headteacher would listen, but was clearly very isolated.

A mixed group of pupils had been awarded a prize for best participation in school activities in creating a piece of artwork (S5GT3). Suggested reasons for good pupil to pupil relationships include the influence of teachers with positive attitude towards inclusion. General teachers highlighted the importance of the school being ready in every respect to take and educate all pupils, one aspect of which was collaboration: "For me, ideal inclusion means mutual help and collaboration between all the participants" (S1GT5).

In summary, teacher to teacher relationships were quite good in terms of collaboration regarding individual children with SEN, but there was little or no communication or collaboration on more general matters such as teaching and managing the inclusive classroom, possibly due to differences in salary (perceived as unrelated to levels of responsibility), class size and availability of educational resource between special needs and general teachers. Overall, relationships between teachers and pupils were good or very good, with some examples where relationships had broken down. A similar picture emerged for pupil to pupil relationships. It can be deduced that good relationships between pupils took time and effort on the part of teachers and that, in some schools, the required effort was not always invested. Similarly, in some schools, the headteacher had not invested in initiatives to promote co-operation and collaboration between general and special needs teachers, and this is an area that requires rethinking of the roles and responsibilities of general and special teachers.

#### ***4.5 Leadership, training and resources***

The extent to which inclusion is implemented effectively has been shown to be influenced by the quality of leadership, teacher training and availability of appropriate and sufficient resources. Leadership, whether from within the school or higher levels of education administration, determines the deployment and allocation of training and resources. Comments concerning the non-teaching staff and the national and regional machinery of education are included here rather than under teachers' and parents' attitudes to inclusion. The criticisms are directed at administrative procedures and not

at inclusion itself; a positive attitude to inclusion is consistent with frustration that school staff experience with the workings of the administrative systems.

#### **4.5.1 Leadership**

It should be noted that headteachers in Saudi Arabia have far less power and independence than headteachers in the UK, for example, they have little authority and flexibility regarding school budgets and almost no voice regarding the appointment of teachers to their school. Leadership, in terms of real authority, therefore comes more from the Ministry of Education and the education supervisors and not from the headteachers. The education supervisors considered that central (national) administration were very supportive of inclusion because “they give supervisors the freedom to do what is useful for SEN pupils” (SG, General Education Supervisor) and “we and the school staff can take suitable action to help SEN pupils and inclusive schools” (SS, Special Education Supervisor). However, headteachers have enormous scope for influencing the successful implementation of inclusion because it is they who effectively establish the school ethos. The headteacher of school 1 was considered by her teaching staff to be a very good example of this, stating “our head teacher encourages inclusion. She always looks after them, asks them if they are happy or not, even if we have got problems” (S1ST5). The influence of the headteacher could be seen in the approach to inclusion adopted by other administrative staff. “Everyone in our school administration encourages inclusion, especially the head teacher” (S1GT3). General teachers in school 2 commented that headteachers “become a champion for inclusion, the head teacher helped the LD

teacher to make the resource room and provide it with all essential education aids, she did her best to provide the resource room" (S2GT1) and "she always makes sure that learning difficulties pupils are progressing, encouraging them to overcome their difficulties" (S2GT3). A learning difficulties teacher agreed, saying "The [...] headteacher always helps me with teaching LD, and gives me advice because she has experience, she is doing her best for LD pupils" (S4ST1, School 4, Special Needs Teacher).

School 1 had been an inclusion school for longer than the others in this study and had developed organically. This will almost certainly be the pattern followed by other schools, but there is no shared road map to inclusion, nor a common destination. The headteachers in schools 1 to 4 recognized that their own influence on how inclusion works was very important. The role of the headteacher in school 1 was perceived to be of vital importance by the headteacher and all teaching staff. It concerned "working hard for LD or SLD pupils, like headteachers checking every day on the classroom and asking teachers and their pupils in the classroom about their needs, what they are doing in their lesson, also asking pupils about how they're feeling and if they're well, so that the headteacher is doing very well for all pupils, encouraging inclusion and helping them do their best" (S1GT1). However, it was recognized that the education supervisor's influence was more important, in the sense that getting the right furniture, equipment and educational aids to the school at the right time was a key role of the education supervisor for SEN. The supervisors could help to speed up responses of the district, regional and national education system to requests for furniture, equipment and educational aids. Furthermore, there was a potential role in

assisting to a greater extent with the training of general teachers and education of parents. The Special Education Supervisor in particular plays a key role in helping to translate the central policies of a top down approach to inclusion into practice in schools, although apart from help with obtaining furniture and equipment, headteachers had received relatively little support from supervisors. Yet the role of education supervisors is particularly important because schools in Saudi Arabia do not have policies as they do in the UK, for instance on health and safety, equal opportunities and bullying. Instead, when there is a problem with a child's behaviour (unrelated to disability), everything is referred back to the Qur'an and behaviour corrected by reminding the pupil and their parent of the teachings of the prophet. When there is a problem involving teachers, such as a breaktime or classroom management problem with children hitting each other, the headteacher will send a memo to teachers, having a moral rather than a policy framework for behaviour conduct and supporting children's rights.

#### **4.5.2 Teacher training and experience**

Training was highlighted as the main barrier to inclusion. There was a sharp contrast in terms of relevant training received by general and special needs teachers. Almost all the general teachers reported a lack of suitable training related to either inclusion or SEN, and in many cases, expressed the desire to access such training (18 out of 19 in both instances). One general teacher reported the value of training: "I had training in Learning Difficulties for one month, also I have had training in autism. All of this training is helping to enhance my experience, and develop my skills to meet LD pupils' needs as much as I can" (S1GT1, School 1, General Teacher 1). Another sought help from the specialist teacher: "Although I have not had any training, I teach them from my experience and with help from the learning difficulties specialist teacher" (S1GT4). One or two commented that the local training centre should provide such training and the administration should provide the opportunity for general teachers to receive such training.

In contrast some of the special needs teachers had received extensive in-service training: "I get a lot of training such as at an international conference on learning difficulties, brain gym movement dynamics, the development of language for pupils with learning difficulties" (S1ST1), "I am a specialist teacher for SLD pupils and also have had a lot of training about autism and epilepsy as well as creative teaching" (S1ST3) and "I have had training in autism and inclusion" (S1ST4). Some had even more specialized training. "I have had one year's specialist training in mental retardation, and in diagnostic assessment for SEN" (S2ST1) and "I took a one year

course in teaching pupils with mental retardation, another course in implementing an IQ questionnaire [sic] on pupils who have mental retardation" (S5ST1). One teacher had received training related to a different type of learning difficulty but was working with children with dyslexia: "I try to help these pupils as much as I can, but I prefer to teach children with mental retardation, because I can develop their arts skills" (S2ST1). Although most of the pupils with learning difficulties seen in this study had dyslexia, only three special needs teachers had had training specifically in dyslexia.

The general teachers perceived the main barrier to inclusion to be their own lack of training (22 out of 23), a view reinforced by the special needs teachers who agreed that the training of general teachers is lacking. For example, the headteacher of school 3 highlighted general teachers' lack of training and her own lack of training, stating "I do not have training"; "We really suffer because our teachers do not have training in SEN". The general teachers themselves were acutely aware of this problem, all mentioning it and one adding "I hope to have training" (S3GT3). Special needs teachers in school 3 confirmed this view: "Teachers in our school need to take training in SEN" (S3ST1). There was no readily available source of knowledge or expertise for general teachers to access, although they freely acknowledged their lack of relevant skills. "I do not have the necessary skills for teaching SEN pupils" (S3GT1, S3GT2, S3GT3, S3GT4 and S3GT5). The general teachers perceived the second greatest barrier to inclusion to be their own lack of experience with pupils with SEN and hence in managing an inclusive classroom, while special needs teachers saw this as one of the two most significant barriers.

The headteacher in school 1 felt strongly that there should be “pre-planning training sessions for teaching staff and the head teacher” as part of the overall concern expressed about the district, regional and national education structures and the ways in which they support inclusion. All teachers agreed there should be a training programme about inclusion and SEN pupils for general teachers, identifying a role for MoE in implementing this. Statements that illustrate this are: “Give teachers training about inclusion and LD pupils” (2 headteachers). “In-service courses on learning difficulties” (S2GT1) and “Give the school at least one professional to enhance our teaching” (S3GT3). A further role for MoE was the provision of school psychologists and other professionals in particular to assist with the development of teaching strategies as well as the education of pupils with SLD. In addition, there was a marked contrast between the fairly extensive training received by education supervisors and the minimal amount of in-service training received by headteachers. Headteachers clearly felt that even when they had sufficient relevant experience to manage an inclusive school they would welcome, were actively seeking, or had organised at their school one or more training courses. There was a clear contrast between what schools and education supervisors said, in that both the general and special needs supervisor were well trained in matters relating to pupils with SEN, and in supervision, but perceived that most teachers had the training they needed. “I think some of them do not have training, however we have tried to train all teachers in inclusive schools but some of them refuse to come” (SG). “In fact we do lots of training for all teachers, we help teachers as much we can, we have training all the year round but the teachers are busy” (SG). “There are courses for all teachers during the year. I have a master’s degree in SEN so next year I will do training for almost all inclusive school teachers”



(SS). Nonetheless, school 1 had been operating for 6 years as an inclusive school and teachers had received only one short in-house training course. There is clearly a mismatch between supervisors' and teachers' views of training, the former considering that training is adequate, appropriate and more or less complete, while the latter feel they are unprepared due to lack of training.

A lack of experience cannot easily be overcome without opportunities to gain experience. Training and professional development as described above can go some way towards closing the experience gap. However, in the short term some teachers suggested that more time should be allocated for preparation so that at least they had more time to consider and plan for the implications of an inclusive classroom. "Give teachers the freedom and free time to prepare ourselves for the next day" (S2GT3, School 2, General Teacher 3). Support and development from SEN teachers and professionals could help to close the experience gap, but the immediate need was for preparation time. As it currently operates, inclusion is a top-down policy that has support from individual headteachers and teachers at school level, but lacks sufficient practical support at the right time from the Ministry of Education and district education supervisors.

A further barrier identified by participants was a shortage of qualified special needs teachers: "Up until now, the school does not have Ministry of Education support" (headteacher and S3ST1). This made it more difficult for general teachers to be able to manage inclusive classrooms, especially as they had no training or experience in working with special needs pupils. This led some special needs teachers to comment

that “Our school did not prepare anything for inclusion such as a resource room or professionals for SEN pupils” (S3GT4) and a special needs teacher to say sadly, “I do not have experience - how can I prepare the resource room?” (S3ST1). This same special needs teacher commented that the “administrative staff did not help me to prepare the resource room”, adding that “Our school administration does not like inclusion”.

#### **4.5.3 Physical environment, infrastructure and human resources**

This section reports findings concerning the physical environment, human resources (professionals and teaching assistants) and infrastructure that is needed to support inclusion. The physical environment is discussed along with notions of space, furniture, equipment and educational aids. Although headteachers and teaching staff were generally happy with the education policy regarding inclusion, there were specific concerns around recruitment of special needs teachers, professionals and infrastructure to support inclusion. These concerns relate to the implementation of policy rather than the policy itself. Statements exemplifying this included: “Increase the number of special needs teachers in schools” (2 headteachers), “Increase the number of LD supervisors” (2 headteachers) and “Do not force teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms without any training because that negatively affects teachers and their pupils” (S2GT3). In addition two headteachers emphasized “Give us the financial support necessary to help us to do our best work”.

## **The physical environment**

The physical environment was perceived by 74% of general teachers and 60% of special needs teachers to be a barrier to inclusion, figures similar to those given by student teachers in Avramidis et al. (2002). Premises and facilities (space, furniture and equipment, and educational aids) were perceived to be a barrier to inclusion in 4 of the 5 schools, with the most significant problem being capacity, including the number and size of classrooms and space for activities. Schools were already too small for the numbers of pupils they catered for and considering that the school population is continuing to grow, 3 of the 4 headteachers as well as all staff in those schools were hoping for at least a new-built extension and ideally a whole new school building sometime in the next few years. Critically, classroom furniture is standard desk-style tables and chairs which do not lend themselves to being rearranged to suit small group work, even where there is space to move the furniture around. Turning to the resource room, or 'learning difficulties' room as it was termed in one school, this is the classroom where remedial lessons take place for pupils with dyslexia and where a variety of lessons are held for pupils with other types of SEN. The resource room varied considerably in size, depending on the age of the building and the numbers of children and classes the premises are required to accommodate. Resources in the recently-built school 1 were relatively generous, with a separate office for the teachers and a resource room containing separate cupboards for pupils' files, pupils' books, education materials and the small gifts. School 1 had not only a resource room for pupils with learning difficulties but also two further classrooms set aside for pupils with severe learning difficulties and with a separate set of educational aids (SLD). However, one teacher commented "we prepared those two classes at our own

expense, we provide those classes with education aids as best we can" (S1ST3): two more teachers made the same point. One of the special needs teachers recounted "The resource room helps LD pupils to overcome their difficulties, this room I prepared it by myself, to teach LD pupils, meet the LD pupils' needs as much I can, the room has all the education materials necessary to teach LD, but still we need more" (S1ST1).

Although there were good resources and committed teachers in school 1, parents of children with and without SEN were aware that more could be done. Parents of children with SEN stated, "The resources in the school help my daughter, but I think the school should provide more, although teachers are doing hard work with our daughters and providing every resource they can" (S1SP1) and, tellingly, "The resources in this school are not enough for teaching in inclusive classrooms" (S1SP3). A similar picture emerged in School 2 where the headteachers, general teachers and special needs teachers were proud of the efforts invested in preparing the room: one special needs teacher said "the head teacher with the previous LD teacher prepared this room from the school budget. The headteacher at the beginning struggled to prepare the room, there was no support from MoE who by the way should have provided the money for the resource room. By their own efforts they prepared the resource room with all necessary education aids to teach LD pupils" (S2ST1). In school 3, the state of the resources room combined with a shortage of educational aids to exacerbate the situation, as voiced by almost all teachers and evidenced by the researcher's observation. Such educational aids as existed were kept in an untidy and cluttered room and not used for teaching, while the resource room itself was dirty and cold and had no one assigned responsibility for organising it. The resource room in

school 4 was very small yet had all the essential equipment and educational materials. The room was equipped with one big cupboard for pupils' files, education materials, pupils' books and some educational toys in addition to a table for the teacher, 2 tables for pupils, a computer and a projector. General and special needs teacher alike were generally satisfied with these arrangements. "In our school there is a resource room and a lovely teacher, this room is ready for teaching LD pupils and really helps LD pupils to improve and overcome some of their difficulties" (S4GT4). The special needs teacher was evidently 'lovely', saying of the very small room "I teach LD pupils in the resource room, which has every necessary education aid to help me to teach LD pupils" (S4ST1). However, researcher's observations indicated that school 4 clearly experienced problems in using the resource room effectively for pupils with dyslexia and other literacy difficulties.

Standard resource room furniture is provided to all schools by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and includes U-shaped tables, a desk for the teacher, one or more tables to accommodate a group of pupils and one or more cupboards for educational materials. The school informs the education supervisor of the number of new pupils with special needs and the education supervisor places the appropriate order according to the specific special needs as well as the number of children. However, furniture does not always arrive when it is needed due to delays in the ordering process, typically resulting from a change of personnel at the school or district office. In School 3, for example, the resource room was not ready in its first year of taking pupils with learning difficulties because, at the time the fieldwork began, the education supervisor had been in post for a week only.

Equipment comes in a standard form decided by the MoE, typically consisting of one or more computers, whiteboards (fixed and/or moveable) and a projector. School 3 had a resource room, supplied with 2 tables, 2 chairs, a separate table for the teacher, some files for pupils and a whiteboard, but no equipment. The headteacher explained that "we have a resource room to help LD pupils to improve their academic attainment but until now we have not provided anything in this room because we are waiting for MoE support and we had to open the room this term". All teachers expressed their dismay at the room not being ready. A typical response was "I feel sorry for LD pupils in our school; we do not have the resource room ready for them" (S3GT3). The special needs teacher elaborated on the situation. "The resource room in this school cannot help LD pupils, I had not prepared the room, because I do not have experience of how to prepare it, even though I teach and help LD pupils as much as I can. Last week the special education supervisor visited our school to see the resource room, she saw the resource room, and asked me to write a list of all we needed for the resource room, she is also a new manager in the administration of special education. I will do as she asked and send the list to the administrator of special education, who told me 'next term you will have all that you want to teach LD pupils, I will do what I can do as soon as I possibly can'" (S3ST1). In contrast, the resource room in school 1 was equipped with a TV and video, a computer, a large whiteboard and a projector. One of the special needs teachers in school 1 noted "the room has every kind of education materials to teach LD, but still we need more" (S1ST1). School 1 had a separate set of educational aids to support children with severe learning difficulties in the two additional classrooms (SLD). Some parents wanted to see more resources. "I think teachers use education aids, but this resource

needs to be developed" (S1GP3). "I think the resources in the school are not enough, the school needs to renew them" (S1GP2). General teachers had identified the problem for pupils with SLD and their teachers in school 5: "Up to now they still need more education aids" (S5GT1) "even though the SLD teacher brought the necessary education aids" (S5GT2). Modern ICT equipment was highlighted as a potential improvement, such as a "computer and movable board" (S3GT3) and "a big screen for our educational activities" (S3GT4) and "I hope they get more modern resources like teaching SEN pupils using computers" (S1SP2). General teachers also highlighted the need for computers in each classroom, particularly in school 5 (S5GT1, S5GT2 and S5GT3). Other additional resources identified by general teachers were computers in each classroom (S5GT1, S5GT2 and S5GT3), "new books and stories for the school library to accustom all pupils to use the school library" (S5GT1) and additional books to encourage all pupils to enhance their skills (S5GT2). One special needs teacher particularly wanted audio equipment, ideally 'an audio room', for more varied work "to help dyslexic pupils" (S1ST1). Even in schools where the furniture and equipment has been provided on time, there are real differences of interpretation in how the resource room should look and feel. The following photographs vividly illustrate this point.

Individual schools use decoration (or the lack of it) to establish different perceptions of the resource room, as illustrated in figures 4.3 and 4.4, where the resource room in school 2 is designed to provide a calming atmosphere and, in contrast, the resource room in school 1 provides an environment that stimulates the senses.

Figure 4.3. Resource room school 2



Figure 4.4. Resource room school 1





A different kind of suggestion was to have an additional room, “a special room, provided with the right reading books, for all pupils to learn the Arabic language [...] because LD pupils do not like the resource room” (S4GT4, School 4 General Teacher 4). Another teacher from a different school endorsed this, suggesting a room for all pupils to learn Arabic together because pupils did not like the “difficulties [sic] room” (S1GT4). Parents came up with slightly different suggestions in a variety of areas, for example "Teachers should use resources which help pupils to gain new skills" (S1GP1).

School 5 had two extra classrooms for pupils with severe learning difficulties, although the school was not fully prepared when inclusive practices were first implemented. The special needs teachers highlighted the benefits and the problems regarding these classes: "We have two classes for SLD pupils, those classes have everything they need to teach SLD pupils, with four SLD teachers, and those classes are more helpful for SLD pupils" (S5GT3) but "we have had to fight for those classes, both were not prepared for teaching pupils with SLD, but we have provided our classes with the necessary education aids, and everything thing we need to help us when we are teaching" (S5ST1). A special needs teacher in school 5 expanded on this, explaining "there are two teachers to teach SLD pupils in each class, one to teach and another to function as a special helper for the class teacher, we prepared our classes from our personal finances, because the MoE did not get the finances to us at the beginning of the year but gave us the financial support at the end of year, and we spent more money than MoE gave us, but we did not wait for their support, we helped each other with education aids, for example both classes exchanging education aids" (S5ST2). Self-help and self-organisation were evident in most of the schools. The role of the school 2 administration in promoting inclusion was recognized by all teachers. The headteacher in her capacity as

overall supervisor of LD pupils and the resource room, “always make sure that everything is going well” (S2ST1).

## **Infrastructure**

A major barrier perceived by some of the teachers in all but one of the schools in the study was premises and facilities, with the most significant problem being the size of schools, including the number and size of classrooms and space for activities. The barriers identified for the most part reiterated responses to earlier questions. Ways of overcoming problems with premises and facilities were largely seen to be the responsibility of the MOE. The Ministry of Education should provide adequate buildings and facilities, a view that came strongly from all teaching staff, two adding that there should be “a special hall for SLD pupils” (S1ST3) for “exercise for SLD pupils” (S1ST4). A separate hall was also endorsed “for doing education activities at our school” (S1GT1). Three of the four headteachers as well as all staff in those schools were hoping for at least a new-build extension and ideally a whole new school building sometime in the next few years. The inadequacy of educational aids was also felt by many teachers to be the responsibility of the MoE, although the perceived MoE failures appeared to stimulate a creative response from a number of teachers in some schools. “Provide the school with different education aids which can be used in every lesson” (S2GT2), “Supply our teachers with suitable and modern education aids” (S2ST1), “Give the school library new books and stories to get all pupils used to using the school library” (S5GT1).

Premises and educational resources obviously represented a major concern for more than 7 out of 10 teachers, probably because limitations of space and resources are the most immediate obstacle since teachers could not implement the good practice of which they are aware. The level of concern not only reflected poor relationships between schools and education supervisors but also lack of consistency between inclusion policy and practice at a school level.

This was further illustrated by varying attitudes towards inclusion displayed by schools' administration. School 3 administration had a positive attitude towards inclusion as reflected in statements such as "The school administration encourages inclusion, they are very helpful and collaborate with us to do the best for inclusion" (S3GT1), "Their attitudes toward inclusion are positive. They encourage inclusion and have asked all teachers to help LD pupils and LD teacher" (S3GT2). However, there was one dissenting voice among the general teachers who stated "They encourage inclusion in words but do not do anything for LD pupils, they did not prepare the resource room for teaching LD pupils" (S3GT4 and S3GT5). The learning difficulties specialist teacher was forthright, stating "Our school administration does not like inclusion, they did not help me to prepare the resource room. I asked several times for help preparing the resource room, but received none although a telephone call was made to the director of special education to provide the LD room with appropriate education aids" (S3ST1). Inclusion was considered to be encouraged by the school 4 administration: "They [the school administration] always ask us to collaborate together to improve our abilities in teaching pupils" (S4GT1). Relationships between teaching and administrative were also viewed as positive. "The administrative staff of our school are really doing well; we have a good relationship with them. All of them encourage inclusion and always ask us to

help learning difficulties pupils as much we can" (S4GT2). "We have lovely administrative staff in our school, they really are doing their best for all pupils; they ask teachers about LD pupils and their improvement, they really encourage inclusion" (S4GT4). "The roles of our school administration encourage inclusion, they are trying to do their best work, to overcome the challenges in the school as best they can, asking the general administration to prepare another class for this number of pupils, and so they encourage inclusion" (S4GT5).

Perceptions of the school 5 administration's attitude toward inclusion were mixed. At one end of the spectrum a general teacher said "The roles of the school administration and their attitudes towards inclusion are positive. They encourage inclusion and have asked all teachers to help SLD pupils and the LD teacher, and to make sure all SLD pupils are getting on well in their classes" (S5GT1). A special needs teacher supported this, stating "All the administration in our school helps us as they can; the head teacher always asked all teachers about SLD pupils' progress, also they encourage inclusion" (S5ST1). In contrast two of the general teachers observed that "inclusion is not encouraged, also there is no collaboration from the administration for SLD pupils" (S5GT2) and "they did not help us to provide education materials, they accepted a lot of pupils in our school even though I told them we could not teach all those pupils because of the school building and size of classrooms" (S5GT3). This view was shared by at least one of the special needs teachers who commented "In my opinion, they discourage inclusion; they do not like our pupils, we are always told 'we have a lot of problems from your pupils'" (S5ST2).

