

Analyzing the Difficulties Hindering Successful Integration in the Primary Schools

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the difficulties, which impede the successful integration in the primary schools in Saudi Arabia. A close-ended questionnaire was distributed among 240 individuals constituting of special needs teachers, normal school teacher, and headmasters. The study found that there is no impact of occupation, experience or age on the integration. However, experience impacted the integration where head teachers' group were likely to serve as a difficulty stimulator as compared to the classroom teachers' group. No association was found among the age group and the inclusion difficulty of the participants. The study concluded that enriching the knowledge of the students can assist in the successful integration of the primary schools. It further helps in overcoming the remaining loopholes.

Keywords: education, integration, primary schools, teachers experience, Saudi Arabia, special needs children

1. Introduction

Education sets the base for the development of every industry and sector across the globe, particularly when the country is in the transition from developing to developed (Fägerlind, & Saha, 2016). Similar is the case of Saudi Arabia where substantial efforts are being made for setting new education standards for the country in order to make it parallel with the international academic standards (Aldabas, 2015). Reflecting back on its history before unification, the kingdom had very few schools to cater to the educational needs of the individuals. The change in the country's education dynamic has been slow but remarkable (Battal, 2016). This gradual growth is evident from the increasing number of education actors and institutes in the country such as at the time of establishment of the Ministry of Education, there were only 300 schools; whereas, today the number has reached to 47325 facilitating a population of about five million in both areas i.e. urban and rural with more than 420443 teachers (Ministry of Education, 2014).

Despite the increase in the education efforts of the country, there are still certain challenges faced in terms of integration of disabled children (Abdalleh, & Abdullah, 2017). The integration is a Latin word which means whole. It symbolizes towards the process of making a procedure complete by integrating into units possessing complete variant capabilities and characteristics (Limaye, 2016). In education, it refers to a process in which the special children are made part of the wider education community for the fulfilment of their opportunities, possibilities and fulfilment prospects. Since the end of the 20th century, the concept of integration has gained immense popularity across the globe in the form of an adequate philosophy for reforming the education sector and improving the capabilities of the students in the country (Aldabas, 2015).

With regard to disability in the country, Aljadid (2013) provides that the law in the country recognizes a person as disabled which has a physical or mental impairment which impacts his performance of the regular tasks. The study by Abdalleh, & Abdullah (2017) provides that multiple states are faced with challenges in terms of integration of individuals with a disability. The study of Alanazi (2012) highlights that the segregation of the students with disabilities is being questioned in Saudi Arabia. The efforts are being made by parents and associated individuals for the inclusion of the special need children in the schools which provide general education. Aldabas (2015), further supplements that the advocacy group of parents, as well as disabilities, are pressurizing the Saudi government towards incorporation of the disabled children in the main education system.

The integration of the special need students in the general educational institutions requires the alteration of the

teaching as well as instructional curriculum (Alquraini & Gut, 2012). Such as changes in the classroom structure, and teaching pattern needs to be made in order to meet the special needs of these children and fill their knowledge and learning gap. With regard to the curriculum modification, Abdalleh, & Abdullah (2017) adds that the assignments provided need to be altered according to the needs of the children as well as advancement of the teachers' teaching skills such as their comprehensive understanding of the special students' needs for creating a conducive learning environment.

This integration has been adopted by various countries, however, its emergence remains novel in the Saudi education system. Also, the efforts made for the successful integration is found to be challenging which further emphasizes the exploration of the difficulties associated with it. Therefore, the study is focused on the exploration of the teaching difficulties which are faced by mildly handicapped special needs children in Saudi Arabia such as students who are partially sighted, have a hearing impairment, are physically handicapped, possess disruptive behaviour, or have language or speech disorder. The researcher believes that the understanding of the difficulties will assist in fulfilling the educational needs of special children in the general education system of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the results of the study will assist in the professional development of the teachers by establishing a standardized framework for the inclusion of the special need students in the general education classes.

This subject remains one of the focus in regional studies, despite the efforts and achievements of many education sectors on the right of children with disabilities. Education contributes to promoting the culture of peace and universal values of justice, gender equality and democracy. The study of Ngithi, (2013) sought to determine the challenges teachers encounter in managing student's welfare. Various problems and hindrance are discussed in her study including lack of parent's cooperation and collaboration, numerous requirements for learning, also high teaching load and inadequate resources of proper classroom facilities.

The government should address the issues of integration of the development of disabled children by examining all those challenges faced by a teacher who teaches them. The main agenda of another research conducted by Udoba, (2014) was to create awareness to accept children with special educational needs in the society of Tanzania. It reviews the benefits and hindrance of curriculum adaptation, availability of learning sources and technology systems as well as funds requisite in the integration of the school environment. The concept of performing analysis was to find out challenges faced by teachers when teaching students with special needs. The study revealed that the collaboration is necessary between teachers and parents of children with special needs, specialized training facilities should be implemented on teachers to conduct classes and schools should hire educators who can fulfil requirements of