## **Human resources**

Turning to human resources support for inclusive classrooms, there was a call for additional professional support services and teaching assistants. Special needs teachers and general teachers both felt professionals' advice would be a welcome addition, one special needs teacher asserting "Our school has to have professionals" (S5GT2). Despite the views of the education supervisors that there were enough teachers specialising in learning difficulties and that they helped the teachers and schools to use the education aids provided, and despite an admission by the general education supervisor that more education aids were needed, the overall impression was one of unreadiness for inclusion at the time when inclusion is first implemented in a school. All teachers and headteachers agreed they would benefit from having health professionals attached to the school and hoped to have them (headteachers, S2GT4, S3ST1). "We hope to have them in our school, they will really help us" (S2T4) and "Professionals should be available at every school" (S2GT5). The headteacher, general teachers and special needs teacher in school 3 all believed their school would benefit from professionals' presence in the school. "We should have one professional at least to help the teachers in the school" (S3GT2), "they will help us to do the best, give us advice for how to deal with LD pupils and general pupils" (S3GT3) and "Every school should have professionals; they play very important roles in schools" (S3GT5). Professionals such as speech therapists and psychologists were specified (with greater collaboration between them), especially for pupils with SLD. "We really need professionals to help and advise all school staff" (S1GT1). In particular there was a perception that the provision of appropriate professionals by the Ministry of Education (MoE) could "create a suitable learning environment for all pupils" (S1GT3). General and special needs teachers in school 4 together with the headteacher strongly identified the need for professionals to support inclusion. "All

schools should have professionals, because they are playing important roles in inclusion in every school” (S4GT3). “The MoE should provide professionals for every school with SEN pupils to make sure that inclusion is going in the right direction” (S4GT5). The education supervisors were rather more satisfied with the situation, stating that “there are lot of professionals at special schools, however in inclusive schools we do not have this, but professionals visit the school monthly” (SG), with another one adding “no inclusive schools have professionals but usually they visit the schools” (SS). Professionals in this context include speech therapists, educational psychologists and peripatetic special needs consultant teachers, but are not necessarily limited to these.

One specific suggestion made by teachers about the type of additional resources required was teaching assistants for inclusive classrooms. This was supported by headteachers, general teachers and special needs teachers alike. A general teacher in school 3 replied “Provide us with school assistant teachers to help us in the inclusive classroom” (S3GT4), a view echoed by a general teacher in school 5 (S5GT3) and school 3 (S5GT3). The participants who supported teaching assistants’ presence in the classroom had no specific ideas of what these assistants should be or do, but recognized that some of the children in an inclusive classroom needed more time and attention than they alone could provide.

A summary of the perceptions of barriers revealed in the study is shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Barriers to inclusion

Statement	A great deal		To some extent		I am not sure		Not very much		Not at all	
	GT	ST	GT	ST	GT	ST	GT	ST	GT	ST
<b>Education policy</b>	3	2	4	4	2	1	10	1	4	2
<b>Premises/ Facilities</b>	8	2	9	4	1	1	1	-	4	3
<b>Teachers' lack of training</b>	22	6	1	3	-	-	-	1	-	-
<b>Teachers' lack of experience</b>	18	6	-	2	3	2	-	-	2	-
<b>Parents</b>	15	4	6	4	-	-	1	-	1	2
<b>Curriculum</b>	6	1	12	4	1	1	2	2	2	-
<b>Culture/ religion</b>	2	4	3	3	2	1	4	1	12	1
<b>Key: GT = General teacher ST = Special needs teacher</b>										

Many of the improvements identified to overcome the barriers are in the hands of the education supervisors and Ministry of Education. However, individual headteachers can and do exert great influence over their staff and the ethos of the school in terms of demonstrating their personal commitment by helping to make inclusion a reality in a range of ways, from preparing resource rooms to visiting classrooms on a regular basis to talk to pupils and ensure their needs are met.

#### ***4.6 Comparison between schools***

A summary of the key similarities and differences between schools with regard to conceptions of inclusion, teachers' and parents' attitudes, leadership, school ethos and organisation, curriculum and infrastructure is given in Table 4.5. The information shows that

MoE rules and procedures do not necessarily lead to consistency in the implementation of inclusion in schools. Where there are noticeable differences, these appear to be attributable to the influences of one or more of the following factors: headteacher, MoE and education supervisor.



**Table 4.5 Key similarities and differences between schools**

<b>Theme / subtheme</b>	<b>School 1</b>	<b>School 2</b>	<b>School 3</b>	<b>School 4</b>	<b>School 5</b>
<b>Meanings and practices of inclusion</b>	<p>Partial inclusion G/S</p> <p>All children learn in the same classroom S</p> <p>Access to general education G/S</p> <p>Academic attainment G</p> <p>Normalization S</p>	<p>All children learn in the same classroom G/S</p> <p>Access to general education G</p> <p>Reducing the deficit caused by learning difficulties G</p>	<p>Partial inclusion G</p> <p>All children learn in the same classroom G</p> <p>Access to general education G/S</p>	<p>Catering for individual difference G</p> <p>All children learn in the same classroom G/ S</p> <p>Access to general education G</p>	<p>Social, partial inclusion G/S</p> <p>Access to general education G</p>
<b>Teachers' and parents' attitudes</b>	<p>Special and general teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion of LD</p> <p>Some general teachers have negative attitudes towards SLD</p> <p>Parents have positive attitudes</p>	<p>Special and general teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion of LD</p> <p>Some parents refuse to let their daughter have lessons in the resource room</p>	<p>Special and general teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion of LD</p> <p>Some parents refuse to let their daughter have lessons in the resource room</p>	<p>Special and general teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion of LD</p> <p>Some parents refuse to let their daughter have lessons in the resource room</p>	<p>Special and general teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion of SLD</p> <p>Parents of children with SLD agreed to lessons in the resource room</p>

Theme / subtheme	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
<b>Barriers</b>	<p>Staff do not have training for SEN, inclusion</p> <p>General teachers teach LD pupils from their experience</p> <p>Physical environment</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>Staff do not have training for SEN, inclusion</p> <p>General teachers teach LD pupils from their experience</p> <p>Uneducated parents</p> <p>Physical environment</p>	<p>Staff do not have training for SEN, inclusion</p> <p>General teachers teach LD pupils from their experience</p> <p>Uneducated parents</p> <p>Physical environment</p> <p>Curriculum</p>	<p>Staff do not have training for SEN, inclusion</p> <p>General teachers teach LD pupils from their experience</p> <p>Uneducated parents</p> <p>Physical environment</p>	<p>Staff do not have training for SEN, inclusion</p> <p>No LD pupils</p> <p>Uneducated parents</p> <p>Physical environment</p> <p>Curriculum</p>
<b>School ethos and collaboration</b>	<p>Good home-school collaboration</p> <p>Good relationships between general teachers</p> <p>Not very good general / special teacher relationships</p>	<p>No home-school collaboration</p> <p>Good relationships between general and special teachers</p>	<p>No home-school collaboration</p> <p>Good relationships between general and special teachers</p>	<p>No home-school collaboration</p> <p>Good relationships between general and special teachers</p>	<p>No home-school collaboration</p> <p>Good relationships between general and special teachers</p>

Theme / subtheme	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
<b>School ethos and collaboration (continued)</b>	<p>Good relationship between administration and teachers</p> <p>Very good relationships between all teachers and pupils</p> <p>LD pupils have a lot of friends and most pupils friendly to SLD and LD pupils</p>	<p>Good relationship between administration and teachers</p> <p>Some poor relationships between teachers and pupils</p> <p>Pupils feel like family</p>	<p>Good relationship between administration and teachers</p> <p>Very good relationships between all teachers and pupils</p> <p>LD pupils have a lot of friends</p>	<p>Good relationship between administration and teachers</p> <p>Very good relationships between all teachers and pupils</p> <p>LD pupils have a lot of friends and pupils friendly to LD pupils</p>	<p>Good relationship between administration and teachers</p> <p>Very good relationships between all teachers and pupils</p> <p>SLD pupils have a lot of friends and most pupils friendly to SLD</p>
<b>Leadership, training and resources</b>	<p>1 in-school session on SEN for general teachers</p> <p>More education aids needed</p>	<p>1 in-school session on SEN for general teachers</p> <p>More education aids needed</p>	<p>No training for general teachers</p> <p>No education aids</p>	<p>1 in-school session on SEN for general teachers</p> <p>More education aids needed</p>	<p>No training for general teachers</p> <p>No agreement between MoE and school</p> <p>No education aids</p>

Theme / subtheme	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
<b>Leadership, training and resources (continued)</b>	<p>Resource room ready</p> <p>Two classrooms ready for SLD</p> <p>School needs more MOE support</p>	<p>Resource room ready</p> <p>School needs more MOE support</p>	<p>Resource room not ready</p> <p>Headteacher did not act to prepare resource room</p> <p>Lack of support from MOE</p>	<p>Resource room ready</p> <p>School needs more MOE support</p>	<p>Not ready</p> <p>Lack of support from MOE</p>

A number of highlights from the comparison table are:

- Two schools (1 and 5) mentioned social, partial inclusion with school 5 defining inclusion only in this way. It was mainly the general teachers who understood inclusion as access to general education, with the exception of school 3, where both special and general teachers shared this interpretation. General teachers in two schools (2 and 4) viewed access to general education as an essential component of inclusion.
- All schools except school 5 accounted for academic attainment by special needs pupils in their definition of inclusion in general.
- School 3 had good relationships with pupils, although not as warm and friendly as either school 1 or school 4, and teacher-child relationships in school 5 were also very warm.
- All schools except school 1 cited parents, their lack of education in particular, as barriers to inclusion.
- All schools, even the newly built, mentioned premises and education aids and resources as being insufficient. Essentially, all schools perceived the challenges that inclusion brings could be faced though good infrastructure and access to professional expertise, promoting a view of inclusion as a problem that requires a technical solution, rather than engaging with its contested nature and the ways in which top down educational policy actually translates into practice.

#### ***4.7 Being a female researcher in SA context***

During the data collection period, the researcher encountered a number of challenges in relation to the parents, pupils and teachers.

##### **4.7.1 Gatekeeping and negotiating access**

Potential difficulties with accessing participants had been anticipated from an early stage in the development of the study, and pressures of time on teaching staff had led to amendments to the proposed data collection instruments following the pilot phase. The researcher was as prepared as possible to face any challenges arising from difficulties in accessing participants, for example by trying to ensure that the participants saw a value in the research so that they gave their time for it.

##### **a) Teachers**

Collecting data from teachers was challenging because the teachers were very busy preparing and delivering lessons in schools. This often meant that the researcher had to wait for 2 or 3 lessons before the teacher became available. Initially, many of the teachers refused to participate in the study, mainly due to time pressures, but on some occasions the headteacher's assistant facilitated the process by speaking to the teachers and encouraging them to help the researcher as much as they could. This worked well with some of the teachers. With some other teachers, the researcher needed to wait for an opportunity to explain the research to them in more detail and provide reassurance.

## b) Parents

The researcher successfully completed all the interviews with headteachers, teachers, supervisors and children but experienced considerable difficulty in arranging and conducting interviews with parents. The researcher had plenty of experience dealing with parents (4 years as a teacher and 5 years as a headteacher) so thought at first that collecting data from parents would be achieved without much difficulty. However, four of the five schools in the study were located in areas where parents had very low levels of education, operating within a culture where a stranger is not always welcome, so there was not only lack of understanding, but also suspicion and hostility on the part of many parents that posed obstacles to collecting data from them. Each school presented a special challenge and each school had its own story of challenge. The researcher had taken the phone number for the pupils who had been interviewed and letters had been sent home with all the pupils in the classes concerned to inform parents about the research. In fact, data was collected from half the number originally planned, ten instead of twenty. Logistically it was almost impossible to arrange interviews because parents do not come to school every day, generally preferring to send a letter or phone. If they visit the school, they do so for a specific purpose related to their daughter's academic needs. In addition, their husbands are usually waiting for them in the car and so they finish what they have come to do and leave quickly. During the time spent at the school, the researcher did not see any parents come, so it was decided to conduct the interviews by telephone rather than face to face. This made it possible to carry out interviews with parents rather than abandon a potentially important source of data. Experience from the researcher's master's dissertation had shown that interviews with parents could be very difficult to arrange but fortunately

had found most of them during a parents' meeting. Before returning to the UK, the researcher ensured that all the names and contact numbers of parents provided by the school administration were properly recorded. In addition, all parents in this study received a letter explaining the purpose of the research and giving the researcher's mobile number, an important point because in Saudi Arabia women do not reply to any mobile number they are unsure about.

In school 1, many parents were educated and requested a telephone interview but found it very difficult to arrange a mutually suitable time for interview. Several, including teachers and doctors, stated that the scope of the research was with regard to children with SEN and thus irrelevant to them in that their children did not have such needs. The researcher persisted and explained their role in the research and why it was important to obtain views from parents of all children.

Parents living in the village had little or no education themselves and low incomes. Thus their understanding of inclusion, SEN or learning difficulties was limited. The headteacher of school 2 told the researcher that many of the families depend on charity, also that some men might have many wives, some living with him and some being divorced. One story told by the headteacher left a strong impression: "One day, one of our pupils was ill so we phoned her father to ask him to come and pick his daughter up from the school, but he did not remember his daughter and his wife, he asked us to give him the name of his daughter or give the mother's name for that daughter because he had many wives and children and also the woman can marry two or three men without taking into account their children". The number of spouses includes those who are divorced or who have died. This story illuminates the complexity of the families and the dissonance between how the school perceives



parents and their availability to support the school and the challenges that families face within a given social and cultural context which may not be conducive to supporting liaisons between families and state organisations such as schools.

There is another illuminating story related to parents' role and capability with regard to supporting their children's schooling. Anecdotally, teachers reported that almost all the parents of children with learning difficulties held poor views about SEN, inclusion and the research, but one particular incident stood out. When the researcher asked the parents of one child for permission to interview their daughter, they felt that through this request their daughter had brought great shame on them and so they took their daughter out of school for several weeks. The headteacher was concerned about the pupil and her academic achievement and phoned the parents to assure them that neither they nor their daughter would be interviewed. The headteacher had to ask the parents several times before they finally agreed to bring their daughter back to school. This shows the clashing perspectives and aims between what parents in some communities believe about SEN and inclusion and the school culture which operates within a top down policy context.

As some schools located in areas where parents have little or no education and low levels of income, the school strongly advised the researcher not to contact parents for a telephone interview. Prior agreement with the school had led the researcher to understand that it was simply a matter of contacting the school to confirm parents' telephone numbers. However, the headteacher advised the researcher not to conduct telephone interviews because they were unlikely to be able to give any useful

responses but also because they felt that researchers, like policy inspectors and others in formal positions, were people to be avoided in case they found themselves in trouble with the authorities. The headteacher involved said that she had tried her best to engage with parents at parents' meetings and to put on training for them, but those who came did not understand whatever she said to them and could not see any value in this engagement.

#### **4.7.2 Researcher's involvement: the professional and emotional challenges**

As a former teacher and headteacher, the researcher found it extremely difficult to handle some of the problems identified during the fieldwork. Although it is clear that a researcher is powerless to change what they find in carrying out fieldwork such as this, and that therefore feelings have to be set aside, nonetheless it can be very difficult to process those feelings when situations arise. Some of the challenges faced are described in the following paragraphs.

When one of the 'hands up' exercises with children showed that relationships between pupils and teachers – one teacher in particular – were not good, the children asked the researcher to change the teacher in question: "This teacher thinks we are tables or chairs without feeling and emotion. Please ask the headteacher to change her - we do not like her at all". The researcher discussed the problem with the headteacher and discussed the possibility of running a small training session for the teachers about the importance of teacher-pupil relationships and the influence this has on their pupils' achievement.

In another school it was the first term for inclusion and the parents did not know anything about inclusion. Although they and another school were situated in an area

characterized by low levels of income and education, the other schools had provided training for parents about learning difficulties and inclusion whereas this school had not. The school administration had simply sent letters to parents seeking their consent to enrolling their daughters in a learning difficulties programme. The researcher asked the special needs teachers how they had left out the parents who have an important role with regard to inclusion. If parents do not understand inclusion they cannot and will not help because they will experience the common human response to the unknown – fear. The researcher advised the special needs teacher to deliver important training for the parents and to do something similar for the general teachers in the school.

At the one school where the resource room was completely unprepared, the researcher was asked by the headteacher, who was a friend, to discuss with the headteacher and the learning difficulties teacher how they could help pupils with learning difficulties to improve without any education aids. The researcher asked why they had not done as some other schools and equipped the room themselves. The SEN teacher said she could afford to provide the education aids but had asked the headteacher for a budget and been told there was no money for the resource room. The researcher advised the teacher to create simple education aids such as making a clock with hands using circular cheese cartons to help with basic maths. The researcher also encouraged the headteacher to take action to equip the resource room and to give some money from the school budget towards this. The researcher knew from her experience that this can be done and that it is ultimately the headteacher's responsibility towards her school and her pupils to do as much as possible. The headteacher stated that the SEN

administration had visited the school and would be equipping the resource room as soon as possible. It was less an issue of lack of creativity but more an issue of whether the teacher perceived her role to create resources and had sufficient time to do so.

#### ***4.8 Conclusion***

This section has drawn together the key findings under each of the themes of the analysis, namely conceptions of inclusion, teaching strategies and curriculum, school ethos and collaboration, and leadership, training and resources. Inclusion was conceived as integration (locational and possibly functional integration) together with a sense of belonging strongly underpinned by Islamic values and beliefs. However, whilst teachers were generally found to share the same ideal of inclusion with all girls learning together in one classroom, there was recognition that practically, given the geography and population increase, this may not happen soon. The vast majority of participants considered inclusion to be both important and beneficial to the education of pupils with SEN and, to a lesser extent, for all pupils, although even in school 3 which had the largest number of dyslexic pupils there was almost no consideration of their needs beyond resource room sessions. Key benefits were seen as improvement of self-concept and the acquisition of good social and education habits by pupils with SEN.

Under teaching strategies and the curriculum, many positive elements were reported, with an emphasis on co-operative teaching and learning, varied teaching strategies that engaged all the children's senses and a curriculum that included life and social skills. However, it was recognized that much more could be done, such as ensuring

that all teachers understood and could apply differentiation and that they were all confident in managing an inclusive classroom. Teachers called for easing restrictions in the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties, saying they should focus more on life skills, with two schools having developed their own materials for pupils with SLD in order to supplement formal curriculum materials.

In general, the school ethos was one of care and encouragement, firmly rooted in Islamic precepts, although home-school collaboration was highlighted as a weak area in 4 of the 5 schools in the sample and at least some of the teachers in all schools considered that collaboration between teachers should be strengthened. On the whole, relationships and attitudes were quite positive, in particular teacher-pupil relationships involving children with SEN and pupil-pupil relationships. However, improvements are possible in all the schools in the case study, in particular in school 2. Care needs to be taken in introducing inclusion that when pupils with severe learning difficulties are enrolled at the school, all staff and pupils understand their role in making SEN pupils feel truly welcome.

Significant barriers were posed by lack of engagement with parents, training and infrastructure, especially considering increasing school populations. Training was considered to be inadequate by the vast majority of general teachers and by all but one of the headteachers, a view shared by the special needs teachers. Human resources, such as professionals, sufficient special needs teachers and teaching assistants, were perceived to be another weak area and viewed fairly negatively by most of the teachers and the headteachers. More professionals such as speech therapists to be involved with schools, on a more regular basis and for more hours, were needed.

In contrast to most western studies, teachers attached considerable importance to the physical environment. Possible reasons are that overcrowding is a real and pressing problem in many schools, many school buildings are old and unsuitable, newer schools are built on traditional lines, and that teachers express underlying frustrations and dissatisfactions with lack of time, salary differences and so forth in this way. It may also be that the presence of a strong moral framework to guide the implementation of inclusion reduces the need, or perceptions of the need, for a more academic and philosophical debate and, as a result, attention is more focused on the practicalities.

The lack of engagement with parents is a major barrier in view of the importance attached to parent-teacher collaboration in helping children with dyslexia. Although parents may reject the idea their daughter has a disability in order to protect her and the family from shame, they need support from schools to begin to bring about changes in this respect. There is a need for parents' capabilities to be developed in order for them to assist in developing the capabilities of their daughters.

## **Chapter Five DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify the key factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of inclusive practices in Saudi Arabia, and to ascertain the attitudes of Saudi teachers and parents towards the educational inclusion of pupils with SEN, specifically learning difficulties (with a focus on dyslexia). It also aimed to discover how inclusion is understood and practised in schools within the cultural and religious framework of Saudi Arabia, exploring the western concept of inclusion within the Saudi Arabian context in terms of its meanings and understandings.

The findings have shown that whilst Saudi Arabian educational policy encouraged inclusive education, the practices of inclusion regarding children with SEN tended toward locational and possibly functional integration rather than inclusive education. Special education services were provided for pupils with learning difficulties (mainly dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia) through individual sessions in resource rooms and in separate classrooms for pupils with SLD, a form of delivery which accords with the Islamic precept of identifying and meeting the varying needs of vulnerable members of society. Education supervisors, headteachers, general and SEN teachers held mostly positive attitudes towards inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties but were less positive about including children with cognitive impairments and behavioural disorders. Inclusion was understood by teachers as “accessing the general curriculum with additional support” and the benefits were seen as reductions in social, educational and psychological deficit and difference for children with special needs.

Parents held similar positive views of inclusion and its benefits for SEN children, although in 4 out of the 5 schools of the sample parents declined to take part in this study, reflecting the Bedouin heritage in which noticeable disability is a social stigma that compromises the public image of the family. Concepts of equality, equity, difference, diversity and inclusion within Islam influenced parents' and teachers' understandings of inclusion and its implementation within a primary school setting, with equity accorded considerable importance, whilst diversity was downplayed and minimised. Implementation of inclusion was also impacted by central educational policy in a number of ways. For example, separate teacher training routes for general and special needs teachers and a lack of provision and take-up of in-service opportunities resulted in low levels of collaboration and a predominance of traditional teaching methods in inclusive classrooms. School infrastructure, size and layout of classrooms, all determined at national level, were perceived as barriers to further implementation of inclusion. In contrast, the national curriculum, with additional support, was generally considered appropriate for SEN pupils. Saudi Arabian headteachers have less authority and power than their western counterparts, although were nonetheless able to exert a real influence on how inclusion was implemented. This was visible in the efforts made to prepare schools for inclusion, and the relationships established between pupils, teachers and parents and particularly in home-school collaboration which was a weak area in 4 of the 5 case study schools. The reluctance of many parents to take part in the study raises concerns, as does their widespread lack of participation in education matters. Finally, teachers were found to accomplish more when they were better supported, for example, via additional human resources such as professionals and teaching assistants, a wider range of equipment



and other educational resources and more accessible opportunities for training and professional development. The ensuing discussion is divided into seven main parts: understandings of inclusion in Saudi Arabia; teachers' attitudes; parents' attitudes; parent participation; school ethos and collaboration; leadership, premises and resources; and implications for policy and practice. The discussion concludes by summarizing answers to the research questions.

## **5.2 Understandings of inclusion in Saudi Arabia**

The findings showed that inclusion was mainly understood as locational integration with access to the general curriculum for SEN pupils and with benefits applying almost wholly to SEN pupils. General teachers' overall viewpoint of inclusion was "including pupils who have learning difficulties in general school to improve their difficulties" (School 2 General teacher 1), modified in some statements as in "including them in general school and providing them with Special Education services" (S3GT3) and "inclusion means there is a special classroom for SEN pupils and we have to include them at every opportunity such as free time and social activities" (S3GT4). However, the education supervisors and just under half the teachers and parents considered inclusion involved being in the same classroom.

"Include LD pupils with pupils without LD in normal classrooms taking into account LD pupils have support from LD teachers" (S3GT1).

"Include pupils who have LD to get information from their teachers with other pupils in normal classroom" (S3GT2).

The last four quotes from different teachers in the same school cover partial social inclusion, extra support and equal treatment in inclusive classrooms, illustrating disparate understandings of inclusion. However, a shared understanding was considered important by Stockall and Gartin (2002) to avoid marginalisation of some children so that, for example, children with serious skills deficits were not only included socially and in the general curriculum (one understanding of inclusion) but were also enabled to develop specific skills which they would need for everyday life outside school and in later life (another understanding of inclusion).

The findings suggest a 'least restrictive environment' (LRE) approach which has been defined as the educational setting which best meets individual learning needs of children with disabilities while educating them together with pupil with students without disabilities as far as possible (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Although official Saudi Arabian policy asserts that regular schools are the natural environment for educating students with SEN (MoE, 2002a), special education for children with mild to moderate learning difficulties consists of slight adaptations to the curriculum and individual or small group support through resource room sessions with special needs teachers, while for children with severe learning difficulties there are separate classrooms within regular schools. On the one hand, provision of separate classrooms for SLD pupils recognizes their rights to education, while acknowledging that a different approach involving additional support, fewer subjects and a greatly adapted curriculum is needed to enable them to benefit. Providing access to education is a first step towards inclusion and Saudi Arabia is still in the process of enabling all special needs children to access education through a programme of locational integration.

Furthermore, implementation of inclusion varies by country, for example resource room sessions are also used in Jordan (Al-Zyoudi, 2006), Oman (Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman, 2008) and Bahrain (Nadra, 2009), while in some western countries such as Poland (Gil, 2007) and France (Benoît, 2006) the emphasis is on providing education in settings such as special centres and the home as well as locational inclusion, while other western countries have introduced teaching assistants into classrooms to increase support for all children who need it (for reasons such as language as well as disability). On the other hand, practices involving pullout sessions and separate classes have been criticized as failing to challenge the status quo and allowing segregation to continue, albeit on the same site (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005). This points to a gap between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reality of the implementation at a local level. The tensions that underpin inclusion in a non western context are discussed in the section exploring issues regarding equity and equality.

Findings were also compared on conceptions of inclusion as ‘belonging’ (Voltz, Brazil and Ford, 2001; Miller and Katz, 2002 and Ellis et al., 2003) where ‘belonging’ is a feeling experienced by individual children and adults and a human measure of the extent to which a society or school is inclusive. Belonging was characterized in this study by frequent references to family; “classes feel like a big family” (S1GT1 and S2GT1) and “I encourage them [LD pupils] to feel like family members” (S1ST5). The strongest sense of belonging was observed in school 1, where all children used the resource room as an educational resource from time to time. This indicates a lack of ‘othering’, because the resource room was seen by children as a useful and good place to go for all children. In contrast to the use of language such as ‘SEN’ in the

discourses of educational inclusion, which has been argued as damaging to inclusion (Thomas and Loxley, 2001), children in school 1 talked about the ‘difficulties room’ in the same way they talked about ‘playground’, a part of the school that was for everyone to use with no negative connotations. This interpretation of the children’s use of the room is supported by Prosser and Loxley (2007) who asserted that space in a school cannot be neutral because children attach meanings to rooms (both positive and negative), for example the headteacher’s office or their classroom. Another example of belonging was seen in school 4, where all year 3 pupils, including three with learning difficulties, were having a little party to celebrate the end of term. They were all very happy, enjoying themselves and laughing, and spent the whole break together. I asked them “Why did you do that?”. They replied “Today is the last day, we want to celebrate with our friends”. Then I asked them “Do you like each other?” to which they replied “We love each other, our feeling towards each other is like sisters”. Then I asked “Who is an LD pupil?” Three girls put their hands up, and said, with no trace of embarrassment, “We are LD pupils. The LD teacher told us for nearly overcoming our difficulties we will get a big gift from her”. This example also illustrates the importance of feeling respected and being able to do one’s best, as emphasized by Miller and Katz (2002), which was evident in 4 out of the 5 schools and characterized by an implicit model of realizing individual potential. In the fifth school, no such model could be identified. This prompts the search for possible explanations for the paradoxical co-existence of a feeling of belonging and separate classrooms for some pupils with pullout sessions for those with dyslexia.

One possible explanation lies in the Saudi Arabian models of disability and SEN, which do not fall neatly into any of the main categories identified by Booth and Ainscow (2002), Sen (2004), Fredrickson and Cline (2009) and Hodgkinson and Vickerman (2009) while containing elements of most of them. For example, elements of the medical model are apparent in statements such as “many pupils overcome their difficulties” (H2) and “social benefits increase the normalization of SLD pupils” (Special Education Supervisor). However, it can be argued that an emphasis on correct assessment of needs matched to appropriate provision is a necessary foundation for inclusion. Furthermore, elements of the social model can be detected in statements such as; “if we can meet the SEN pupils’ needs then we can include them” and “one key point for successful inclusion is making a suitable policy for each district because we cannot make all points of policy applicable everywhere” (Special Education Supervisor). Components of models which emphasize economic issues and human rights are also present, the former in, for example, the allowances paid to families with SEN children and the latter in the application of an Islamic understanding of human rights, one not based on disability politics as in western countries but on “rights due from the parents, society and the state” including education (Article 7, Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, 1990) and on an understanding of equality as being ‘equal but different’. The Islamic obligation to love for another what one loves for oneself is consistent with notions of compassion and empathy but far removed from condescension, hence cannot be equated with the western notion of charity which can have negative connotations in terms of denoting relationships characterised by power inequality. Evolving models of disability in western countries have subsumed a compassion-based model into the bio-

psychosocial (Fredrickson and Cline, 2009) and capability models (Sen, 1999) which strive to value individuals' diversity and uniqueness. However, in Saudi society it is not diversity but rather homogeneity that is valued due to the value of conformity within the family unit which is the core of both Bedouin and Islamic society (Patai, 2002). Conformity in striving to follow Muslim precepts, in dress and in customs and habits is expected by the wider society and pressures are exerted within the community to ensure conformity.

The study found no clear distinction or link between inclusion and integration, in contrast to Avramidis and Bayliss (2002) who distinguished between inclusion as about belonging, and integration as the process for achieving inclusion. Rather, integration in Saudi Arabia resulted directly from the implementation of top-down education policy while inclusion as belonging related to the many references to family values. In accordance with the importance attached to the family unit in both Bedouin culture (Patai, 2002) and Islam (Whyte and Ingstad, 1995), the findings suggest that in Saudi Arabia family is the paradigm that is set to guide catering for SEN children, rather than a human rights framework as in western contexts.

A human rights framework directly challenges the LRE concept by requiring all children to be able to attend a local mainstream school; indeed, it can be extended to the notion that no child should be educated separately because of a learning difficulty or disability (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). However, a human rights framework alone does not address the challenges of inclusion because it neither specifies the

content of the education to which children have a right nor is it prescriptive about the relationship between education and adult life. For example, in a school with inclusive classrooms where all children studied a differentiated curriculum with peer learning activities, Stockall and Gartin (2002) found that not all children experienced a sense of belonging, despite a unique learning environment of care and co-operation which focused on inclusion in all opportunities for social interaction and participation in class, and which facilitated acquisition of general knowledge by students with disabilities. Some children lacked essential skills, indicating a failure to tackle skills deficits, a failing due to “an overcoding of social activity rather than diagnostic and prescriptive interventions”, in other words emphasizing social interactions and benefits at the expense of identifying and meeting individual learning needs (Stockall and Gartin, 2002, p.186).

Comparing results with approaches to inclusion proposed by Ainscow et al. (2006, p.15) (which are “inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorised as ‘having special educational needs’, inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion, inclusion in relation to all groups seen as being vulnerable to exclusion, inclusion as developing the school for all, inclusion as ‘Education for All’ and inclusion as a principled approach to education and society”), the understanding of inclusion in Saudi Arabia is strongly about students classified as having SEN and, to a lesser extent, concerned with Education for All. The Saudi Arabian model of special education services is closer to mainstreaming / integration than to inclusion since the aim is to improve the academic or educational performance of pupils so that they ‘earn’ their place in the regular classroom. However, it is also an approach to society built on the framework of the family unit, albeit with a degree of dissociation between

the technical educational solution to inclusion and the equity-based compassionate approach underpinned by Islamic precepts, a dichotomy reflected in education supervisors' and special needs teachers' comments.

“Of course, inclusion for severe disabilities does make a difference, especially if we do not have their equipment” (General education supervisor). “Ideal inclusion is including all pupils in all respects – academic, social, education – to meet their needs” (Special education supervisor).

Whereas the general supervisor's statement tends to reflect the Bedouin heritage in which disability is a source of shame, the compassionate Islamic approach underpins the special education supervisor's comment who understands ideal inclusion to include all pupils irrespective of their disabilities. A similar disparity is evident in special teachers' views, most of whom consider it possible to include all pupils with SEN, while others felt that some disabilities such as epilepsy did not allow inclusion.

The Saudi Arabian adoption of the pullout session approach supported by numerous separate programmes and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) can be explained by a closer examination of equity and equality in western and Islamic settings.



### **5.2.1 Equity and equality in inclusion**

One of the paradoxes at the heart of inclusion is that an increase in equity reduces equality, because more resources are directed towards helping those who are identified as needing more help which means reducing the resources available to others. This raises issues of equity and equality and issues of cultural relativism associated with the redistribution of resources, to whom they are allocated and how, since differences in cultures and economies are reflected in choices made about resource allocation. Miles and Singal (2010) warn that attention needs to be paid to the cultural and contextual appropriateness of educational programmes addressing inequity, whether social or educational. Different interpretations of inclusive education indicate not only a possible conceptual confusion but also the possibility that it can take different forms according to a context. Although Dyson (2004) has identified a common thread, namely that inclusion is a process of challenging exclusion in schools and communities and of being aware of potential threats to equity, this assertion leaves unanswered the question of how equity is understood. Equitable access to education underpins statements such as that by Al-Mousa (2010) which reasserts the role of special education institutes for children with multiple complex physical and psychological needs which cannot be adequately met in regular schools. The Islamic position on equity is that those who are strong and wealthy must take care of the weak and poor, while equality applies to all living things being deserving of equal respect as creations of Allah. Saudi academics and clerics are deeply committed to upholding the Islamic principle of ‘equal but different’: every human being is created by Allah and is therefore to be valued as a human being.

Whilst western thinking has evolved from human rights and from 'equal opportunities' to 'diversity' in recognition of the fact that identical treatment for all fails to acknowledge important differences, Islamic precepts have always emphasized equity rather than equality.

The Islamic position explains why each category of SEN has its own programme and why care is taken to assign pupils to the most appropriate programme. It is not about labelling individuals but about identifying and meeting their particular needs, since once a child is allocated to a programme, the Individual Educational Plan is a customised and living document that supports individual development educationally, socially and psychologically, with detailed specific objectives that are regularly revised. Hence in Saudi Arabia it is widely accepted to educate children with disabilities in a way that combines integration with their peers with the accommodation of individual needs (Al-Mousa, 1992), since this recognizes both difference and equity. Authority for this equity principle is derived from the highest possible source, Allah. Identification of individual problems and weaknesses is wholly consistent with the equity principle in Islam. In practice, however, in this study there was noticeably more equity in the treatment of pupils with dyslexia than in the treatment of pupils with severe learning difficulties who, notwithstanding separate classrooms and resources to meet their needs, found it more difficult to mix and make friends with other children. This indicates that despite the application of the equity principle within the education system to different categories of SEN in terms of assessing and meeting needs, in implementation processes equity is affected by traditional perceptions of disability as social stigma. The way in which this aspect of

inclusion is understood and viewed is also influenced by whether a perspective of cultural relativism is adopted.

### **5.2.2 Cultural relativist perspectives on inclusion**

From cultural relativism perspectives, the insistence of western countries on a universal human rights can be seen to constitute imperialist oppression. There is a difficulty with the application of both universal human rights and cultural relativist definitions of human rights from the Saudi Arabian viewpoint. The Saudi perspective holds that Islam is the absolute truth and that all human rights are granted by Allah rather than by any group of people except perhaps for clerics who are responsible, with teachers, for educating the entire population in the right way to live. On the one hand, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was announced as an absolute standard to be achieved for all nations and peoples (United Nations, 1948), a legal rather than a cultural standard, and one which represents the minimum required for protection of human dignity. Nussbaum (2008) also asserted human dignity as a universal standard and as a right, associating it with an inalienable human worth arising from individuals' capacities for activity and endeavour. Other principles in Nussbaum's version of capability theory include what she terms 'valued functionings' or universally valid notions of human dignity (such as 'Senses, Imagination, and Thought' and political and material 'Control over One's Environment') which are valued by most people in most cultures (Nussbaum, 2004). In contrast, cultural relativism asserts that truth and standards are relative and each viewpoint is as valid as any other, therefore one should not judge the practices of cultures by the values of

one's own culture. The 'truth' for any one individual or society is rooted in the relevant culture, so that in one country but not another, for example, inclusion could refer to gender or linguistic minorities or inclusion into a particular society rather than to the creation of an inclusive society. Some scholars have argued that a country's record on human rights should be judged according to their stage of economic development on the basis that economic development necessarily precedes the implementation of human rights (Peters, 2003 and Miles and Singal, 2010). One attempt to define human rights as an absolute standard was based on what people considered sufficiently important to put their lives or property at considerable risk to achieve (King and Murray, 2000), five measures of human security; poverty, health, education, political freedom, and democracy. Events in Arab countries in 2010-2011 have lent support to the idea that political freedom is an essential component of human rights, although this is not to be understood as synonymous with democracy, but may instead be focused on issues such as freedom of speech, fairer distribution of wealth or being able to choose an Islamic ruling party rather than an monarch or dictator who is perceived as not following Islam. Islamic states assert that democracy is a political concept created by human beings and therefore incompatible with the rule of divine law and associated absolute obedience. This assertion denies the existence of conflicting interests between the state (as a political entity) and communities (as civil associations) in some Arab and Asian societies. However, events in North Korea, Burma and Libya have shown that strong support for values of social harmony and homogeneity can result in dominance of particular leaders in regimes which impose such severe restrictions that human rights are clearly violated under the heading of 'cultural relativism'. From a relativist perspective, equity can be

understood as equality and independence among cultures (Benadusi, 2001), a comfortable and convenient concept in situations of rising regionalism and nationalism, competition for scarce resources and times of war. If however children are going to grow up into a world where international and intercultural communication is far more frequent and widespread, cultural relativism may be less appropriate because of the need to interact and establish working relationships across cultures. Within the understanding of inclusion as all children learning together and accessing the same curriculum, Saudi Arabia does not make adjustments for diversity in the same way as the UK where parents may withdraw children from certain lessons such as religious education or sex education classes. The much-mentioned British value of 'tolerance' is under considerable strain, not least because, for example, parents who withdraw their children from classes are not tolerant of these aspects of the general British education system whereas the system respects their wishes. Respect for differing points of view may be a more relevant value in education and society as proposed by Robinson and Jones-Diaz (2006).

A capability approach to human rights is also relativistic in the sense that it rejects a single measure of wealth and wellbeing and focuses on "expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen, 1999, p.3), with an emphasis on individuals having freedom to choose and create the freedoms they wish to enjoy. In order to have the freedoms to make choices about leading educated and healthy lives, Nussbaum (2004) argues that people require two particular capabilities, affiliation and practical reason. Nonetheless on matters of affiliation and freedom she is ambivalent, saying for example that some cultural preferences may lead women to experience oppression (for example, lack of

voting rights in cultures which hold that women should not vote) but at the same time arguing that adults' lifestyle choices should be respected. However, children are a special case, because of their vulnerability and also because of the "centrality of early childhood to the realization of a range of human capabilities" (Dixon and Nussbaum, 2012, p.553). It follows that parents' capabilities are important for enabling their children to realize their capabilities. Viewed through a capability lens, the outcomes of parents' interactions with their children are dependent on their own access to opportunities and capacity to take advantage of them. Schools and parents are jointly involved in supporting children to develop their capabilities and, according to Saito (2003), together with the wider society should support children to choose the capabilities they want to develop. Educational inclusion is thus inextricably linked not only with giving children the opportunities to develop and exercise capabilities but also with parents being able to develop and exercise capabilities both for themselves and to be able to support their children. In contrast to this western perspective, an Islamic society and education system requires children to develop above all capabilities of living life according to Muslim precepts and requires parents to think and act on behalf of their children until adulthood.

Whilst inclusion remains a complex and controversial philosophical issue for educators (Ainscow, 2007), practices in this study for the most part support the argument that acknowledging difference can be positive as well as negative (Norwich, 2008). This is consistent with Islamic teachings of tolerance and understanding towards individual differences within a Muslim culture, although there are cultural traditions hundreds of years old, especially in some of the villages, which still carry

the idea of disability as, at best, a shame on the family and, at worst, a punishment for some past or present sin. However, Islam offers a strong platform on which to build a more widespread and deeper sense of belonging for children with SEN because of its emphasis on helping people who have fewer advantages in life than oneself, although tensions between the Islamic and non-Islamic traditions require resolution in order to make progress. Cultural relativism can be problematic for inclusion because, as in Saudi Arabia, the existence of conflicting cultural attitudes towards disability and special needs can work against inclusion. In contrast, an accepted international standard could help to resolve such conflicts, although some aspects of human rights (especially political freedom) would be rejected at least temporarily by a number of countries. Hence cultural relativism can create problems within the context of human rights as well as for educational inclusion.

### **5.3 Teachers' and parents' attitudes**

#### **5.3.1 Teachers' attitudes**

This section opens with a discussion of teachers' expressed attitudes then explores whether these were demonstrated in their teaching strategies and approach to the general curriculum. Special education and general teachers were in general found to have positive attitudes towards inclusive education for children with learning difficulties, with 8 out of 10 teachers saying they were very or fairly positive about inclusion. "From what I can see attitudes are always positive because teachers deal

kindly with LD pupils” (S4GT2). Positive attitudes were translated into practice in and outside the classroom.

“Some pupils did not accept LD pupils. I dealt with this situation by increasing social activities in the last lesson every day until I saw attitudes changing for the better. Also I arranged for some pupils to be special helpers for each of the LD pupils. I wrote timetables for all my pupils, including LD pupils, to improve socialization. Also I help LD pupils to make friends in their classroom. I do my best to help every pupil in my class who needs my help” (School 5 General Teacher 1)

One teacher noticed a group of pupils welcome an LD pupil as a friend; the group sits and plays together in one place in the hall. “I notice them every day. If I notice any change, I advise them to help, deal with any problems and how to make friends, they really need our help” (School 5 General teacher 2)

Most teachers held an Islamic rather than a cultural view of disability: children with disabilities were to be helped and it was the responsibility of the teacher to help them. This confirms findings of studies in Malaysia by Ali et al. (2006) and in India by Nayak (2008) and is further supported by Al-Faiz (2006) who examined variables affecting teachers’ attitudes in Saudi Arabian boys’ primary schools concerning the inclusion of children with autism. Al-Faiz found that regardless of relevant training and experience, the majority of teachers in the sample held positive attitudes. In spite of the cultural tradition that disabilities can be a source of shame for families, the



strength of the religion and religious belief does seem to be a major influence on the acceptance of difference in Saudi Arabia.

Teachers were positive about the benefits of inclusion, especially for SEN pupils. “Inclusion affects SEN pupils positively in many respects” (Headteacher school 1). Inclusion was considered suitable for children with learning difficulties in terms of both education and emotional and social suitability, with benefits identified as increased self-esteem and a stronger sense of belonging, social interaction and friendships, soft skills development and learning through modelling of appropriate behaviour.

SEN pupils “develop an acceptance of self” (Headteacher school 1), “improve their self- concept” (School 1 Special needs teacher 2), “learn from pupils without SEN how to collaborate” (School 2 General teacher 1), “SLD pupils improve their social communication, for example learning from other pupils how to accept foreign pupils and make friends with them” (School 1 Special needs teacher 4) and “LD pupils are influenced by other pupils around them” (School 2 General teacher 5).

Although the principal benefits highlighted by teachers and headteachers were the development of social skills and self-esteem, it was perceived that there were also academic benefits, mainly expressed in terms of good educational habits but also recorded in pupil files in terms of achievement of targets in Individual Education Plans, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the school. These findings agree with those of Kochhar, West, and Taymans (2000), where students with SEN reported they were better able to study and learn in inclusive settings.

Results indicated generally positive teacher attitudes even in the absence of a number of key influencing factors such as training (Dickens-Smith, 1995), knowledge and confidence (Anderson et al, 2007; Koutrouba et al, 2006) and experience (Avramidis et al., 2000). This was somewhat surprising as many previous studies have emphasized the importance of teachers' positive attitudes for successful implementation of inclusion and have identified key influencing factors (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996; Carrington, 1999; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002 and Norwich 2002). One possible explanation for the expression of positive attitudes is social desirability, in that study participants wished to say the 'right' things. However, through triangulation and interrogating data from different sources, it became clear that teachers' behaviours were consistent with positive attitudes towards inclusion of LD pupils.

Results also indicate that inclusion is not accepted for children with some types of disability. For example, the headteacher in school 1 stated "inclusion means all children whose IQ ranges between average and more than average in general schools" (H1), supervisors anticipated resistance towards inclusion of pupils with SLD from general teachers and parents and some special needs teachers considered certain categories impossible to include.

One said "teachers will struggle to teach and accept SLD pupils in inclusive classrooms" (SG) while the special needs supervisor identified additional challenges of "provision for SEN, also the parents of pupils without SEN" (SS).

“We cannot include all the SEN categories, because some of them need too much time and effort from their teacher, and the most important thing is proper provision for SEN categories, to make sure we are implementing inclusion” (S1ST2, School 1, Special needs teacher 2). “My view is we include all pupils, with SEN or without SEN, but some SEN categories are prevented by their nature from inclusion, for example SEN pupils with aggressive behaviour, or epilepsy” (S1ST3, Special needs teacher 3). “I think we can include any categories of SEN, on condition we have the premises, special teachers, education materials, psychology professionals to help SEN pupils and their teachers” (S2ST1, School 2, Special needs teacher 1).

Teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion have been shown to be related to the nature and extent of the disability present. One UK study reported that teachers perceived students with emotional and behavioural difficulties as creating more stress than those with other types of disabilities (Avramidis et al., 2000) and similar findings have been reported for example in the United Arab Emirates (Alghazo and Gaad, 2004), and the Netherlands (De Boer et al., 2011).

Implementation of inclusion for pupils with dyslexia is not complete in Saudi Arabian primary schools and has yet to be extended to secondary schools. Implementation of programmes for children with severe learning difficulties, autism and emotional and behavioural disorder is following the programmes for learning difficulties. However, the foregoing quotes indicate that this is unlikely to be straightforward, and confirm

that the underlying philosophy in Saudi Arabia remains one of partial rather than full inclusion and that attitudes towards pupils with LD are more positive than towards pupils with SLD.

General teachers were mostly aware of the range of appropriate teaching strategies available such as co-operative learning and differentiation, with an emphasis on group activities which they felt benefited all pupils, although they tended not to use them due to lack of preparation time, insufficient resources, and inflexible classroom layouts. Despite statements such as “I adapt my teaching strategy to accommodate all pupils, I choose my strategy based on my experience with the curriculum” (School 3 General teacher 3), in this study there was very little mention or evidence of teaching strategies to help dyslexic children to read, probably reflecting a lack of knowledge and experience. However, a minority considered that “every category of SEN has a special teaching strategy, for example if we use dialogue methods with LD we cannot use them with SLD, especially with children who have speech disabilities” (S3GT3). In every school, teachers sought greater support to enable them to teach SEN children more effectively, emphasizing the need for improved supply of education aids. Earlier research indicated that teachers who assumed the disability to be inherent in the child were less likely to interact with individual SEN children than teachers who attributed most of the problems to arise from interaction between the child and the environment (Jordan et al., 1997) and that the latter were more likely to adapt teaching strategies to the child, which led to their choice of teaching strategies being more effective. Adjustments to teaching styles, appropriate variety of strategies and thorough planning can enhance inclusion (van Garderen and Whittaker, 2006).

Despite the range of teaching strategies mentioned and the considerable interest in newer methods for use in regular classrooms, observations suggested that traditional techniques remained dominant even in the resource room. A need for teachers to move away from traditional teaching methods was confirmed by parents; “all teachers use traditional teaching” (S1GP1) and “some teachers do not use resources when they are teaching” (S1GP5). Teachers’ expressed views broadly agreed with the conclusions of Davis and Florian (2004) who considered that a wide spectrum of teaching strategies and techniques were appropriate for almost all teaching situations in order to meet the needs of the diverse learners found in inclusive classrooms. This allows scope for specific techniques to be employed where children with specific disabilities have been shown to benefit from them, but not at the exclusion of the wider range of approaches.

Lewis and Norwich (2000) conducted a review of teaching strategies which they organised by categories of learning difficulty; grouping together severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, with separate sections for specific learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, and low attainment. This reflected their concern with investigating whether different teaching strategies could be associated with differences between categories of SEN learners. They concluded that only two of the fourteen categories they reviewed provided evidence of a specific pedagogy, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) and ASD. Their recommendation was for using and adapting teaching strategies to meet “unusual individual needs” (Lewis and Norwich, 2000, p.59). Later, they proposed a spectrum of teaching strategies ranging from low to high intensity (Lewis and Norwich, 2005), asserting that all were useful depending on circumstances and learners. One study in Wales

found that children with dyslexia benefited from high intensity strategies provided in extra hours (rather than pullout sessions) by a highly qualified and experienced specialist (Mackay, 2005).

The findings from this study suggest a mixed picture, bringing together a diverse pedagogy (such as collaborative learning and multisensory approaches) with predominantly traditional teaching methods in practice (such as copying from a board and completing exercises in a textbook). One teacher who said she could not teach learning difficulties pupils very well because she was trained to teach SLD pupils may be indicative of an aptitude-treatment interaction (ATI) approach which is typically underpinned by a biomedical model of special needs, as argued by Davis and Florian (2004). Such an approach assumes that a particular set of teaching strategies and techniques will minimize or overcome a specific difficulty, for example that there is one right way to teach children with dyslexia or that there are a number of ways depending on the identified cause and learning difficulties associated with dyslexia. This is evident in Saudi Arabia, where for example separate programmes have been designed for children with reading difficulties as compared with writing difficulties. Such programmes target the learning difficulty first and then consider the child through the production of the IEP. In contrast, most literature asserts that differentiated teaching is student-centred and can be personalized for individual learners and the context in which they are learning (Voltz, 2003), in other words starting with consideration of the child. However, debate continues about whether specific teaching strategies and techniques are needed to teach learners with particular types of disability. Overall, the literature therefore supports parents' suggestions that

further development of teaching methods and associated resources is appropriate, as wanted by all teachers.

The majority of teachers emphasized that greater variety and number of educational resources would help the implementation of inclusion, but were attempting to rise to the challenge, in this case mainly in relation to LD pupils. Parents also believed teachers needed to use resources more widely.

“The resources are good but they need to develop them, because all teachers use traditional teaching” (S1GP1) and "From my point of view, there are not enough resources in this school - some teachers do not use resources when they are teaching" (S1GP5).

This finding is consistent with findings related to the integration of students with severe learning difficulties; teachers thought inclusion was working well, wished for more resources, but treated the situation as a challenge to their skills and knowledge to ensure all pupils benefited (Subban and Sharma, 2005).

Results showed around half of all teachers considered the curriculum to be a barrier to some extent.

“The current curriculum is unsuitable for LD pupils because they need more time to work through it. The curriculum can be changed by reducing the number of subjects and making them closer to the pupil's environment and so help teachers to explore their pupils' interests...about examinations, we do not have any exams, but we have continuous

assessment for each subject. I think exams are unsuitable for LD pupils"

(School 2 General teacher 2)

Teachers were pragmatic about the use of the general curriculum and supporting access to it as far as possible but when access was not possible, proposing that the curriculum should be adapted to meet needs and abilities. Individual teachers in two of the schools had developed or were developing a special book for pupils with severe learning difficulties.

However, it has been suggested that students with disabilities are better engaged in learning in a general education environment because they are exposed to a wider variety of experiences than in a special education setting, leading to the concept of special education curricula being challenged (Giangreco and Cravedi-Cheng, 1998). A study by Moon et al. (2001), involving diverse students with various ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, indicated that, when the design is student-centred and the practice is individually-focused, curriculum modification is effective for all students regardless of their backgrounds. In contrast to this view, the relationship between dyslexia, literacy in the classroom and self-esteem makes the regular classroom unfriendly for dyslexic children (Riddick, 2006).

One child had progressed from the mental retardation curriculum through the learning difficulties curriculum to the regular curriculum, albeit a year below her age group, and had the goal of learning the same curriculum with her peers, indicating that, in certain circumstances, the general curriculum can aid motivation, perhaps where



associated with friendships. This is consistent with findings of a study by Lewis and Batts (2005) which showed that adjustments to content of the curriculum and exposure of learners to a range of varied opportunities to evidence their learning could, when coupled with the development of critical thinking, increase chances of attainment and achievement for all learners. At secondary school level, findings of a study in the US showed that inclusion led to an increase in numbers of students with disabilities gaining high school diplomas (United States Department of Education, 2002).

Adjustments to the curriculum may be problematic. Some teachers said either the number of subjects should be reduced or teachers should be given “freedom to teach it or not or choose any subject they like” (School 5 General teacher 1). Changes are typically designed and approved centrally and where there is flexibility for SLD pupils, education supervisors may not be able to help. The special education supervisor stated that “suitable changes for the curriculum are creating books for learning difficulties pupils that address the difficulties and needs of the pupils”, although this sounds more like making the existing curriculum more accessible. The general supervisor acknowledged she was not well placed to assist: “I do not know what the changes the pupils need in the curriculum because I have been a general supervisor for a long time”.

In sum, teachers held positive attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with dyslexia and other learning difficulties but less so where more severe cognitive impairments and behavioural problems were concerned. They felt that a greater variety of educational resources would help them to use a wider range of classroom strategies but opinions were divided about the extent to which the curriculum should be adapted.

### **5.3.2 Parents' attitudes**

Results showed the majority of parents of children with and without SEN who took part in the study expressed positive attitudes towards inclusion. Almost all parents saw inclusion as benefiting children with SEN. Typical statements from parents of children without SEN were “my daughter is a regular pupil so inclusion will not help her” (S1GP3) and “inclusion helps SEN pupils” (S1GP4). Mothers of children with SEN were generally enthusiastic: one praised inclusion for what “inclusion had done for my daughter, she has become like a regular pupil, her normalization increases day by day, her psychology has changed completely, she is doing the same as her classmates., there is a big improvement in my daughter’s academic achievement” (S1SP2). One parent of a child without SEN saw mutual benefits, saying “inclusion helps my daughter to make new friends at school, my daughter likes to play, chat and make friends with LD and SLD pupils, also she has become a very collaborative, helpful girl” (S1SP5). These positive attitude findings are consistent with those of Al-Mousa (2008) who found parents were more positive towards mainstreaming than towards special institutes. However, not all parents agreed, one parent justifying “a special class for LD pupils, because including them will take teachers’ time in inclusive classrooms and so other pupils will lose opportunities” (S1GP1, parent of child without SEN). Furthermore, it is evident from the numbers of parents who refused to participate in the research that there remain concerns and potentially widespread suspicion about either inclusion or educational research or both.

Teachers reported some parents refused to allow their child to learn in the resource room, rejecting the possibility their daughter might have learning difficulties. This agrees with Al-Ahano (2006) who argued that in a society that aims to be profoundly homogeneous, disability is not something to be openly acknowledged. Al-Ahano (2006) further asserted that the views of wider society held that learning difficulties (LD) did not persist throughout life and did not constitute a disability, therefore parents were less likely to reject these ideas, at least initially. However, if they came to believe that learning difficulties did persist and therefore were in effect a disability, this could increase resistance later. Whilst 'learning difficulties' may be a factual descriptive term, 'disability' carries connotations of undesirable differences in traditional social culture therefore by association parents will deny both labels. Al-Ahano (2006) also proposed that because Islam teaches that it is wrong to call people names, parents can also use religion to strengthen social norms and deny their daughters' condition. The tensions between faith and older cultural traditions could not be fully explored in this study but clearly impacted the participation of parents and hence the findings.

No parent support network was identified, nor evidence of interaction between parents, although where parents participated the parent-teacher-child relationships were working effectively, indicating that support was provided by teacher-parent interaction. Support in Saudi Arabian society is mainly confined to within-family networks and one or two close friends. In contrast, inclusion has been shown to result in parents of children with disabilities receiving higher levels of support because of greater interaction with other parents in a similar situation as well as school staff. It

has further been argued that they can access additional support and resource through this network (Kochlar et al., 2000).

### **5.3.3 Parent participation**

The extent of parental participation or indifference towards school is thought to have reflected the different socio-economic environments of the schools. Parents from traditional rural areas and, to a lesser extent, from the small town, continued to hold strong views about disability and learning difficulties that were clearly related to their negative attitudes towards inclusion as evidence by non-participation or brief hostile communication. According to teachers in two schools, socio-economic status was a factor for some parents, for example some parents could not send all their daughters to school on the same day because they shared clothes and shoes so were ashamed of their poverty. In the village school, a combination of poverty (families dependent on charity), very large families and Bedouin traditional beliefs in disability as shame and stigma were strongly in evidence. A factor in another school was the non-Saudi population, mainly immigrants, who preferred to remain out of sight and hence, in their view, out of trouble. In a third school, all the foregoing factors were apparent. The remaining two schools had predominantly middle class parents with higher levels of education and confidence, but even in these schools, teachers hoped for greater parent participation.

Although earlier studies had found higher educational levels to correspond with more positive parental attitudes towards inclusion (Leyser and Kirk, 2004 and Balboni and Pedrabissi, 2000), a study by Kalyva and colleagues analyzing parents' attitudes indicated that parents held positive attitudes towards inclusion irrespective of their educational level (2007). However, in these studies country contexts and research approaches were not directly comparable; implementation models differed, as did instruments used to assess positive attitudes.

Elliot et al. (2007) identify long-term collaboration of teachers and parents as vital to enabling children to develop strategies for dealing with their dyslexia and also improve their self-perception, a view supported by Frederickson and Cline (2009) who note the importance of collaboration between the school and family in overcoming dyslexia. Whilst there were instances of very strong collaboration, with a parent, special needs and general teachers all working together to develop the child's abilities through a sharing of objectives, schoolwork/homework and progress, as in "communicating with my daughter's teachers helps me to know her progress, and it helps them when they ask me to complete the teaching of some points at home" (S1SP5, parent of child with SEN), in very many cases there was an almost total absence of collaboration. For example, in some cases, parents refused to allow their child to attend lessons in the resource room; in others, they did not take part in initial diagnostic and planning processes. These findings correspond with those of Al-Herz (2008) who identified a lack of participation in the diagnosis of needs and preparation of IEPs. A failure to participate from the beginning makes it more difficult to achieve appropriate levels of engagement in implementation of the IEP and potentially hinders

the child's development. However, in Saudi Arabia separation is a largely unquestioned fact of life, as in the home and in public roles and the physical spaces in which they are carried out are distinct in terms of gender, age and qualification, an extension of the equal-but-different principle. Thus many parents and teachers will not recognize a need for more than perfunctory compliance with the minimum levels of co-operation contained in official procedures.

The refusal of many parents to participate in this study may be due in part to a non-acceptance and a sense of stigmatisation that disability brings in a homogenous society, strongly reinforced by the traditional value of conformity within the family grouping (Patai, 2002) and further strengthened by a lack of education in general and lack of understanding of SEN and inclusion in particular. Among non-nationals, concern to blend into Saudi society without attracting unnecessary attention is also a prime consideration. Another reason may be lack of awareness among parents due to lack of parent organisations and other networks for information. There are no family learning programmes in Saudi Arabia, neither do Parent Teacher Associations nor parent school governors exist. The non-participative stance is therefore not easy to overcome, although Green and Shinn (1995) have proposed that parents' attitudes can be influenced towards a more positive stance if they are given sufficient information about the benefits of inclusion for their child and their family as a whole. However, the wider role of parental engagement and involvement in their children's education is a contentious issue; in the UK, parents are expected to be full partners with the school, for example being fined for their child's unauthorised absence and attending sessions to learn what their children are learning so that they can help them at home,

while in Saudi Arabia they have specific functions to fulfil such as signing the homework book, giving consent and responding to invitations to participate.

Even in western countries, there is no consensus about the extent to which parents should be involved in their children's education. It can be argued that developments in the UK have not only given parents a voice in education by ensuring they can be school governors, for which they can receive training but have increasingly sought to hold them jointly accountable with the school for their child's education in a contractual relationship, for example by fining them if they take their children out of school for a holiday during term time. Increasingly, the state requires parents to monitor and control their children's activities and behaviours (Churchill and Clarke 2010), and in the process has reduced the role of parents in supporting their moral development (Le Sage and De Ruyter, 2008). Parents are expected to participate in activities such as parenting classes, and family learning classes while also giving permission for subjects such as sex education, morals and citizenship to be taught in schools rather than at home. In contrast, Saudi Arabia places considerable importance on the role of the parent in educating their children in moral and religious matters, leaving the role of instruction in curriculum subjects (including Islamic studies) to teachers and the responsibility of completing homework to the children's parents. Roles are clear and separate. Children will behave well and learn at school if they know the moral and religious imperatives for doing so. Parents will know they need to continue their children's moral education at home. However, many schools are located in rural areas where illiteracy is still unacceptably high among mothers in their mid 30s or older. Despite an almost-completed programme of evening classes,

the demands of looking after large families have prevented many mothers from taking advantage of the opportunity. Under these circumstances, schools need to do more to bring mothers into the school. If mothers cannot read, it is unrealistic to expect them to help their children with their homework. The previously informal relationship in the UK is being increasingly regulated by parent-school contracts and homework contracts. In contrast to Saudi Arabia, there are no longer clear dividing lines in the UK between private family matters and public duties. However, Saudi parents' stated preference for communicating via the homework book offers a platform on which to build collaboration, provided account is taken of the need to develop parents', in particular mothers', capabilities.

The findings also indicated teachers were quite negative about parents, in contrast to parents' views of teachers, echoing conclusions by Seligman (2000) who proposed that teacher negative behaviour could influence parents' attitudes towards the school. Although at a theoretical level the importance of educating parents about "the meaning of inclusion and its importance" (S1GT2) was recognized, in practice all but one school followed the minimum requirements specified by the regulations to engage and involve parents. Although many teachers considered parents to be uneducated, they were doing little to help them become educated. In the schools where collaboration was most needed, nothing was done. This finding may echo those of Norwich (1994) who reported, in a comparative study in rural and urban areas in the USA and England, that teachers' socio-political views were related to their attitudes to integration, as were cultural issues with regard to how they related with school communities depending on how close their own cultural values were to those of the



school communities. In contrast, the Framework on Special Needs Education (Porter, 1997) which followed the Salamanca Statement proposed ways of encouraging parents to take part in educational activities at home and at school, as well as in supporting learning. Teachers' assumptions about uneducated parents can be challenged; as observed by Cooper et al. (2010, p. 235), "it is absolutely critical that teachers not assume that uneducated parents, poor parents or parents with limited [language] proficiency have nothing of value to offer". Some Arab countries have already taken steps to improve parent participation, through parent councils in Oman (Ministry of Education, Oman, 2008), school inspections which include parent involvement and plans for increasing it in the Emirates (Sumaiti, 2012). Research in the Emirates has also identified a role for family literacy programmes in increasing parent involvement in their children's education in the Arab world, in the specific context of enabling parents to help their children to become better readers by using certain activities at home and by promoting the value of reading (Midraj and Midraj, 2011), although this may not be wholly transferable to Saudi Arabia where, even in educated families, the Qur'an is often the only book read at home, other than books for education.

Highlighting difficulties of transferring policy into practice, the special education supervisor said "The greatest difficulties are the shortage of special teachers for LD pupils, and the parents if they do not collaborate with the school". The perception of parents as uneducated, (whether understood as uneducated, uninformed, non-native speakers or of lower social or economic status) in fact offers an opportunity for one strand of in-service training and development for teachers to be highly beneficial by

helping them to identify measures that have been successful in improving communication and collaboration. A European Commission Communication on improving teacher education asserted the need for skills and knowledge to work closely and collaboratively with parents, colleagues and the wider community, recognizing implications for teacher training (Beard et al., 2007).

In common with the conclusions drawn by Ali et al. (2006) and Al-Herz (2008), the findings of this study have important implications for schools, all their staff and the wider education administration in the successful implementation of the ongoing programme of inclusion in Saudi Arabia. The researcher's own experience as a teacher and headteacher in Saudi Arabian schools reveals that for the majority, teachers are teachers, parents are parents, and almost the only time that roles interact more closely is when a parent who is also a teacher interacts with teaching staff. Yet research in the UK, where greater importance has been attached to parent involvement in the last few decades, has indicated an increase over the last ten years in the percentage of parents who are routinely involved with their children's education (Peters et al, 2007). The single largest increase has been in the percentage of parents who often read with their children, with almost 4 out of 5 parents doing so, and this pattern is repeated across different socio-economic groups. However, in contrast with the UK, in rural Saudi Arabia many parents and grandparents, particularly mothers and grandmothers, cannot read and write. The literacy needs of these groups still remain to be addressed but this will entail removal of two further barriers to participation of mothers and grandmothers, namely the lack of childcare in large families in poor neighbourhoods and transport difficulties.

In sum, parental participation was low in all but one school for a number of reasons; schools observed minimum contact specified in official procedures, many parents were unaware of (or preferred not to acknowledge) special needs, others preferred to maintain a low profile with regard to authority figures, transport and childcare issues presented insurmountable barriers for many mothers, and literacy levels remained low in rural and non-Saudi communities. The outcome was weak collaboration which constitutes a major barrier to further progress with inclusion.

#### **5.4 School Ethos and Collaboration**

All schools had an Islamic ethos, positive in promoting and instilling the values and beliefs of Islam, therefore almost all teachers as authority figures both expressed and demonstrated real care and concern for their pupils. The school ethos was influenced by the headteacher's level of commitment and her actions to introduce inclusion and make it successful, assuring set-up of the resource room and visiting all classes every day. The more committed and involved the headteacher was, the higher the level of inclusion was seen in terms of children's friendships, team social activities and individual progress. Findings are in line with Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) who hypothesized that the positive attitudes self-reported by teachers in schools with integration units had largely developed as a result of teaching in an inclusive ethos through exposure to children with SEN who were welcomed into social activities and inclusive classrooms by already committed teachers and headteachers. They also asserted that continuous support and encouragement from the headteacher has been shown to be key to creating an inclusive 'ethos' (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007), an ethos which has been shown to influence positive teacher attitudes (Avramidis and

Norwich, 2002). Since a positive school ethos, which is characterized by welcoming attitudes and a strong achievement orientation (Dyson et al., 2004) in addition to teamwork and collaboration (Hartas, 2004), is considered to be a major contributory factor in successful inclusion (Skidmore, 2004), children and staff may have a less satisfactory experience of inclusion if teachers and headteachers are not working together and contributing to a positive ethos.

#### **5.4.1 Inter-professional Collaboration**

Relationships between the different groups of participants in the study varied considerably. Although relationships between general teachers were very good across all schools, this was not the case with relationships between general and special education teachers. Some schools exhibited close cooperation between some general and special education teachers in respect of specific pupils, with individual learning objectives jointly discussed and teaching and learning requirements agreed for the following week's lessons. However, Saudi Arabian education policy and practice clearly separates the roles, management structures and physical spaces of general and special education teachers, the latter not being permitted to teach in regular or inclusive classrooms but being expected to remain almost always in the resource room. These factors combine to create unfavourable conditions for collaboration between teachers, which was a weak area in all schools in the study.

Time was a major constraint on collaboration between teachers, but the division into special and general teachers was reinforced by a clear separation of education

supervisor duties, the general supervisor stating clearly “I am a general supervisor so I do not visit the school”. In contrast, the special education supervisor would usually visit “an inclusive school 3- 4 times a term, also visit them if they had necessary reasons or if the LD teachers needed me”. Great care, attention and resources have been given to special education services, yet in inclusive schools it appears that general teachers have not received the support they require to teach in inclusive classrooms. In other words, organizational factors did not support or promote collaboration.

However, collaboration has emerged as a major theme underpinning the success or otherwise of inclusion, not only between teachers but especially collaboration between parents and special needs teachers or parents and the school. The importance of collaborative working with parents and colleagues has been increasingly highlighted in the last decade (Ambrukaitis et al., 2004), with particular emphasis given in implementation of inclusion to the importance of collaboration between SEN and general teachers (Ali et al., 2006). In the practical teaching context, four types of collaboration were identified by Rao (2009), all of which could apply in the Saudi setting and two of which already exist to some extent; teams to support general teachers, collaboration-consultation between general and special needs teachers regarding specific situations, peer support and mentoring, and general and special needs teachers working together to co-teach. Non-contact time for teachers to undertake collaborative planning has been identified as an important contributory factor to successful implementation of inclusion (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002). It has also been proposed that collaborative working with colleagues is so important to

all pupils and to inclusion of pupils with SEN that it should be included as a topic in Initial Teacher Education (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007).

Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) reported that in-service training shared by SEN and general teachers promoted effective joint working through sharing ideas and learning new skills together. A study examining achievement of the learning goals of the IEP was conducted in Saudi Arabia (Al-Herz, 2008) and found that while SEN teachers defined the important elements of IEPs, a lack of multidisciplinary teams acted as a barrier to progress regarding inclusion, where for example no speech therapist was available to support teachers and child to achieve speech development goals. Multidisciplinary teams needed for effective collaboration have been described as including the special education teacher, other teachers, the parents and other people and professionals when required by Waldron and McLeskey (2010) who further identified the critical and challenging role of the principal for establishing collaborative cultures for successful school inclusion (Waldron and McLeskey, 2010).

The lack of shared teacher training programmes, the lack of planning time, and the physical separation of general and special needs teachers constitute barriers to further progress with inclusion. The researcher's observations revealed the negative impact of separate arrangements for general and special needs teachers and the effect of separate teacher training programmes was apparent from confused understandings of appropriate classroom strategies. For example a general teacher in school 4 stated "various SEN categories are different in needs and need special training to teach them" (S4GT5) whilst a special needs teacher in school 1 considered that skills

appropriate to inclusive classrooms were the preserve of special needs teachers, saying "I use in my special classroom different skills like learning through play, collaborative learning and workshops" (S1ST3). On the problem of time, one teacher summed up all the challenges facing teachers as "the biggest challenge is time - we do not have enough time" (S1GT3). Thus interprofessional collaboration is problematic due to general and special needs teachers being separate for most of their initial teacher education and in-service training as well as physically separated in schools, and time has not been made available for collaborative work or joint training. These difficulties can only really be alleviated by leadership at national, regional and school level but are also linked with issues of training and resources.

### ***5.5 Leadership, training and resources***

The role of leadership is critically important, affecting not only the operation of individual schools but the organisation of the whole education system, which in turn impacts training and resources, including infrastructure, educational and human resources. Therefore it is important to highlight differences in leadership roles in Saudi Arabia and the UK and their consequences for training and resources.

### **5.5.1 Leadership**

In this study, the interest and involvement of the headteacher appeared to influence the spirit of inclusion throughout the school; daily direct contact between the headteacher and pupils was reflected in a stronger sense of family within the school. The headteacher is influential in 'walking the walk' of inclusion in the school. It has been acknowledged that the whole school needs not just to have a positive attitude towards inclusion but to be proactively engaged and supportive because administrative staff at a school are typically the first point of contact as well as the providers of practical support to both pupils and teachers. Research has highlighted the importance of headteachers' visionary leadership and commitment (Ainscow, 1999) and, at a practical level, McLeskey and Waldron (2002) highlighted the key role of the headteacher in effecting necessary changes to the building and in supporting implementation of inclusion including time for staff training and development in addition to a planned timescale for change. They also argued that teachers should be in control of the changes rather than unconsulted victims and that they should be encouraged to take risks and experiment with ideas without being blamed if they do not succeed at first. Any additions to their workloads should be acknowledged. Furthermore, McLeskey and Waldron asserted that an inclusive school should suit the needs of the neighbourhood it serves, although in the present study there was no evidence of meeting local needs, probably due to the strength of the centralized model. Whilst schools are invited to become inclusive schools, whether they take pupils with learning difficulties or SLD or other categories of special needs depends on pupil assessments and an approach to the school from the education supervisor. This is how neighbourhood needs are met at present.



Leadership in educational inclusion has been defined as involving the headteacher role, and the capacity to reduce or remove barriers while supporting the development of staff (Hattie, 2005) and, in the UK, much of the leadership function resides with the headteacher, for instance recruitment of staff, budget responsibilities and some curriculum decisions. In Saudi Arabia, however, the leadership role is shared between the headteacher, education supervisor and MoE due to a combination of clear definition of roles and responsibilities in national regulations, allocation of budgetary responsibilities and dominant sociocultural expectations and norms regarding both central responsibility and equity. Notwithstanding the differences, the researcher concludes with Shevlin et al. (2008) that the headteacher plays a critical part in assuring implementation of inclusion and improving the overall ability of the school to deliver inclusion successfully. This is linked to the role of the headteacher in encouraging teachers in the creation of an inclusive ethos, as mentioned earlier (Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007). Furthermore, the headteacher's commitment is vital to challenging the limitations of rhetoric at national level (Carrington and Robinson, 2006).

One further aspect of leadership needs to be mentioned, the role of the imam in influencing what is considered correct behaviour in society. Whilst greater acceptance of disability is certain to occur over time, it can be accelerated as has been shown in countries where legislation has been used to enforce equality and inclusive education, such as Canada. In contrast, in Saudi Arabia the most appropriate mechanism would not be legislation unless changes could be encompassed through Shari'a law. Since nothing relevant is written specifically in Shari'a law, a more productive approach

would be for imams to reinforce the equity precept, linking it with developments in inclusive education but stressing that a positive approach to such developments is consistent with, indeed necessary to, living an Islamic life.

Overall, considerable progress towards inclusion was shown in this study, in a sense that the school with the most experience was far ahead of the others, and all but one of the others could be seen to be taking the right steps towards implementing and improving inclusion. However, some findings led the researcher to question the extent of schools' commitment to inclusion, in particular the supervisors' view that everything was provided for the schools and teachers but that for one reason or another schools did not always take advantage of the provision. There was a lack of effort on the part of some headteachers to ensure the resource room was ready before the start of the learning difficulties programme in the school. Some teachers lacked the imagination or the will to create education aids. Many teachers lacked the imagination and will to try to create better communication or collaboration with parents; the school with the greatest degree of collaboration with parents gave a small party for new parents of children with learning difficulties, contrasting sharply with the minimum effort of some schools which, in accordance with official procedures, simply sent two standard letters, one asking permission regarding enrolment to the special education programme and the other inviting them to a meeting. Leadership is critical not only to creating an inclusive ethos but also to changing the approach in schools to children with SEN and disabilities (Department for Education, 2011). Despite some obvious difficulties around physical and human resources, and communications between schools and the MoE, the contribution made by headteachers' leadership can be considerable, with personal involvement in assuring

readiness for inclusion and support and encouragement for teachers without the need for a central directive.

The Ministry of Education has a role in supporting headteachers in inclusive schools in addition to its overall role. Whereas education supervisors considered that they and MoE services provided everything for inclusion, schools clearly did not share this view. Inclusion had been implemented without premises and resources being made available in time, leaving the school unable to prepare for inclusion.

The headteacher of school 2 in the beginning “struggled to prepare the room, there was no support from MoE who by the way should have provided the money for the resource room. By their own efforts they prepared the resource room with all necessary education aids to teach LD pupils” (S2 Special needs teacher 1). In contrast the special needs supervisor asserted “The resource rooms in schools are suitable in general. During my visits to schools I give the teachers advice about the resource room” (SS).

Education supervisors recognized the need for adequate preparation, stating “A lot of support is needed for successful inclusion, such as financial support, premises, enough education aids, also the really important thing is advance planning for inclusion” (SS). However, at present the only real link is the MoE provision of financial support to the schools and the MoE does not always know in time the requirements of any particular school. The MoE does not proactively engage with inclusive schools to understand the difficulties they face, although such contact would help the MoE to identify gaps

in the inclusion policy and evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the current policy. Headteachers considered that direct contact at appropriate times such as the last two weeks of the academic year could improve understanding on both sides as well as helping to ensure resources arrived in the school on time.

As the representatives of the MoE at district level, the leadership role of the Education Supervisors is also critical. Collaboration between schools and the general administration revealed difficulties, for example schools agreeing to become inclusive schools without considering the capacity of the premises or the consequences of inclusion. The special education supervisor stressed the efforts being made: “Supervision for inclusion is important therefore our teams are working hard to cover almost all the problems which inclusive schools face, like provisions, pupils’ problems, curricula, IEP and books, so we are like a consultancy for inclusive schools”. At the same time, the difficulties were acknowledged. “There are a lot of barriers for LD categories like cooperation between school staff, also between school and home, and the number of special teachers, the premises, and the provisions for the resource room”. The general supervisor supported these statements, saying “All the supervisors are trying to help, remove, overcome barriers, however sometimes we cannot deal with some barriers like the number of special teachers, the provisions for inclusive schools”. The potential role of education supervisors was summarized by the special education supervisor who said:

“There are many factors that can contribute to help inclusion, and ensure its success. But in relation to our schools, there are some factors that need some attention such as giving teachers enough training about inclusion, giving the LD teachers financial support, providing the school with

enough educational aids, educating teachers about LD, collaboration between teachers, collaboration between school and parents... experience in teaching LD pupils can help the teacher to teach LD pupils”.

The role of the special needs supervisor in Saudi Arabia is very different from the role of the SEN Coordinator (SENCO) in the UK. The need for an SENCO in every school has been recognized along with the importance of the role (Cheminais, 2005). The SENCO provides guidance for the school leadership team and staff on effective practice in implementing inclusion and works with teachers to make decisions about individual children (Dyson et al., 2004), typically has the day-to-day lead and models effective practice, and is increasingly involved in promoting and delivering training for partnership working with parents (Lewis et al., 2010). The relationship between the SENCO and the school management team is assigned prime importance. In short, relationships between schools and the MoE and its representatives at district level are not as productive from the schools’ perspective as the education supervisors state and the division of leadership roles creates problems for the implementation of inclusion.

### **5.5.2 Training**

Positive attitudes existed in spite of a lack of training, only two of the schools having had a short (one-week) course. Nonetheless, almost all the general teachers and headteachers expressed the need for training. Interestingly in school 1, where the headteacher had organised a short course and the school had six years’ of experience, there was some evidence of a more creative approach to teaching among the general teachers. In some of the other schools, there were indications that general teachers felt

less confident, in agreement with the findings of King and Edmunds (2001) that preparation and experience both played a role in increasing teacher confidence.

Previous studies have found that training is very important for the teachers before inclusion is implemented in their school (for example Al-Khatteeb, 2002). Training in special or inclusive education is a variable consistently found to have influenced educators' attitudes, either in a single course (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Shade and Stewart, 2001; Subban and Sharma, 2006; Sharma et al., 2006) or as part of a longer teacher education programme. Dickens-Smith (1995) studied the attitudes of both regular and special educators towards inclusion (not integration) by administering an attitude survey before and after staff development. Both groups of respondents revealed more favourable attitudes towards inclusion after their in-service training, with a greater positive attitude shift evident among regular education teachers. Dickens-Smith concluded that staff development was the key to successful implementation of inclusion. A 2001 study also found that professional development lowered resistance to inclusive classroom practices (Leyser and Tappendorf, 2001), a finding that echoes Kamens et al. (2003) and McLeskey and Waldron (2002) who reported that irrespective of the extent of their experience or their attitude, teachers want to know more about the characteristics of specific disabilities and teaching strategies and behaviour management techniques.

There was no strong evidence in this study to suggest that training would lead to significantly more positive attitudes towards inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties, based on the many comments referring to them as like family members.

However, the call from teachers for training related to inclusion and SEN indicates a real need for knowledge which would at least increase their confidence and hence potentially increase the number of teachers recording 'very positive' as distinct from 'fairly positive' attitudes. All general teachers expressed the desire for training in a range of ways for example by the presence in schools of teachers "who have enough training – experience - to help other teachers... the MOE should provide us with enough special teachers or give training for general teachers in school " (S3GT3). "Giving teachers training for SEN and inclusion" (S1GT1) was mentioned as essential by almost every teacher. Moreover, the potential impact of training on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with SLD and other disabilities might be greater, although this was outside the scope of this study. The findings regarding LD pupils contrast with those of Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) and, in an Islamic context, Hassanein (2010), both of whom identified an association between more extensive training and more positive attitudes to inclusion.

Official policy in Saudi Arabia clearly states that the SEN teacher, in this case the learning difficulties teacher, is responsible for conducting the initial training at the school. The learning difficulties teachers however stated that it was the responsibility of the education supervisor. Ainscow (2007) asserted that culture could affect training and consideration should be given to making ideas and practices relevant to each particular context and different understandings of status and authority in Saudi cultural settings give the supervisor far more respect and authority than the new specialist teacher, a power inequality in their relationship which undermines the provision of appropriate and timely in-school training provision.

Despite the small sample size, more inclusive behaviours such as team activities and friendships were observed in school 1, the school with the longest experience of inclusion, in comparison with the other schools. This is consistent with findings of a survey of teachers' attitudes in a UK LEA which identified that teachers with some years' experience of implementing inclusive programmes were more positive towards inclusion than those who lacked such experience (Avramidis et al., 2000). Evidence was also found of a desire for more flexibility and freedom in what to teach and how to teach it, a finding consistent with research carried out by Schroth et al., (1997) which recommended teachers be empowered to implement changes in addition to visiting inclusive education environments in order to gather new ideas. Recently, Arif and Gaad (2008), in the context of the United Arab Emirates, found scope for improvement in the provision of additional material and education aids as well as the need to train teachers in how to use the 'para curriculum'. This consists of the regular textbooks but with difficult chapters either removed or made simpler, a situation paralleled by that of Saudi Arabia.

In this study, leadership involvement in preparation for inclusion and teacher experience of children with SEN and inclusion influenced teacher confidence but the perceived junior status of newly trained special needs teachers and lack of autonomy to adapt the curriculum had a negative impact on teacher confidence.

### **5.5.3 Resources**

More than half the teachers in this study emphasized the importance of resources to support inclusion: infrastructure, premises, educational resources (equipment and



educational aids) and human resources. Infrastructure was perceived to be a major obstacle to inclusion at the time of the study; the layout and age of the buildings, classrooms and other facilities such as halls clearly influenced a school's self-perceived ability to implement inclusion. Too many pupils and an unprepared resource room set up the worst possible physical conditions for inclusion. Almost every teacher mentioned the need for more and better educational resources and even in modern schools there were complaints about the number and sizes of classrooms and other facilities. Al Mousa (2010) and Gaad (2011) have highlighted the premises problem while acknowledging that the country has a major schools building programme underway for the next few years in order to overcome the problem. The rapid expansion of the school age population has been too large and too fast for the education system to match.

Interestingly, the fact that the resource room in school 1 was clearly labelled 'Learning Difficulties Room' did not seem to have any negative effect whatsoever; indeed, regular pupils asked to go to the learning difficulties room to watch educational videos. Inclusion is progressing in spite of the barriers presented by premises, but the reduction or removal of this particular obstacle should bring about considerable improvements in the future. Revisiting the design and use of space will assist in developing new socially constructed worlds (Soja, 2001) that are more closely aligned with the spirit of inclusion. However, whilst reconsideration of the use of space and classroom furniture can assist in this, an overemphasis on infrastructure at the expense of debating different philosophical issues related to inclusion is a limiting factor in future development. On the one hand, Islam offers a taken-for-

granted approach to inclusion which allows attention to be concentrated on more practical matters, especially on obvious technocratic problems of premises and resources. On the other hand, this study has shown that there is an underlying rejection of children with more severe special needs, an issue which is at present ignored and which cannot be solved by technocratic means. The voice of the children in this study was also heard, as it has been shown that students with disabilities have strong opinions and perceptions about where education takes place and what it consists of (Shah, 2007). An early study found that students with learning difficulties enjoyed activities in the resource room because of the extra help and types of activity but were concerned about what they might be missing in the regular classroom (Padeliadu and Zigmond, 1996). Although this study found that most students enjoyed the resource room, there was very little evidence that children felt they were missing out on the regular classroom activities, except for the one school where inclusion itself was problematic.

Teachers, on the other hand, felt they were hindered by a lack of educational resources, a factor mentioned by almost every teacher and headteacher, as well as by parents. Equipment and educational aids in the resource rooms were of variable standard, from very good to non-existent. The lack of a resource room ready for use presents a major barrier to inclusion as it sends a message from the outset that some pupils are not so important as others and that the school cares less about some pupils than others. In some instances, the headteacher had recognised this and, together with the SEN teacher, had made every effort to prepare the room. In other instances, no effort had been made beyond an initial order for supplies to the education supervisor,

and where there was no supervisor in post, no further effort had been made. It would have to wait until a supervisor was in post. Alzyoudi (2006) identified a strong relationship between having enough resources (educational resources and specialists) and successful inclusion, and educational resources and school premises are among the factors influencing the successful implementation of inclusion (UNICEF, 2010).

Classroom observations indicated some specialist teachers were using more traditional methods than would have been expected if greater variety of education aids or more professional support had been available. This finding reflects previous research which showed that teachers reflect more positive attitudes when they have sufficient support (Leatherman and Niemeyer, 2005). Problems concerning equipment and education aids should be relatively straightforward to resolve, subject to several changes to the ordering system, except in situations where the headteacher lacks energy or commitment to set up and use the resources provided.

The need for more support from professionals such as speech therapists and educational psychologists was voiced by almost all teachers and headteachers even in school 1 and supported by parents.

“Provide our school with all the professionals we need to help us” (School 3 General teacher 5). “We really need professionals to help and advise all school staff” (School 1 General teacher 1). “We do not have professionals in our school, even though they play an important role for inclusion in every school” (School 4 General teacher 3).

Although Saudi policy states that peripatetic professionals are available to schools on a once a month basis, in practice this appeared to be very inadequate, even when it was happening.

The findings showed that schools and supervisors had differing views about the availability of special needs teachers. Whereas schools said “provide the school with a specialist teacher to help us when we teach LD pupils” (School 1 General teacher 3) and “increase the number of special teachers in our school” (School 2 General teacher 4), the general supervisor asserted “We have enough specialist teachers for learning difficulties”. It is highly probable, in view of the rapid expansion of education in Saudi Arabia, that the numbers of trained teachers have lagged behind numbers needed, as is typical in almost all situations where new types of occupations are emerging or sectors expanding. Until the numbers trained match both numbers needed and physical environment requirements, this will continue to be a source of frustration.

Teaching assistants are not used in Saudi Arabia, although, following prompting by the researcher, some headteachers and teaching staff considered they would be a beneficial addition for inclusive classrooms. In a western context, teaching assistants were among the sources of support consistently considered to help inclusion in a review of literature by Avramidis and Norwich (2002). In order to better support inclusive classrooms, support for teachers is increasingly aimed at whole class support (Forlin, 2001). In western settings, increasing inclusion has strengthened the need for shared responsibility for support (Florian and Rouse, 2001) and for more and higher

quality support (Winter and Kilpatrick, 2001). The care role of teaching assistants working to class teacher's instructions in western settings (Garner, 2000) tends to be largely taken by the pupil- or learning mentor (literally, 'pupil guider') in Saudi Arabia, who has responsibility for the well-being of all pupils and for helping them to resolve problems affecting their learning.

Human resources recruitment and allocation of professionals and teaching assistants, like the provision of sufficient physical facilities and equipment, remains the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Whilst allowances must be made for the scale of the undertaking in Saudi Arabia and praise given for what has been achieved so far, improved dialogue between the MoE and schools is needed, through the education supervisors. Peripatetic special needs teachers could deliver occasional sessions to provide additional human resource support to general as well as learning difficulties and other special needs teachers. However, teachers could also be more creative in producing education aids and in taking greater responsibility for their own professional development or for assisting that of other teachers. Whilst positive attitudes were expressed and there was plenty of evidence to indicate they were being translated into practice in all but one of the schools in the case study, the researcher considers the reluctance to take responsibility and the initiative may raise questions about the extent of individual teacher commitment to inclusion. This issue has also been addressed in the section on leadership.

## **5.6 Peer relationships**

In general, relationships between pupils were very good, again with a notable exception: the good relationships made a major contribution to the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties, socially and academically through friendships and help with classwork and homework. On the whole pupils were positive towards both LD and SLD pupils.

“All pupils in my classroom are very kind”. “Yes, I help my friends, at every lesson. Last time was today, I helped my friends in the last lesson, I gave them the number of our homework in maths” (S1P1). Statements from pupils with LD corresponded. “Yes, all my friends help me, they help me all the time, and they help me if I want their help. Last time was today when they gave me my, I did not copy anything from the board because one pupil cleaned the board” (S1P5).

According to the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (2008), inclusion is the only form of education with the potential to develop understanding, respect and friendships because children meet and interact on a daily basis and learning about each other is an integral part of their education for life. Pupil relationships can be influenced by school ethos, as evidenced by varying degrees of acceptance of SLD pupils in different schools. The ethos of the school, collaboration and relationships are therefore important to achieving the desired outcomes of inclusion.

Some pupils were more negative concerning pupils with SLD. Most children accepted most pupils, playing and talking with them, although some children were frightened of pupils with SLD and their behaviour.

“We do not like to deal with SLD pupils, we are really scared of them because one of them shouts loudly in the classroom, hits us for no reason, also our parents tell us do not go near SLD pupils, they will make big problems for you, so keep away from them” (school 1 child 5). “One day when SLD pupils were taking arts in the inclusive classroom, one SLD cut a pupil’s hair. The pupil cried all the lesson because she had lost her hair and the next day her mother came to the school, created a big problem and asked us not to include them again” (School 1 General teacher 2).

Findings are in agreement with those of Kourea and Phtiaka (2003) who showed peer acceptance to be affected by the type of disability, with less acceptance of children with more severe and obvious disabilities, although primary age children appear more willing to interact with their disabled peers (Arampatzi et al., 2011). However, feelings of fear and pity have been reported (Allen, 2003), together with a dislike of aggressive behaviour (Arampatzi et al., 2011). This may in part be due to failure to prepare pupils for inclusion before and during its implementation process. If children do not know what is expected of them in welcoming and taking care of children with greater needs than themselves, or if children learn from their parents that such children are ‘stupid’ or ‘dangerous’ and do not understand the meaning of SEN, they will react against the unknown and what they have been told to avoid. It is possible that time plays an important role in acceptance and tolerance, as the school with the longest experience had the greatest degree of acceptance by all pupils of each other.

This raises the question of whether improvements in preparation for inclusion could shorten the time needed to reach an equivalent state of acceptance. The importance of acceptance by all pupils has been emphasized, together with the contribution that can be made by educating pupils without disabilities about those who have disabilities. Simpson et al. (1997) noted that acceptance does not always occur naturally and Saudi Arabian policy specifies that pupils should be taught about any new special education programme at the start of the year when it is introduced. This did not always happen in the study, but where, in addition to teachers modelling and encouraging welcoming and caring behaviour, pupils were introduced to the resource room as a shared facility and whole classes celebrated the success of pupils with learning difficulties, the feeling of belonging was stronger. On this point, collaboration between general and special needs teachers may play an essential part in accelerating the process, as the special needs teachers possess valuable knowledge while the general teachers are likely to have greater experience of practical teaching. In addition, the pupil mentor focuses on pupils without SEN, leaving the special needs teachers to assist children with SEN and their families, so that there are two separate formal systems of support; this may be a further factor that works against inclusion.

Informal support provided by friends was invaluable to pupils with SEN, not only in making sure they were in the correct classroom with their books and pencils at the correct time but also in providing role models and encouragement to develop good educational habits. Many children without SEN looked after their peers with SEN by reminding them to go to the resource room at the right time for lessons. More generally, a number of studies have reported the positive impact of typically developing peers on the social skills of students with disabilities (Downing, 2008). In



western settings, similar help for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder has been supported by teaching typically developing peers to act as social partners by initiating and formalised as peer mediation (Reichow and Volkmar, 2010). However, in Saudi Arabia support from peers arises directly from an Islamic perspective of helping those who need help. Formal support for children with SEN and their parents is wholly almost provided by the special needs teacher in the absence of other specialists. In Saudi Arabia, adults are expected to take this kind of responsibility rather than give children a more formal role, for example a facilitatory role in peer mediation. However, Norwich (1994) showed attitudes of typically developing children influence the success of inclusion.

### ***5.7 Implications for policy and practice***

Findings from the present study showed that the practices of inclusion, in conformity with Saudi policy, reflect an ethos of integration rather than inclusion (i.e. some pupils cannot be accommodated in regular schools). Education is aimed at an inclusive society based on a strong family unit rather than an inclusive classroom that embraces western notions of diversity and difference. However, inclusion in Saudi Arabia is a work in progress with scope for improvement at a national, regional and local level. It is proposed that the capability approach may offer a theoretical lens to view inclusion as it relies on caring for others in a spirit of altruism (Nussbaum, 2011), which is very close to the Islamic precept of loving for others what you would love for yourself, and avoids the contractual approach which underpins home-school relationships in much of the western world. As the rollout of special needs inclusion

programmes is completed and extended to all identified categories of SEN pupils, it is important to improve practice in order to avoid marginalisation of particular groups and individuals within schools that are termed inclusive schools. However, it is essential that sufficient resources are made available and time is allocated to all stakeholders in order for proposed improvements to be implemented.

#### **5.7.1 Raising awareness and training: understandings of inclusion**

Understandings of inclusion among all stakeholders need to be extended and deepened beyond locational integration, through a process of debate and discussion rather than direct instruction and dissemination of existing information.

1. At a national level, policy makers and academics should promote discussions about inclusion in relation to the Islamic precept of equity and the possibilities opened by considering a capability approach. For example, building capability in families through supporting mothers and grandmothers to access to transport and childcare in order to take advantage of literacy initiatives in addition to ways of implementing inclusion rather than locational integration alone for the other categories of SEN that have been identified. Current negative perceptions of children with cognitive impairments, autism and behavioural disorders should be challenged by asking what needs to happen for children not as yet included.
2. At a district level, education supervisors should jointly promote similar discussions across different schools. In particular they should identify examples of good practice in implementing inclusion and support

dissemination of good practice and ideas sharing, certainly among inclusive schools and those schools about to implement inclusion, but ideally involving all schools. They should also assist schools to find ways of promoting discussions with all parents, to increase understanding of SEN within a framework that includes both Islamic teachings and capability approach. One option is to have sessions for mothers and daughters out of hours or in social activities lessons, with appropriate transport and childcare support, to explore relevant Islamic teachings, linking them to the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights and to the implications for supporting all children to develop capabilities in school and at home. This could be done by setting aside one social activities session each month for an assembly-type event; to try to attract more parents, this could be combined with certificate presentations and displays of children's work. Another longer term option is to explore possibilities of establishing Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and engaging interested parents in promoting the discussions.

3. Schools should promote debates among all teachers and non-teaching staff, ensuring that general and special needs teachers are jointly involved in arranging and facilitating sessions on understandings of inclusion, the Saudi Arabian model of disability, teaching and learning strategies for the inclusive classroom. All teachers should be involved in drawing up the programme of sessions to ensure they are fully engaged from the beginning. The headteacher should seek to ensure that the special education supervisor participates in appropriate workshops and training

sessions on school premises. Headteachers also need to create a single team from general and special needs teachers meeting and working together on a more regular basis to create and deliver a programme of educational activities such as team competitions that bring together pupils with and without special needs and life skills that address the needs of all pupils.

4. Every year in inclusive schools there is a new intake of pupils, with and without special needs. New pupils and parents should be welcomed and given full information about the school and how it implements inclusion, with updates for all pupils and parents such as changes to the curriculum, inclusive educational and social activities and new resources. One way to encourage more parents to come is to adopt school 1's approach of having a small celebration for parents of new intake children to mark their child's entry to the school. Another small celebration for parents of children with special needs would provide an opportunity to form initial contacts with like-minded parents, with the potential to develop termly networking events following this.
5. For schools entering their first year as an inclusive school, in preference to making the new special needs teacher responsible for delivering training, the specialist teacher should be supported by making an education supervisor responsible for jointly delivering the initial training, with the supervisor being present for say half a day or less during the course. This would combine the benefits of respect for the supervisor, ensuring teacher attendance, and specialist knowledge. The supervisor could create a

standard core training programme which could contain school-specific elements and be delivered by the headteacher and specialist teacher if a supervisor was not in post or available. This could be a bottom-up approach started by headteachers making requests to supervisors or a top-down initiative started by the MoE

6. Finally, the greatest potential for increasing understanding of special needs and inclusion lies with the mosques and imams, therefore the MoE should engage in dialogue with religious authorities at the highest level to explore the most effective ways of promoting understanding and inclusion through the mosques. At the local level, schools should assist the dissemination of information and understanding by engaging with the community through appropriate channels of contact with the local mosques.

### **5.7.2 Teacher attitudes and inter-professional collaboration**

#### **Training and development**

1. The divisions between general and special needs teachers created by distinct teacher training pathways, manifested in the form of an additional 30% salary payment for special needs teachers and the physical separation of designated teaching areas should be narrowed by a combination of initial teacher education (ITE) and in-service training and development. At a national level, ITE for both general and special needs teachers should include modules on how to teach effectively in inclusive classrooms,

encompassing teaching strategies, learning resources, classroom management and teacher collaboration.

2. A specific recommendation to improve teaching and learning for children with dyslexia is to rapidly increase and disseminate successful teaching and learning strategies by sharing contributions from teachers, especially those with a dyslexia specialism, through contributions to a school magazine intended for all teachers, magazines which could be shared electronically or in hard copy among inclusive schools via the district education supervisors.
3. A medium to long term recommendation for improving teaching and learning for children with dyslexia is for a new module to be developed and delivered to in-service teachers and both general and SEN student teachers on ITE programmes. This should be designed by suitably qualified Saudi Arabian personnel in conjunction with other lecturers and practitioners recognized worldwide for their experience and proven successful outcomes of their strategies.
4. A recommendation for the longer term is that an in-service training programme for inclusion and SEN is drawn up, clarifying the differences between the two strands but also how they fit together and complement each other. It may be that in future Saudi Arabia should consider much closer working relationships between general and special needs teachers and between different categories of specialist teacher in order to meet the needs of all pupils, possibly leading to co-teaching.

5. To meet in-service general teachers' need for more than a one-week course on inclusion and SEN, more in-service training and development should be planned and delivered in schools and by schools to share knowledge, experience and ideas among special needs and general teachers. Supporting this and hence the leadership role of the headteacher should be the responsibility of the education supervisor. There are many valuable international resources available on the internet, such as designs of school buildings and videos of inclusive classroom teachers at work with learning assistants, together with a vast body of research literature that could be used to stimulate discussion and practices regarding inclusion.
6. Sessions aimed at removing the fear and stigmatisation associated with certain categories of SEN such as cognitive impairment and epilepsy should be provided on both ITE and in-service programmes.

### **Maximizing the benefits of inclusion**

1. Greater benefits of inclusion should be realized by increasing the number of social activities sessions at least to the once a week permitted within the existing curriculum. Sessions should include more inter-team activities and competitions to promote interaction between pupils with and without learning difficulties/severe learning difficulties, for example role-plays of real-life situations such as 'playing house', how to welcome a new pupil and shops and shopping. Activities like acting out stories and creating stories, or choosing food for a party could also be used.

2. Where the resource room has sufficient space, it should be used as an educational resource by all pupils and, conversely, other spaces in the school such as the hall should be used by all pupils for social activities.

### **Educational resources and the curriculum**

1. Schools should have the opportunity to identify resources additional to core curriculum books and resources. General and special needs teachers should discuss and agree a list which should be ordered through both education supervisors who should negotiate an agreed budget from the Ministry of Education. New resources should be evaluated by teachers and knowledge and expertise shared as it is gained.
2. Sections of the general curriculum, for example subjects such as history, should be subject to a rolling review and new modifications introduced for different categories of special needs. Schools should be given the freedom and support (such as time) to experiment with various approaches to teaching children with SLD and other categories for whom the general curriculum is considered inappropriate.
3. A key area for improvement is the inclusive classroom's layout; furniture should be capable of flexible arrangement to enable more use of group activities such as peer collaborative learning.
4. Every school should be able to provide more pictorial instructions in classrooms and corridors to help dyslexic children to feel a stronger sense of belonging in their school environment. This could be achieved by



school administrative support staff who could tailor the pictures to suit their own school.

## **Leadership**

1. Central leadership in the Ministry of Education should more strongly support headteachers through efficient and timely central administration systems such as ordering equipment and teacher allocation, which provide appropriate resources, including human resources, before the inclusion programme starts and thereafter.
2. There should be a support network for headteachers so that they can encourage each other, a network that would be based at a regional level, a network for which volunteers could be found to start a group in their locality before building on local successes to create more such networks. Headteachers in Saudi Arabia are for the most part not familiar with the kind of leadership that is expected of headteachers in the UK who are managers, motivators and resource allocators. In-service training sessions should be introduced to allow exploration of the role of the headteacher in an inclusive school. The general education supervisor should support these sessions either by facilitating them or providing materials for facilitators.
3. Education supervisors have the potential to make a significant difference because of their background in relevant higher education studies and their experience, but they should be more proactive in engaging headteachers and teachers and in helping schools to engage parents. Critically they should work collaboratively; as long as general and special needs teachers

work through separate structures and lines of communication, existing distinctions will present a barrier to further progress. Education supervisors not only have a leadership role to play but also act as role models for headteachers and schools. They should also take a role in promoting home-school collaboration by securing additional resources over time to enable parents and teachers to interact more often and in different ways. There could, for example, be joint events to share concerns about the children's future lives, whether or not they are assessed as having learning difficulties. Such discussions could lead quite naturally into areas such as how their children will be good Muslims in the future as the world changes, raising concerns about access to the internet, and hence provide opportunities for exploring inclusion in an Islamic society.

4. The creativity of individual teachers in producing and using education aids could be similarly encouraged, supported and publicised in order to share best practice. Headteachers should be more proactive in contacting and following up supervisors to obtain the resources needed by the schools, and should offer suggestions based on identified staff development needs, for training to be provided by education supervisors. For headteachers to be effective in their leadership, however, their own development and support needs should be addressed by the MoE.
5. The Ministry of Education should take the lead on ensuring a sufficient supply of human resources and should consider introducing teaching assistants and staff such as the pupil-guider to provide support in inclusive classrooms.

6. The Ministry of Education should also allocate time to education supervisors to fulfil the teacher support role of the SENCO to ensure that teachers are able to provide the most appropriate education for individual children.
7. The Ministry of Education should consider engaging in dialogue with senior cleric to explore how reduction or removal of the shame and stigma associated with some types of disability could be achieved.

### **Parent engagement and participation**

Improving home-school collaboration is one of the greatest challenges facing Saudi Arabian schools but is essential to making further progress with inclusion.

1. The main recommendation for home-school collaboration is that teachers should continually make efforts to engage parents in a respectful and culturally appropriate way. Each parent deserves the same respect as every other individual. Critically, special needs teachers need to recognize that parents are the ‘experts’ on their own children, irrespective of their levels or education or socio-economic status, and should ensure they spend enough time listening to parents so that a child is seen first by everyone involved as an individual child. Making parents feel respected and welcome is the first vital step.
2. Events to celebrate children’s progress should be held, such as one assembly a term, events which are used to consult parents about how the school can work with them to help their children.

3. Meetings with individual parents should be used to encourage them to support their child's reading at home, promoting reading to an older sibling or other family member, as a starting point for greater home-school collaboration.
4. A family literacy programme should be introduced with adequate transport and childcare provision.
5. Critically, teachers need to use meetings with parents to develop relationships that support the parents as well as the child. The headteacher has a key role to play in ensuring that the pupil mentor allocates time to supporting families of children with special needs and does not leave all the support to the special needs teacher.

### ***5.9 Limitations of the study***

Firstly there are the limitations which apply to almost every case study, namely the lack of generalisability of findings due to a relatively small sample size and sampling techniques (purposive sample) and the highly specific nature of the phenomenon being studied. In addition, the situation with regard to roll-out of existing special education services and ongoing development of those services means that it is difficult if not impossible to extrapolate many of the findings of today into the future. The situation in two years' time may be very different, although the principle of adopting a resource room pull-out approach to educating children with special needs is likely to persist for those who cannot easily be accommodated in inclusive

classrooms. Moreover, the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of the schools in this study point to contrasts and comparisons rather than to generalisability.

Another limitation is that the sample was entirely drawn from one region, i.e. Al Qassim province, and also the schools were selected on the basis of already being inclusive schools, meaning that teachers' and parents' attitudes in schools that are not as yet inclusive schools are not addressed by this study. Furthermore, observations of classroom practice were mainly concentrated on the resource room and not whole-school classroom level. The focus on pupils with dyslexia is also a limitation because it has been shown that attitudes vary with the type and severity of disability and whilst potential difficulties have been highlighted with the implementation of inclusion for pupils with SLD, the inclusion of children with other types of disability has not been investigated because it has not as yet happened. It is likely that attitudes towards children with severe disabilities will be very different to those towards children with relatively mild disabilities (or even invisible disabilities).

Parents' suspicion and reluctance to participate, in addition to the imbalance of power between teachers and parents, meant that parents' attitudes were not explored as fully as intended at the outset. Whilst the researcher's own position as an insider and teacher may have added to parents' reluctance, it also created a research environment in which teachers were open about their attitudes towards children with SLD and perceived limits to inclusive education.

### ***5.10 Summary***

In this chapter, Saudi Arabian inclusion policy and practices have been discussed by considering the Islamic precept of equity. The findings have suggested that practices of inclusion regarding children with SEN are mainly directed toward locational and possibly functional integration and are more inclusive of children who look and behave normally (children with invisible disability such as dyslexia) than of those with greater needs and more obvious difficulties. The physical separation of teachers and pupils engaged in special education, with most special needs teachers having little or no interaction with general teachers as they are not allowed to teach in general or inclusive classrooms, reduces collaboration between the already distinct provision of general and special education services.

The mainly positive attitudes of education supervisors, headteachers, general and SEN teachers towards inclusion of pupils with dyslexia did not extend to children with behavioural disorders and cognitive impairments. Hence, understandings of inclusion and benefits of inclusive practices were limited to certain SEN categories only. Notwithstanding the parents who contributed to the study and were positive towards inclusion, schools were not reaching out to mothers who did not understand inclusion and adhered to values of the Bedouin heritage in which evident disability was a social stigma. It has been discussed how concepts of equality, equity, difference, diversity and inclusion within Islam have impacted the understandings and implementation of inclusion within a primary school setting. Although equity was accorded considerable importance, equity for pupils with certain categories of disability was not extended to their parents.

Low levels of home-school collaboration and collaborative working between general and special needs teachers constituted significant barriers towards further progress with inclusion. Traditional teaching methods needed to change with the support of more varied educational resources and more flexible classroom layouts and further adaptations to the general curriculum are required for some children with special needs. These areas should be addressed by the combined leadership of the Ministry of Education, education supervisors and headteachers. Headteacher leadership needs to be supported by the provision of additional human resources such as specialist professionals, more accessible opportunities for training and professional development and day to day support for teachers from education supervisors. Most crucially, inclusion processes and practices should not just be about offering technocratic solutions to how best to respond to difference but should take on board cultural perspectives and value the particularities of cultures that adhere to Islamic principles of what an inclusive society should look like.

## **Chapter Six CONCLUSION**

The exploration of how inclusive policies are understood and translate into practice within the education system of Saudi Arabia, has focused specifically on girls of primary school age assessed as having learning difficulties, chiefly dyslexia, since children with dyslexia are considered to constitute the largest group of children within the broader category of 'learning difficulties' who are involved in the initial stages of a country-wide inclusion. The findings from this study have shed light on issues such as teaching strategies and the curriculum, school ethos and collaboration, and leadership, training and resources and understandings of inclusion, especially with regard to teachers' and parents' attitudes and views concerning inclusion, and the benefits, suitability of and barriers to inclusion.

Understandings of inclusion varied from physical inclusion (all children learning in the same classroom), to access to general education and partial inclusion, through accessing the same curriculum with additional support and catering for individual differences, to reducing the educational deficit caused by learning difficulties and normalization. Inclusion was predominantly understood in terms of physical location, with all children learning in the same school. Whilst children with dyslexia and other mild to moderate learning difficulties learned in inclusive classrooms with support sessions provided by a special needs teacher in a resource room., children with more severe learning difficulties were in separate classrooms but participated in social activities and art sessions. Inclusion was widely understood by teachers as access to the general curriculum with additional support as needed, although some felt strongly



that greater adaptation was needed for pupils with SLD, creating their own books to meet this need and seeking a curriculum containing the development of life skills. In parallel with practices of targeting specific categories of SEN, inclusion was understood as belonging. In statements by teachers, parents and children, belonging was typically expressed in terms of family values, using language to express concepts such as 'family', 'sisters' and 'love'. Inclusion was considered to mainly benefit children with special needs, chiefly through improved self-esteem and a sense of belonging arising from increased social participation and friendships. However, inclusion was considered less suitable for children with noticeable cognitive impairments and behavioural problems. Ideally, inclusion would be based on a consensus about what inclusion is and how it should be implemented in a manner that is gradual and process responsive to learner needs and supported by specialist human resources and appropriate training for everyone involved.

Almost no general teacher or headteacher had received training about inclusion, and more than half of all teachers talked about problems with premises and a lack of educational and specialist human resources. Whilst some general teachers knew what teaching and classroom management strategies were required for effective teaching and learning in inclusive classrooms, they were finding it difficult to put them into practice. Notwithstanding these barriers to the effective implementation of inclusion, the majority of teachers and headteachers held positive attitudes towards inclusion. Parents were also positive towards inclusion, with parents of children with SEN considering inclusion to be very important for their child. Parents supported teachers in saying more resources were needed to support modern teaching strategies such as

differentiation and cooperative learning. However, in 4 out of the 5 schools, parents declined to take part in the research, therefore results are not representative of how all parents in this region feel about inclusion but reflect the views of mainly middle class, educated parents. In contrast to the views of parents and teachers, the general and special education supervisors were more confident that teachers had the training and resources needed to effectively implement inclusion.

Collaboration was found to be a weak area, in particular between general and special needs teachers and between home and school. The absence of teacher collaboration was attributed to different Initial Teacher Education programmes for general and special needs teachers, no shared teaching, oversight provided by two education supervisors from different departments and a 30% salary enhancement for special needs teachers which led to resentment among general teachers. Collaboration between home and school was weaker still, with teachers perceiving parents as a barrier to the further implementation of inclusion and attributing this to parents' lack of education. Pupil relationships were generally very good between pupils with and without SEN, with most pupils having friends irrespective of learning difficulties, although not all children with SLD had friends. Leadership, training and resources were seen to be essential to the effective implementation of inclusion. However, headteachers in Saudi Arabia have less autonomy and power than in western countries, with education supervisors and the Ministry of Education playing much stronger leadership roles in terms of teacher recruitment and budgets and hence allocation of resources. This did not detract from the importance of the headteacher's role in ensuring that all was ready for inclusion such as briefing staff, informing

pupils and parents, and preparation of the resource room. Furthermore, some headteachers chose to go beyond the minimum requirements of official procedures to implement initiatives such as small welcome parties to improve collaboration between teachers and between home and school. Lack of consensus between the Ministry of Education (MoE) and schools was a weakness, with headteachers stating that leadership in training and preparation for inclusion (for instance, provision of furniture and equipment on time) should come from the special education supervisor and that the MoE should be more proactive in supporting inclusive schools.

The most important findings relate to differences in understandings and practices of inclusion between western settings and the religious and cultural framework in Saudi Arabia, and to inadequate training and preparation for inclusion, a preoccupation with premises and resources, and a weakness in collaboration especially regarding parent participation. Inclusion was mainly understood as physical co-location of children with and without SEN in mainstream schools, locational integration which allowed all children to access the general curriculum to a greater or lesser extent and which principally benefited children with special needs. In addition, the concept of inclusive classrooms was mainly limited to children with dyslexia or other mild to moderate learning disabilities; teachers did not consider that children with cognitive impairment or behavioural problems could be included. The strong sense of inclusion as belonging based on family values and incorporating an expectation that many children could overcome their difficulties and become a closer member of the school-as-family unit was offset by the significant barriers posed by lack of training, low levels of engagement with parents, and infrastructure limitations. Whereas education

supervisors considered that schools had almost everything they needed, schools cited poor communication, insufficient special needs teachers and specialist human resources such as speech therapists, in addition to late arrival of resources. Indeed, the roles of supervisors and the Ministry of Education were viewed fairly negatively by most headteachers and teachers. The importance placed on the physical learning environment contrasted sharply with findings of most western studies and was attributed in part to the strong underlying religious framework which provided a shared rationale for educational inclusion. This resulted in less debate about what inclusion should be and more attention on the practical implications of implementation. However, this failed to address how inclusion would be implemented for children with more serious and complex SEN.

Inevitably, the practice of inclusion reflects a country's context and in Saudi Arabia the overall aim of inclusion is inclusion into a specific Islamic society, as set out in the general goals of education which place the correct and comprehensive understanding of Islam before the various skills and knowledge required for economic and cultural development. The development and implementation of educational policy is less directed by technocratic principles and more guided by the teachings of Islam which influence the adoption, modification and implementation of educational policies, and how policy is translated into practice. In accordance with Islamic precepts, Saudi Arabia considers education to be an obligation and a right conferred through the word of the Qur'an and therefore promotes the right of disabled children for education. Whilst the role of the family is to provide a nurturing environment in which children grow to observe Muslim practices in their daily lives, the role of the school is to provide formal education based on correct understanding of Islam, with

literacy being essential to accessing the Qur'an. In this context, dyslexia, like other learning difficulties and disabilities, is a barrier to be overcome to enable access to the Qur'an. The state therefore has to provide access to education for all children with disabilities to enable them to fulfil their obligations as Muslims. Thus, religion lies at the heart of an inclusive education.

Within Islam, understandings of equity, disability and difference are different from western societies and this affects policy and practices of educational inclusion. Equality conveys the idea that all human beings are equal creations of Allah and therefore to be respected equally. Disability is about difference like any other markers of difference between people. The Qur'an says very little about disability for this reason but stresses the absolute importance of the strong and wealthy taking care of the weak and poor. Equity is understood within Islam as the religious obligation for those who have health and wealth to take care of those who do not and, as such, equity affirms the absolute spiritual and human equality of every single person. For this reason, differences are simply a matter of creation and do not suggest inferiority or superiority. Differences exist so that people can serve and help each other and their different capabilities are of equal value in promoting the common good and developing strong communities through mutual reliance and support. Such reliance and interdependence reflects the Islamic precept of loving for others what one would love for oneself.

The influence of Islam on the policy and practice of inclusion can hence be understood along the notion of equity. The starting point is to recognize that every child must be valued equally and that differences are an integral element of their equal value as a human being. Equity then dictates that needs are recognized and every effort made to meet them, a principle which explains why identification of categories of disability and SEN are an essential first step, and specific programmes to meet those needs are a logical and necessary second step in the design and implementation of inclusion. The fact that such an approach exists comfortably with inclusion as a sense of belonging is further explained by the Islamic precept of loving for others what one would love for oneself, which results in family values as a guiding framework for individual families, the community and inclusion in Saudi Arabia.

However, the implementation of inclusion has revealed tensions between the Islamic framework and the older Bedouin tradition in Saudi Arabia. Whilst both emphasize the importance of the family group and conformity in exchange for support, the Bedouin tradition views disability as deviation from the norms associated with the public image of the family and is therefore associated with stigmatisation. This explains to a great extent why children with mild learning difficulties are more readily accepted than those with severe learning difficulties (because they appear more normal) and why parents' lack of education or non-Saudi nationality may be a source of shame. However, with Islam as the guiding framework for inclusion, some of the remaining barriers to effective implementation of inclusion could be reduced or removed. Equity would require general and special needs teachers to work together for the greater good of more vulnerable children. Equity would require an in-service

training and development programme to be available to all teachers and headteachers at a time and place suitable for their needs and equity would require those who have relevant skills and knowledge to share them with those who do not. For dyslexic children, equity would require general teachers to recognize when assessment was appropriate, assessment which incorporated a wider range of instruments and more informed panel members, greater flexibility in applying elements of various specialized programmes, a greater number of dyslexia specialist teachers and advisers and wide dissemination of teaching strategies for use in the regular classroom. Finally, equity would require teachers to implement initiatives to enable parents to develop their own capabilities so that they could better help their children.

However, inclusion in Saudi Arabia focuses first and foremost on inclusion into Saudi society. This implies that the equity principle needs to extend beyond equity in education to greater equity in opportunities in life. Indeed, the precept of loving for others what you would love for yourself requires this to be done. This is the cornerstone on which an application of capability theory can be built, with parents supporting the development of their children's capabilities to enable them to lead fuller lives as members of Saudi society, and with teachers supporting parents to develop the capabilities they choose. Whereas children with special needs have limited opportunities to explore their capabilities because of the emphasis on encouraging them to access all or parts of the general curriculum, a capability perspective would focus on offering a broad range of exploratory multisensory experiences provided by encouraging and supportive teachers and parents and, in the process, building a more inclusive society.

From a philosophical standpoint, a capability approach offers an alternative perspective on difference and disability. It neither downplays nor celebrates difference, in contrast to the prevailing Saudi Arabian and UK worldviews. Instead it proposes that whether notions of difference, disability and equality are viewed through a lens of cultural relativism or absolutism, differences and disabilities exist independently of their social constructions and can be assessed in terms of comparisons with individual functionings and capabilities (Terzi, 2004, 2005). According to Sen (1999), these differences, together with social, political and environmental differences, produce differences in the quality of life and hence lead to inequalities. Such inequalities must be appropriately addressed through developing individuals' capabilities and reducing institutional and cultural barriers. The capability concept is thus aligned with the notion of equity in Islam.

Further progress with inclusion is required. The tendency to see the child as the problem appears to persist; in the case of dyslexia this is due to the importance of literacy within the education system and in wider society (Collinson, 2012). Development of dyslexia-friendly classrooms in an ethos of enabling capabilities would not only enhance the educational experience of dyslexic children but also offer other children opportunities to extend their own capabilities. One study of women who recalled their own experiences as children while undertaking childcare training has illustrated the importance of fostering early capability in all young children, reiterating the importance of capability development for women as carers for children as well as the development of the children they care for (Wright, 2012). Fostering capability in children and women is likely to require the full involvement of teachers. In line with the recommendation that teachers should work more closely with parents,



it has been stated that “Certainly, the enhancement of students’ capabilities is one avenue for schools interested in reform but enhancing practitioner capabilities is an even more powerful agent of change as they are the only ones with the power to modify the conditions of access” (Graham and Harwood, 2011, p.149).

A capability approach holds that people control their own lives and hence education should promote the development of capabilities which help them to do that (Glassman, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, the religious and cultural framework points towards the enhancement of individual capabilities to achieve valued functionings being founded on Islamic precepts for most, if not all, individuals. According to one version of capability approach, individuals should make the choices for themselves in their particular societies about which capabilities to develop (Sen, 1999), thus a capability approach can provide an appropriate basis for making the necessary progress with inclusion in Saudi Arabia.

In conclusion, this study has made an important and unique contribution to the debates concerning inclusion, diversity and difference within an Islamic framework. It has shown that a capability approach to inclusion is compatible with such a framework and moreover that a focus on human capabilities can strengthen the application and implementation of the equity precept. Thus this study has advanced the discussion of issues of difference and diversity in inclusion through valuing and promoting human capabilities within a societal and religious framework that places common good and societal values at the heart of educational policy and legislation.



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## **Appendix 1 Socio-economic context**

This appendix gives the context for the current case study, giving brief relevant population and education statistics before outlining the socio-economic contexts of the schools in the case study. The schools were selected to reflect different contexts; the main characteristics of each of the chosen city, large town and rural environments in which the fieldwork was undertaken provide a socio-economic perspective on the study.

Saudi Arabia has the largest land area of the countries in the Middle East, approximately 2,149,690 square kilometres. The population is estimated at just over 25.7 million, of whom some 25% are aged 15 or under. The current population growth rate is around 2.6% ([www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)). Some 82% of the population lives in towns and cities but there remain many much smaller village communities.

Saudi Arabia in its present form is a young country. It was formally unified by royal decree on 23 September 1932 when King Abdl Aziz was crowned. Education in Saudi Arabia is free at every level. Schools are classified as elementary (primary), intermediate (middle), and secondary schools. Net enrolment and attendance at primary school in the years 2005-2009 was estimated to be 85%. Classes are segregated by gender. To deal with the growing school population, Saudi Arabia has a major schools building programme: the Kingdom's Future Schools Building Programme will be rolled out from late 2011 over a period of ten years and will involved a total of 4,500 new schools (in the region over the next ten years (Broomhall, 2011).

A map showing the province in which the fieldwork was carried out is provided in figure 1.

Figure 1 Map showing Al Qassim province



Source: [www.ahlamme.com](http://www.ahlamme.com)

Al-Qassim province has a strong regional economy with a relatively broad spread of sectors. There are almost 150 plants and factories in a range of industries; not only food processing and beverages, but wood and wood products, paper and paper products, as well as printing. Furthermore it has thriving industries related to building materials, metals and engineering. Development of new factories is still under way, especially in Qassim city where an estimated 100 factories will be established when development is complete.

The region around Buraidah is known as the 'breadbasket' of Saudi Arabia because it contains around one-fifth of all the agricultural land in the country and has many large

farms producing dates, vegetables and wheat together with traditional oasis products such as oranges and lemons. In addition, there is large-scale poultry and egg production. The region exports produce to all the Gulf countries as well as supplying cities around Saudi Arabia. However, although the region as a whole enjoys a strong mixed economy and is not dependent on oil to the same extent as the overall economy of the country, there is considerable variation in the standard of living among the cities, towns and villages of Al-Qassim province. As far as practicable, therefore, the locations selected for the case study were typical of the variations in family income, health and education found in the province. The selected schools were located in the city of Buraidah, the town of Al-Hafer and a small village in the area around Buraidah. Further details of their populations, economy and general levels of education are given in the following sections.

### **Buraidah city**

Buraidah is the capital of Al-Qassim Province in north central Saudi Arabia in the heart of the Arabian peninsula. Buraidah lies halfway between the Persian Gulf to the east and the Red Sea to the west. It occupies a land area of around 1,300 square kilometres and, according to the 2010 Census, has a population of 609,000. It is a major city with a long history of trade in agricultural produce which has been developed with support from the government. Although the city has shopping malls, government offices and businesses, agriculture remains the key contributor to the economy.

Levels of education among the population are higher overall in Buraidah than in many parts of Saudi Arabia, in spite of recent migration from nearby villages, because the city has benefited from three generations of relatively high levels of education due to



a long tradition of trade and government support for education. In total there are 218 schools for girls and 145 schools for boys (further statistical breakdown not available).

### **The village**

The village (name not supplied in order to protect confidentiality of the school) is also located in Al-Qassim province, some 10Km outside Buraidah, to the north of the city. With a population of about 18,000 people, it is heavily dependent on subsistence level farming in addition to date production, and is also known for its salt flats which provide a livelihood for most of the inhabitants of the village. As in many rural locations in many countries, the level of educational attainment among the population as a whole is lower than in the cities. However, the younger generations benefit from all stages of education from primary to secondary for both boys and girls. As is also typical of villages in countries in the process of development, many inhabitants relocate to the city of Buraidah as soon as they are able to do so.

### **Al Hafer town**

Al Hafer is located in the north east of Saudi Arabia some 500 km from the capital Riyadh. Covering an area of approximately 144 square kilometres, Al Hafer enjoys an important location at a crossroads which link the Gulf countries and Europe. The estimated population according to the 2010 Census for the year is around 300,000. There is a variety of economic activity and industries, together with many shopping malls, hotels and restaurants. The town boasts more than fifteen government health centres and ten private clinics. One of its distinguishing characteristics is the presence of wells, 40 in total, of which 4 are suitable for drinking. Again, there are schools at primary, middle and secondary level for both boys and girls.

In sum, there are differences in socio-economic levels between the school environments which impact parents' financial situation and average educational levels, with distances between the town or city and the village presenting a further limitation, in particular on mothers.

## Appendix 2 Data collection instruments

### Headteachers' interview schedule

#### Dimensions of the Interview

- 1- Understanding of inclusion
- 2- Training and experience
- 3- Resources and support
- 4- Perceptions about barriers to inclusion and required changes

#### ❖ Understanding of inclusion

1- What does inclusion mean in your view?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2-How important do you think inclusion is for children in your school?

(1=very important, 2=quite important, 3=neutral, 4=not very important 5=not at all important)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3-How do you think inclusion helps pupils with SEN to improve their school work?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4-What other effects on children with SEN do you notice? Can you explain? Eg making friends, conversation, play.

.....

.....

6 – Overall, how suitable do you think that the regular school environment is for children with SEN? (1=very suitable, 2=quite suitable, 3=neutral, 4=not very suitable, 5=not at all suitable)

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
a.. educationally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. psychologically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. socially	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7- What effects on children without SEN do you notice? (academic, psychological, social)

.....

.....

.....

.....

8- What is the school policy on inclusion?

.....

.....

.....

9- What are the initiatives emerging from these policies?

.....

.....

.....

.....

10- How would you describe the educational programmes available at your school? In your opinion, to what extent do they meet the level of SEN students?

.....

.....

.....

11- In your view, how important is the head teacher's influence on how inclusion operates in a school?

(1=very important, 2=quite important, 3=neutral, 4=not very important 5=not at all important)

*1      2      3      4      5*

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

12- What influence can you exercise? E.g. on teacher training, curriculum, resources, ethos

.....

.....

13- Compared with the head teacher's influence, how important do you consider the education supervisor's influence on how inclusion operates in a school?

(1=much more important, 2=more important, 3=neutral, 4=less important 5=much less important)

*1      2      3      4      5*

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

❖ **Training and experience**

14- To what extent do you think teachers in your school are trained properly to teach children with SEN in an inclusive learning environment? (1= fully trained, 2= quite well trained, 3= neutral, 4= not very well trained, 5= not at all)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15 - What types of training have the teachers had to equip them for an inclusive classroom? Prompt for regular teachers and SEN specialist teachers, pre-service and in-service training

.....

.....

.....

.....

16- What training have you yourself received relative to inclusion? Also to SEN?

.....

.....

.....

.....

17- To what extent you have acquired the skills you consider necessary for managing inclusive education programmes?

.....

.....

.....

.....

18- What previous experience do you have of teaching children with SEN?

.....

.....

19-What previous experience do you have of managing inclusive education programmes?

.....

.....

❖ **Resources and support**

20- How would you describe collaboration between teachers and other professionals in the school? E.g. speech therapist. Please give examples

.....

.....

.....



21- To what extent is your school is resourced and ready for inclusion?

(1=fully, 2=quite well, 3=neutral/neither good nor bad, 4= quite poorly, 5=very poorly)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

a. Please list the educational resources available in your school that support inclusion?

.....

.....

22- What support do you receive from the MOE or local authorities regarding the education of children with SEN?

.....

.....

.....

23- What do you think about the role of the teaching assistants in inclusive classrooms?  
[may need to explain]support do you receive from the MOE or local authorities regarding the education of children with SEN?

.....

.....

.....

24- What additional support is necessary to implement inclusion successfully from your point of view?

.....

.....

❖      **Perceptions about barriers to inclusion and required changes**

24- What barriers do you perceive to the successful implementation of inclusive education in your school?

.....

.....

25- What do you think should be done to overcome these barriers?

.....

.....

26- What challenges do you face in implementing inclusion?

.....

.....

.....

26- Please identify the most important actions that you consider can be taken to enhance the inclusion of SEN children in your school

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Teachers' interview schedule

School number: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Information for the teacher:

- ❖ You are a teacher (general - special – other)-
- ❖ You have been a teacher for: \_\_\_\_\_ (years/months)
- ❖ You have been in this school for: \_\_\_\_\_ (years/months)

### Dimensions of the Interview

- 1- Understanding of inclusion
- 2- Training and experience
- 3- Resources and support
- 4- Perceptions about barriers to inclusion and required changes
- 5- Outcomes and suggestions

#### ❖ Understanding of inclusion

1. What does inclusion mean to you?

.....

.....

.....

2. To what extent do you think that the regular school environment is educationally, psychologically and socially suitable for children with SEN?

(1=very suitable, 2= fairly suitable, 3=neutral, 4=not very suitable, 5=not suitable at all)

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. What effect does the SEN child's presence have on the regular classroom environment? (1=very positive, 2= fairly positive, 3=neutral, 4= fairly negative, 5=very negative)

	<i>i.</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
a. on behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. on academic attainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. on pupil relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4. In what ways does a child with special educational needs benefit from regular education, academically and socially?

.....

.....

.....

5. What is the ideal model of inclusion from your perspective?

.....

.....

.....

6. Do you think all children can be included? Why/ why not?

.....

.....

.....

7. Does the severity of disability make a difference? How?

.....

.....

.....

8. What are the challenges of including children with severe SEN?

.....

.....

.....

9. How would you describe regular students' attitudes and feelings towards their peers with SEN? Can you think of any examples?

.....

.....

.....

10. How positive do you personally feel about teaching students with SEN?  
(1=very positive, 2= fairly positive, 3=neutral, 4= fairly negative, 5=very negative)

1            2            3            4            5

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

❖     **Training and experience**

11. What pre- or in-service training have you had relative to special educational needs?  
What type?

.....

.....

In your, what are the skills required to implement inclusive strategies in a class?

.....

.....

12. Do you think that you have the necessary skills for teaching children with SEN?

Why/why not?

.....

.....

13. What experience do you have of teaching children with SEN? If yes, was it in a special school or a regular school?

.....

.....

14. Do you think that teachers in regular schools have sufficient abilities and skills to teach SEN children ? Why/why not?

.....

.....

15. What teaching strategies do you use?

.....

.....

16. What kind of teaching strategies do you think could work well with SEN children? And why?

.....

.....



17. How do you differentiate your teaching strategies to accommodate all children, eg in literacy?

.....

.....

18. Do you use individual educational planning? And how challenging is this process for you?

.....

.....

19. Do you think the current curriculum is suitable for all children? Why/ why not?

.....

.....

.....

20. How can the curriculum be changed? How can the examination system be changed to meet all students' needs?

.....

.....

.....

21. Do you think that head teacher/administration has received adequate training for implementing inclusion in your school? Why/why not?

.....

.....

.....

❖ **Resources and support**

22. How far do you think your school is resourced and ready for inclusion?

(1=fully, 2= partly, 3=neutral, 4= not very well, 5=not at all)

1            2            3            4            5

☐    ☐    ☐    ☐    ☐

Could you please list the educational resources available in your school that support inclusion?

.....

.....

.....

23. What support do you receive from the MOE or local authorities regarding the education of children with SEN?

.....

.....

24. What do you think about the role of teaching assistants in the classroom? In your view, how important are teaching assistants to the process of inclusion?

(1=very important, 2=quite important, 3=neutral, 4=not very important 5=not at all important)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. What kind of support do you need to implement inclusion successfully?

.....

.....

26. How important is the role of the other professionals such as speech and language therapists? (1=very important, 2=quite important, 3=neutral, 4=not very important 5=not at all important)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

And how does this role work in the school?

.....

.....

27. To what extent would you say that inter-professional collaboration in your school has facilitated inclusion? (1=a great deal, 2=to some extent, 3=neutral, 4=not very much, 5=not at all)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. How would you describe the roles taken by the school administration towards inclusion? Does it encourage/discourage this process? How?

.....

.....

.....

❖ **Perceptions about barriers to inclusion and required changes**

29. To what extent do the following create barriers to the implementation of inclusive education in Saudi schools now? and what are these barriers a bit too big, you may differentiate in terms of barriers in policy and practice level, cultural / religious factors? (1=a great deal, 2=to some extent, 3=neutral, 4=not very much, 5=not at all)

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
a. education policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. premises/facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. teachers' lack of training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. teachers' lack of experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. curriculum issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. culture/religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

30. Could you please mention some important factors that could contribute to the inclusion e.g. training, expertise, school-home collaboration, leadership, school-professionals collaboration

.....

.....

.....

31. How have you adapted your teaching methods to meet the needs both general education pupils and those with special needs?

.....

.....

.....

❖ **Implications of inclusion**

32. From your own observations, can you indicate positive outcomes that have come from the inclusion of pupils with SEN in your classroom?

.....

.....

.....

.....

33. From your observation can you indicate negative outcomes from including pupils with SEN in your classroom?

.....

.....

**34. Finally, what suggestions would you make to improve inclusion in your school?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Supervisor interview schedule

### **Understanding of inclusion**

- 1) What does inclusion mean to you?
- 2) Do you think that the regular school environment is educationally, psychologically and socially suitable for children with SEN?
- 3) What effect does the SEN child's presence have on the regular classroom environment?
- 4) Does the SEN child benefit from regular education, academically and socially?
- 5) What is the ideal model of inclusion from your perspective?
- 6) Do you think all children can be included? Why/ why not?
- 7) Does the severity of disability make a difference? How?
- 8) Why do you think that it is difficult to include children with severe SEN?
- 9) How would you describe regular students' attitudes and feelings towards their peers with SEN?
- 10) What do you feel towards teaching students with SEN?

### **11) Training and experience**

- 12) What training have you received relative to special educational needs?
- 13) What training have you received relative to supervision for special educational needs?
- 14) Do you think that you have been given the necessary skills and knowledge for this kind of supervision?
- 15) Have you got any previous experience in teaching children with SEN? If yes, was it in a special school or a regular school?
- 16) Do you think that teachers under your supervision in regular schools have the necessary/ sufficient abilities and skills to teach SEN children or not?
- 17) Do you prefer certain teaching strategies (methods) for inclusion? If so, why?

- 18) Do you think that the current curriculum is suitable for all children? Why/ why not?
- 19) How can the curriculum be changed? How can the examination system be changed to meet all students' needs?

### **Resources and support**

- 20) What kind of resources do you have for inclusion?
- 21) What kind of resources do you use to for inclusion?
- 22) How far do you think schools are resourced and ready for inclusion?
- 23) Could you please list the educational resources available for all schools that support inclusion?
- 24) Do you receive any support from the MOE or local authorities regarding the education of children with SEN?
- 25) What do you think about the role of schools assistants come from MOE?
- 26) What kind of support do you need to implement inclusion successfully in all schools?
- 27) What do you think about the role of other professionals such as speech and language therapists? And how does it work in the school?
- 28) How would you describe the roles taken by the school administration towards inclusion? Does it encourage/discourage this process? How?
- 29) Do you have training for SEN teachers? How many? And when?
- 30) What kind of training do you have?

### **Inclusion Policy:**

- 31) When will the implications for inclusion policy in Al Qassim city start?
- 32) What policy do you have for inclusion?
- 33) What policy do you have related to pupils with learning difficulties in inclusive schools?
- 34) How do you transfer this policy into practice?



- 35) Do you have any assistance for transferring the policy?
- 36) Do you have any difficulties in transferring the policy into practice?
- 37) Can you change or delay any point from the policy? ( if you note there is no benefit from it )
- 38) What is your opinion about the current inclusion policy?
- 39) From your view what are the key points for successful inclusion?

### **Supervision**

- 40) How many schools do you have under your supervision?
- 41) How many schools do you have?
- 42) How many times usually do visit schools?
- 43) What does supervision for inclusive schools mean for you?
- 44) What is the purpose for your supervision on inclusive schools?
- 45) Do you have plans and policy for the supervision?
- 46) How long should your plan be - one term or one year?
- 47) How can you measure the achievement of SEN pupils in inclusive schools?
- 48) Do you have a new plan for supervision every year?
- 49) How do you organize your plans for your supervision?
- 50) How often do the relevant policies change?

### **Perceptions about barriers to inclusion and required changes**

- 51) In your view, what barriers to the implementation of inclusive education exist in Saudi primary schools now?
- 52) Could you please mention some important factors that could contribute to successful inclusion
- 53) Do you think teaching pupils with SEN can enhance the learning environment?
- 54) How you adapted your teaching methods to meet the needs both general education pupils and those with special needs?

## Parents' interview schedule

### Dimensions of the Interview

1. Understanding of inclusion
2. Collaboration between home and school
3. Resources and support
4. Perceptions about barriers to inclusion and required changes
5. Relationships and attitudes

#### ❖ Understanding inclusion:

1- What does inclusion mean to you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2-How important do you think inclusion is for your child?

(1=very important, 2=quite important, 3=neutral, 4=not very important 5=not at all important)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3-How do you think inclusion helps pupils with SEN (for your child for example) to improve their school work?

.....

.....

.....

4-What effects on your child(ren) do you notice? Can you explain? Eg making friends, conversation, play.

.....

.....

5- In your opinion, is inclusion a good idea?

(1=very good, 2=quite good, 3=neutral/neither good nor bad, 4=quite bad 5=very bad)

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6-How well do you think inclusion is working in this school?

(1=very well, 2=quite well, 3=neutral/neither well nor badly, 4=not very well 5= badly)

	1	2	3	4	5
a. For pupils with SEN?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

b. For pupils without SEN?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
----------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

❖ **Collaboration between home and school**

7. What communication exists between the school and your family?

.....

8. How often does communication take place?

Once a year    Once a term    Once a month    More than once a month

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

9. To what extent does it help your child and your family? In what way?

.....

.....

10. Are there parents' meetings with the classroom teacher/head teacher on a regular basis? How effective they are in responding to your queries?

.....

.....

11. What changes have been made at the school as a result of inclusion?

.....

.....

.....

12. How would you describe the roles taken by the school administration towards inclusion? Are they encouraging or discouraging?

.....

.....

.....

❖ **Resources and support**

13. What do you think about the current resources in the school (e.g. staff, computers, books)? (1=very good, 2=quite good, 3=neutral/neither good nor bad, 4=not very good 5= bad)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. To what extent they are sufficient for including your child in the mainstream schools?

.....

.....

15. What other resources (such as educational visits, trips, pictures, teaching assistants) would help your child? What would help most?

.....

.....

16. What other resources (such as educational visits, trips, pictures, teaching assistants) would help the school and teachers to make sure that all children can learn together properly?

.....

.....

17. How would you describe your child's safety in the school/ in the class / playground?

(1=very safe, 2=quite safe, 3=neutral, 4=not very safe 5= unsafe)

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please give examples.

.....

.....






❖ **Relationships and attitudes**

18. How would you describe the relationship between the teacher and your child?

.....

19. How good do you think the relationship is between the teacher and your child?

(1=very good, 2=quite good, 3=neutral/neither good nor bad, 4=not very good 5=bad)

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
				

20. How does this relationship affect your child's achievement? (academic and social)

.....

.....

21. How would you describe teachers' attitudes towards your child and other children with SEN?

.....

.....

22. What is your attitude towards inclusion?

.....

.....

.....

23. What are the advantages and disadvantages of inclusion for your child?

.....

.....

24. How would you describe regular students' behaviour towards children with SEN/  
your child?

.....

.....

❖ **Perceptions about barriers to inclusion and required changes**

25. In your view, what are the barriers to the implementation of inclusive education in  
the school?

.....

.....

26. What would you like to change to make the school more inclusive? (e.g. teaching  
assistants in classrooms, more computers, more specialist help)

.....

.....

27. Would you recommend this school to another parent who has a child with SEN?

Please give reasons.



.....

.....

### **Children's interview schedule**

Briefly the interviewer will remind the child of what she said to the whole group and check if she is happy to talk to her. After asking the child's name and ages in order to build an appropriate social relationship with the children and help her to talk, the interviewer will ask the children simple questions about their experience in the school, reflect upon some academic and social issues. In a sense, children's experience about an inclusive school could reflect the school's ethos and to what extent inclusive policies have been translated into inclusive practices in that school. In a friendly way the following questions, obviously with variations suitable for children's understanding, will be used in the interviews with children.

School number \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil class \_\_\_\_\_

Pupil number \_\_\_\_\_

### **Dimensions of the Interview**

- 1) Attitudes towards the school
- 2) Relations with peers
- 3) Resources and Support
- 4) Relations with teachers (teachers' attitudes)

❖ **Attitudes towards the school**

1. When did you join this school? .....
2. Have you joined another school before this one? And if yes, What is your previous school? .....
3. Tell me about your first day at this school.

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. Do you enjoy being at this school? If 'yes', why?

.....

.....

❖ **Relations with peers**

5. How many friends do you have at school? .....
6. Do you help any of your friends with their school work? (Tell me about a time when you did this, or When did you last help a friend with their work? Tell me about it.)

.....

.....

.....

7. Do any of your friends help you with your work? (Tell me about a time when a friend helped you, or When did a friend last help you with your work? Tell me about it.)

.....

.....

.....

.....

8. Who do you play with in break times? And why do you like playing with them?

.....

.....

9. Would you say that other children are kind to you?

.....

.....

.....

10. Do any children in your class call other children unkind names? And how often?

.....

.....

.....

11. Do you feel safe at this school?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Do you do all the same lessons and activities as everyone else in your class?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. If not, what lessons do you do in a different room?

.....

14. Have you ever been told off in a lesson or activity because you cannot do it?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. Do you think everyone in your class should learn the same things at the same time?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### ❖ Resources and Support

16. What help does your teacher give you in the classroom? And how much/how often? .....

.....

.....

17. What help do you get outside the classroom? And how much/how often?

.....

.....

.....

18. Do you feel happy in the school?

Yes

No

☐☐

19. If you feel unhappy at school, who looks after you?

.....

20. What helps you the most to learn at school?

.....

21. What else do you think could help you to learn at school?

.....

❖ **Relations with teachers (teachers' attitudes)**

22. Do your teachers listen to your ideas?

Yes

No

☐☐

23. How much do your teachers help you with your work? a lot or a little?

A lot

A little

☐☐

24. How well do you think you are getting on with your lessons and learning at

school?

Very well

Quite well

Neutral

Not very well

Not at all well

☐☐☐☐☐

25. Do your teachers tell your parents how you are getting on at school?

Yes

No

☐☐

26. What do you think your teachers think about you? (e.g hardworking, naughty, clever) .....

.....

27. Do you like your teachers?

Yes

No

☐☐

28. Do you think your teacher (s) like you?

Yes

No

☐☐

29. Do your teachers treat all children the same? [equally and fairly]

Yes

No

☐☐

30. Do your teachers try to help all children?

Yes

No

☐☐

31. If you have a problem in the school, do you think the head teacher will listen to you?

Yes

No

☐☐

32. Do your teachers try to make the lessons easy to understand for everyone?

Yes

No

☐☐

## **Encounters with children**

The researcher engaged with children in a number of ways, first of all by being seen around the school, then telling the children that she wanted to find out what they thought of their school and changes that had been happening at the school. She also wanted to know about their friends, what they thought of their teachers and lessons. She particularly wanted to know what they thought about the changes that were bringing all different kinds of children together in one class. She had asked their parents and teachers if she could spend time with them doing this and they had agreed. She was now asking them if they were happy to work with her. There were different things they might be asked to do – a 10 minute session in class, drawing their friends and spending 10 minutes talking to the researcher by themselves. Children who were happy to work with her were asked to write their names on a sheet of paper being passed round the class and to tick if they were happy to do 1, 2 or 3 things if asked (explaining what these things were and where to tick).

### **Group (class) ‘hands up’ activity**

Two groups of children {whole class groups} using the ‘hands up’ approach. The researcher’s instructions were:

“I am interested in what you think about your school, your teachers and what you learn. I will say something like “Hands up if you have always been to this school” and you put



your hands up if you have always been to this school – like a game. You have to listen carefully to what I say so that you know when to put your hands up, when to keep your hands up, when to put your hands down and when to sit still and do nothing... and when to do something different. Let's do the first one to make sure we all know how to play the 'finding out' [research game]. Listen carefully now..."

❖ **Attitudes towards the school**

- Hands up if you have always been to this school. [count hands. "Hands down"]
- Hands up if you were at another school before this one. [Keep your hands up. Count hands]
- Now... If you like this school more than the other school, keep your hands up. [Count hands. OK, everybody... hands down]
- Let's check if I have got that right....
- Hands up who doesn't like this school [Count hands. OK, everybody... hands down]
- Hands up who likes this school [Count hands. OK, everybody... hands down]

- Hands up who likes this school very much [Count hands. OK, everybody... hands down]

❖ **Relations with teachers (teachers' attitudes)**

Teachers can make a big difference to how much you like school, so... .

8. Hands up if you like your teachers [count hands. "Hands down"]
9. Hands up if your teachers like you [count hands. "Hands down"]
10. Hands up if you think your teachers treat all children the same [count hands. "Hands down"]
11. Hands up if you think your teachers try to help all children [count hands. "Keep your hands up"]
12. [Hold up cards – LOT in right hand, LITTLE in left hand.] If you think your teachers try to help all children a little, walk over to this side and line up. If you think your teachers try to help all children a lot, walk over to *this* side and line up. If you are not sure, sit still [count heads.]
 

Lot      Little
13. Now, if you think teachers make the lessons easy to understand, go to the front of the classroom, if you think teachers make the lessons hard to understand, go to the back of the classroom and if you aren't sure, stand in the middle. OK – easy at front, hard at the back and 'not sure' in the middle [count heads.]
 

Easy      difficult

## **Children's drawings**

### **Finding out about friends**

Let's do a quick drawing. Please draw the friends you usually play with at school. You have about 5 minutes to do this. [Stop] Now please write the names of your friends next to their picture like this [show example]. Last, please write your own name and class on the top of the picture [show example again] [Stop].

[I'll collect your pictures now. Well done everybody.]

## BREAK TIME OBSERVATION SHEET

Place:

.....Date:.....Time:.....

.

### SECTION (I): INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

(A) HELPFUL PRACTICES e.g children playing together, teacher encouraging play together, teacher engaging child(ren) with SEN, mediation

DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE	FREQUENCY

Additional comments

.....

**(B) UNHELPFUL PRACTICES e.g. separation of children (unless for health and safety reasons), separate breaks for regular classroom pupils and resources room pupils**

DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE	FREQUENCY

**Additional comments**

.....

.....

.....

**SECTION (II): CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN**

CHALLENGE	RESPONSE

## CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SHEET

Place:.....Date:.....Time

### SECTION (I): INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

(A) HELPFUL PRACTICES e.g children working together, all children participating, teacher valuing all contributions

DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE	FREQUENCY

Other helpful practices e.g. pictures in classroom, facilities

.....

.....

**(B) UNHELPFUL PRACTICES e.g. come children not engaged/ not participating, few pupils answering questions**

DESCRIPTION OF PRACTICE	FREQUENCY

**Other unhelpful practices e.g. pictures in classroom, facilities**

.....

.....



.....

**SECTION (II): CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS**

CHALLENGE	RESPONSE

### Appendix 3 Children's drawings

School 1

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page (*Translation of Arabic at top of page*).

Note: Children in school 1 did not write their name or their friend's. It was already contentious to ask them to draw a living person so there was no pressure for them to do this.

Some of the drawings are cartoons, while some have no faces. This is due to a cultural tradition that a living person should not be represented and does not indicate whether a child is better or worse at drawing than her peers.

#### رسومات الطالبات

الآن، لدينا رسمة جميلة، كل طالبة ترسم لي صديقتها التي تلعب معها في الفسحة، ثم تكتب اسمها عند نهاية الرسمة، ثم تكتب اسمها و فصلها في أعلى الورقة.





We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



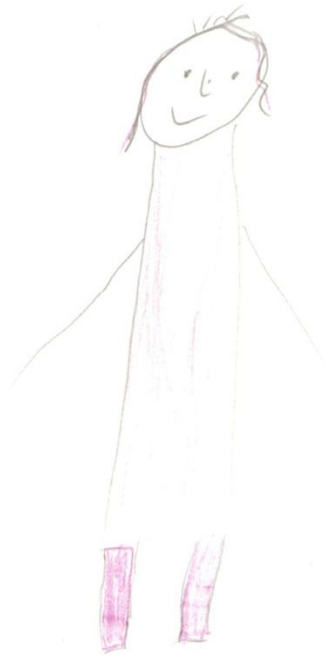
We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.

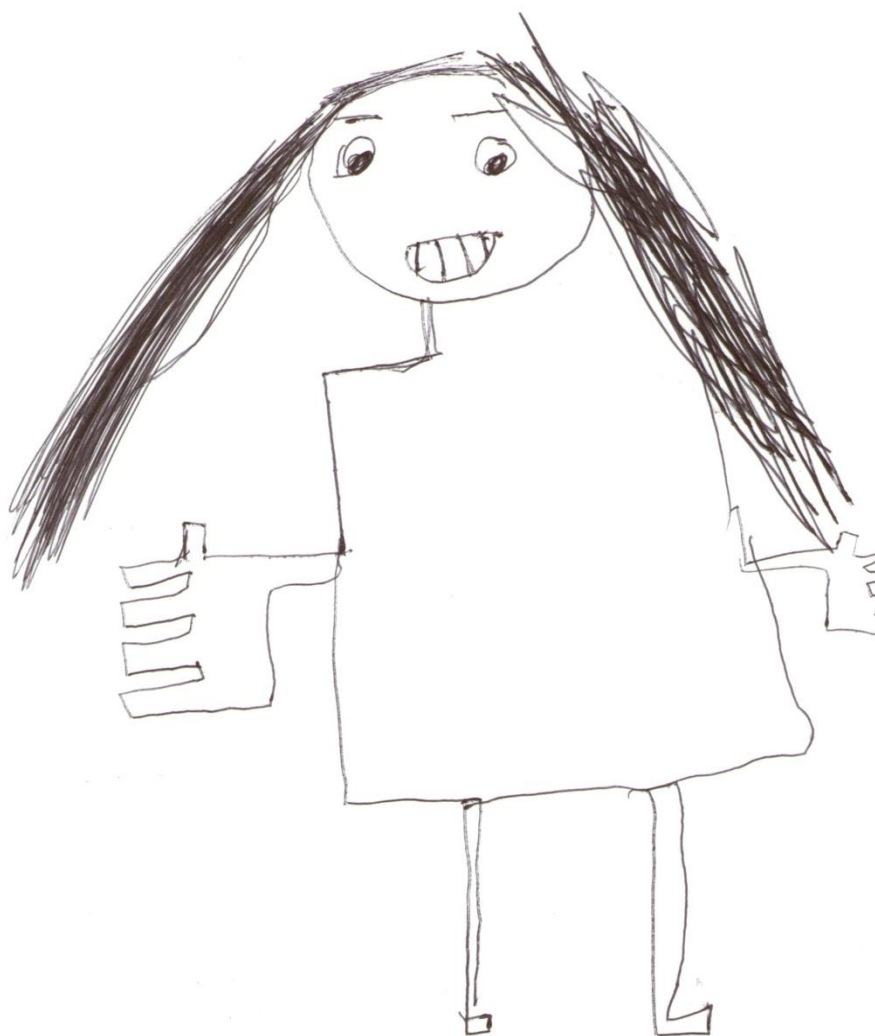


We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.





We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



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We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.





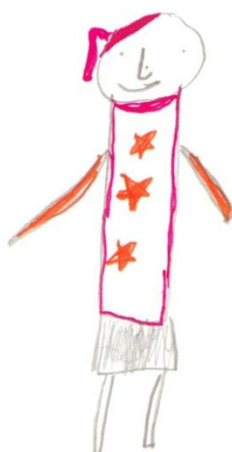
We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



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We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.

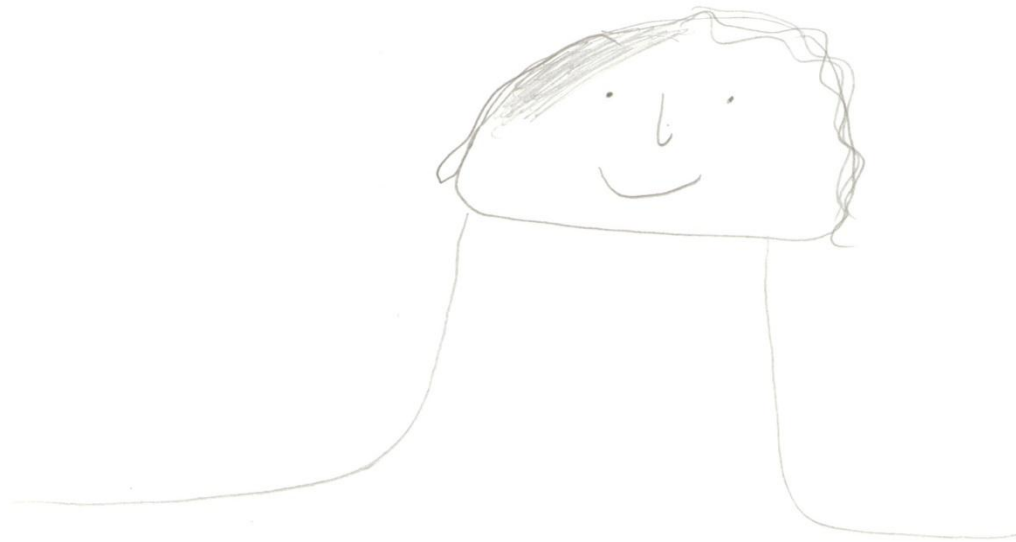


The drawing shows a simple line drawing of a girl with two pigtails, wearing a dress, standing on a lined background. There are faint floral patterns on the left and right sides of the page. The girl is positioned on the right side of the page, with her arms slightly out to the sides. The background consists of horizontal lines, and there are faint floral patterns on the left and right sides of the page.

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



## School 2

حمله الفيزيائي؟  
الطف، الخامس، (٨)

Arabic writing at top is the child's  
name followed by one of Year  
5/Year 5a/Class 5/Class 5a

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her  
friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name  
under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top  
of the page.

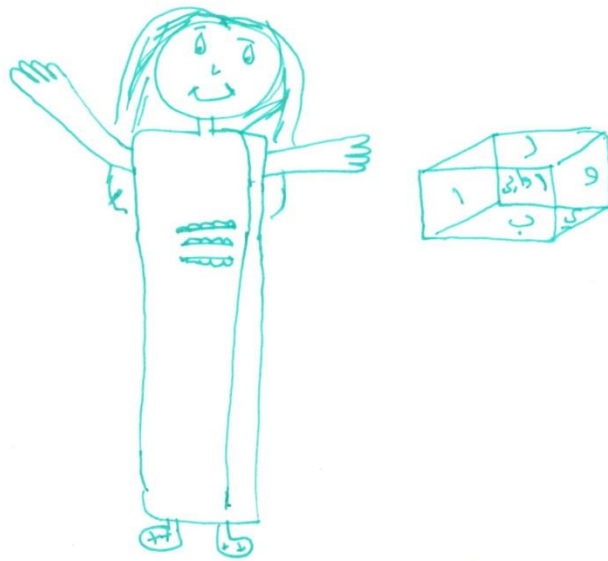


حسان

Arabic writing lower down the page is the  
friend's or friends' name or names sometimes  
followed by one of Year 5/Year 5a/Class  
5/Class 5a

9/0 2020 6/10

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



9/0 2020 6/10

اسم: جواہر فالح امیری ایف ۶/۵

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



حسان ناصر

Friend's name(s) [sometimes  
followed by one of Year 5/Year  
5a/Class 5/Class 5a]



نامی لکھو

وہ کلاس

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



وعدش العتري

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



نورة عبد العتري م / ٥

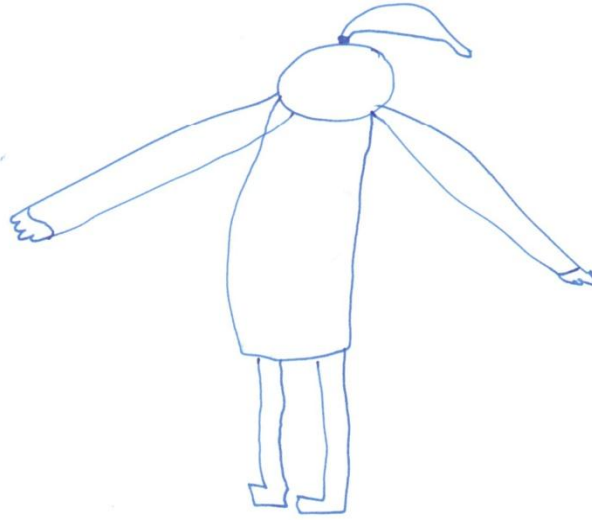
نوره عبد الصمد  
خامس (أ)

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



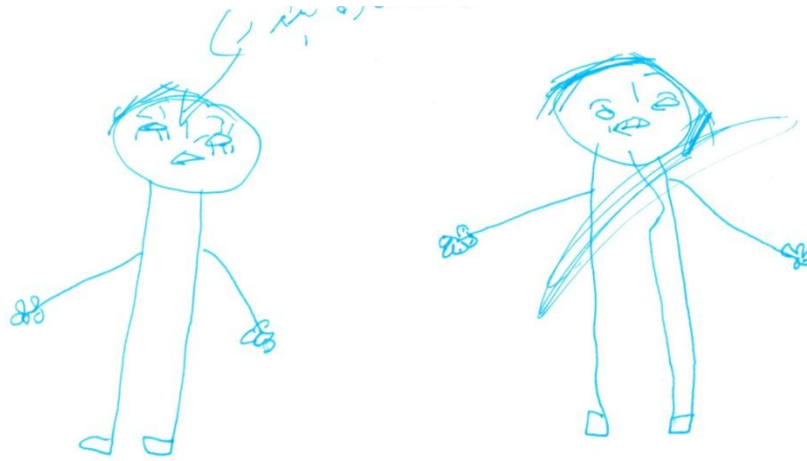
الأسم: مينا داليري

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



مودة بيني  
الصف الخامس (9)

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



باسم سالتة بنور السنتي  
لغتي : ٩/٥

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



(نوره نسيم)

## آفات فساد خامس آ

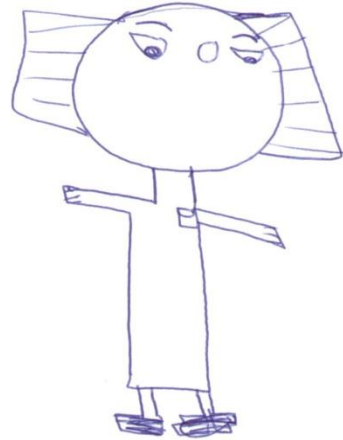
We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



الاسم : الخارم عوض

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.

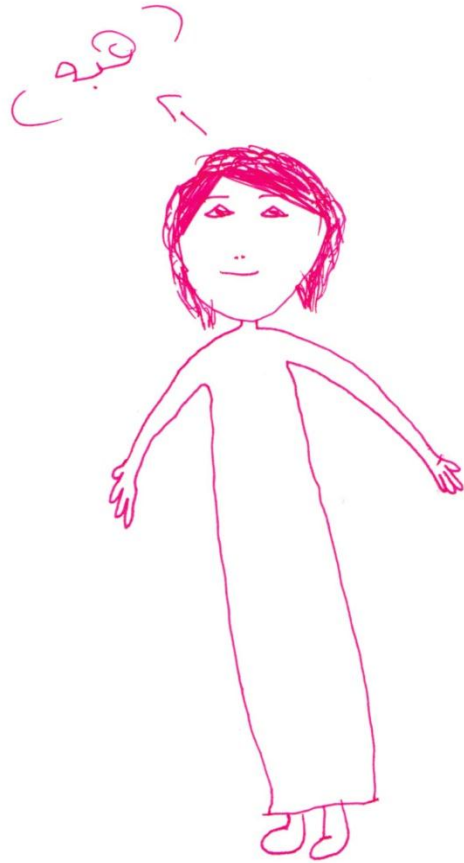
طبيات سعدو ح الصوري خالصة







We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



رہف صالح، امیری

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



(عیردا غنی، امیری)

تولدی مفری  
الف (P) (P)

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



امشواق سالم العتري

We need to do a beautiful drawing. Every child should draw her friend who plays with her in the playground and write her name under the drawing. Write your own name and your class at the top of the page.



## Appendix 4 Ethics: Permissions and Approvals

الرقم: ٢٠ / ٦٤٦  
التاريخ: ١٤ / ١٢ / ١٤٤٣ هـ  
المشروعات:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
الإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم للبنات  
في منطقة القصيم  
إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

إلى: مديرة الابتدائية ( ٤ ، ٥ ، ١٧ ، ٢٥ ، ٤٦ ، ٧٠ ، الشقة )  
من: مديرة إدارة التخطيط والتطوير  
بشأن: تسهيل مهمة باحثة .  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

بناءً على خطاب الباحثة منى بنت صالح العنزي بشأن طلب الموافقة على إجراء دراسة بحث الدكتوراه بعنوان: "اتجاهات المعلمات والوالدين نحو دمج ذوات صعوبات التعلم في فصول التعليم العام في المدارس العادية" مستخدمة أداة المقابلات الشخصية مع المعلمات في المدارس التي بها برامج صعوبات تعلم .  
عليه نأمل منكم التكرم بالتعاون مع الباحثة ، شاكرين حسن تعاونكم مسبقاً .  
والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

هيفاء بنت إبراهيم اليوسف

١٤٤٣  
١٢  
١٤

١٤٤٣/١٢/٢٣ هـ

فاكس: ٠٦٢٨٥٠٣٦١ - مباشر: ٠٦٢٨٢١٥٠٣  
البريد الإلكتروني: pluedu@qge.gov.sa

الرقم: ٣٥٩٨١  
التاريخ: ١٣٩٠/٩/٧  
المفوضات: —



المملكة العربية السعودية  
وزارة التربية والتعليم

وكالة التخطيط و التطوير  
الإدارة العامة للبحوث

سعادة مدير التربية والتعليم بمحافظة حضرة الباطن وفقه الله

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته :

تجدون سعادتك برفقه أدة الطالبة / منى بنت صالح الغنزي، إحدى طالبات الدراسات العليا لمرحلة الدكتوراه من جامعة وارويك في بريطانيا بشأن بحثها بعنوان " اتجاهات المعلمات والوالدين نحو دمج ذوات صعوبات التعلم في فصول التعليم العام في المدارس العادية " .

أمل من سعادتك التكرم بالتوجيه بتسهيل مهمتها .

وتقبلوا وافر التحية ، ،

كفاح  
١٥

مدير عام البحوث

د. محمد بن عبدا لله الضويان

من الإدارة العامة للبحوث  
صورة لخدمات البحث  
صورة للباحثة

الرقم :  
التاريخ : ١٤ / /  
المشروعات :



الجمهورية العربية السورية  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
الإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم للبنات  
في منطقة القصيم

### " إثبات حضور "

تشهد إدارة الإبتدائية السادسة و الأربعون ببريدة  
بأن الباحثة - منى العنزي .. حضرت إلى المدرسة  
لعمل البحوث و الإستهيبانات و ذلك مدة ثلاث أسابيع  
في العام الدراسي ١٤٣١ - ١٤٣٢ هـ  
و ذلك بما يتعلق في البحث من جهة الإداريات  
و المعلمات و الطالبات .  
و عليه جرى تحرير هذه الشهادة بناء على  
طلبها .

مديرة المدرسة :  
خديجة علي السكيت



## Consent form

My name is Mona Alanazi and I am a student at Warwick University in England researching inclusion for SEN pupils. Inclusion is very important for SEN pupils. Teachers and parents play important roles in inclusion; this study explores teachers' and parents' attitudes in inclusive schools in Qassem region. The importance of this study is that it can inform improvements in inclusion in Saudi schools. If you are willing to help with this research, you are asked to give about 30 minutes of your time for an interview or phone interview. Allow me to reassure you that the information will be treated confidentially and that it is used for the purposes of this study only. Your participation will be very much appreciated because your views are essential and important. However, let me reassure you that you may withdraw from the study at any time if you are uncomfortable about taking part. I hope you will agree to be involved and if you do, please sign below to show your consent.

Name .....

School name .....

Occupation .....

Mona Alanazi

PhD student

Warwick University



## Consent form

Dear parents

My name is Mona Alanazi and I am a student at Warwick University in England researching inclusion for SEN pupils. Inclusion is very important for SEN pupils. Teachers and parents play important roles in inclusion; this study explores teachers' and parents' attitudes in inclusive schools in Qassem region. The importance of this study is that it can inform improvements in inclusion in Saudi schools. Pupils also take part in this study. The children will be asked to draw their friends, put their hands up to express their opinion about including SEN pupils and be invited to an interview. Allow me to reassure you that the information will be treated confidentially and that it is used for the purposes of this study only. Your child's participation will be very much appreciated because your child's views are essential and important. However, let me reassure you that you may withdraw your child from the study at any time if you are uncomfortable about your child taking part. Your child has the same right to withdraw. I hope you will agree to involve your child and if you do, please sign below to show your consent.

Child's name .....

Parent's name .....

School name .....

Mona Alanazi

PhD student

Warwick University

**Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees  
(MA by research, MPhil/PhD, EdD)**

Name of student  
Mona Alanazi

PhD

**Project title Teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion in inclusive schools  
in Saudi Arabia**

Supervisor Dr Dimitra Hartas

Funding Body (if relevant)

Please ensure you have read the Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research available in the handbook.

**Methodology**

Please outline the methodology e.g. observation, individual interviews, focus groups, group testing etc.

Structured interview- semi structured interview- drawings(individual)- whole class 'hands up'- observation

**Participants**

Please specify all participants in the research including ages of children and young people where appropriate. Also specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. children; as a result of learning disability.

Primary inclusive school for girls- headteachers-general teachers-special education needs teachers (learning difficulties-severe learning difficulties)- special education needs supervisor-general education supervisor - parents whose child has learning difficulties- parents whose child does not have learning difficulties- pupils with learning difficulties age (9 -11)- pupils without learning difficulties (9 -11).

**Respect for participants' rights and dignity**

How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?

Respect of cultural and religious values was assured because the researcher was a Saudi woman dressed according to cultural conventions and conducting research in Arabic therefore all requirements of a researcher in a girls' school were met in full.

#### Privacy and confidentiality

How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.

Nobody had access to the data collected except the researcher and her supervisor. All the names and the organizations of the participants could not be recognized as codes were assigned.

Confidentiality (information shared only with the thesis supervisor) and all responses coded to assure as far as possible anonymity, explaining to participants exactly how their information will be used by the researcher and how their identity will be protected.

#### Consent

- will prior informed consent be obtained?

- From participants? Yes/ from others? Yes

- explain how this will be obtained. If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:

Consent forms signed by all participants except children, whose parents signed a form. Children were also asked if they wanted to stay or wanted to go and do something else.

- will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status? Yes

#### Competence

How will you ensure that all methods used are undertaken with the necessary competence?

By taking advice from my supervisor, by practising with friends and family and then by conducting the pilot phase and getting feedback.

#### Protection of participants

How will participants' safety and well-being be safeguarded?

Participants in the research had not cause any harm to the participation. They had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

### Child protection

Will a CRB check be needed?      No      (If yes, please attach a copy.)

### Addressing dilemmas

Even well planned research can produce ethical dilemmas. How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research?

It was arranged that any serious ethical dilemmas would be discussed with my supervisor (via email).

### Misuse of research

How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

By protecting the identity of schools and individuals as far as possible, by ensuring that analysis of findings and recommendations are relevant and related to the original data, by requiring permission to quote from or distribute the research.

### Support for research participants

What action is proposed if sensitive issues are raised or a participant becomes upset?

Support would be requested from a teacher or the pupil mentor as appropriate if such a situation arose.

### Integrity

How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others?

Through regard for research principles, a robust methodology, integrity of data collection and analysis and checking understanding and interpretation with individual participants, as well as quality assuring translation to retain fidelity to the original data.

What agreement has been made for the attribution of authorship by yourself and your supervisor(s) of any reports or publications?

Agreement is to be made in respect of individual publications.

### Other issues?

Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you will address them.

Signed *Mona*

Research student Mona Alanazi

Date 17/9/2012

Supervisor

Date 18/09/2012

*[Signature]*

Action

Please submit to the Research Office (Louisa Hopkins, room WE132)

Action taken



Approved



Approved with modification or conditions – see below



Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

Name

*G. LINDSAY*

Date

*19/9/12*

Signature

*[Signature]*

Stamped

Notes of Action

This is a very brief submission + does not show  
near great deal of consideration of ethics apart from the obvious.  
For example: ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> you/cole instead of using names ~~if so~~, –  
how will you store these? And your material? Where will  
ATU

Protection of anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved as far as possible by employing codes that give each school a number code (e.g. S1) and participants a code according to the type of participant (e.g. ST = SEN teacher, SP = parent of child assessed as having SEN) and a number allocated in order of individuals being interviewed. Thus a code might be S2GT3 for the third general education teacher interviewed at school 2. During data analysis and writing up of the thesis, raw handwritten data will be stored separately from all electronic data and all electronic data will be held on a password-secured laptop and password –protected files. Following successful completion of the research, the raw data will be shredded, and once the electronic version of the thesis has been uploaded onto the Warwick University website, the electronic version held on the laptop will be deleted. The hard drive will be cleaned if the laptop is sold or written off.

#### Collecting data from children

There are specific ethical considerations concerning the young children participating in this study: establishing whether a CRB disclosures check was necessary for research in Saudi Arabia, making young children feel comfortable in the presence of a researcher by getting to know the children and explaining the aims of the research in a language they could understand, making particularly sure that children knew they could withdraw from the process anytime they wanted. Another relevant consideration is the fact that adult researchers cannot see the world as a child does therefore care will be taken not to impose an adult interpretation on children's contributions.

**Appendix 5      Data Analysis Template**

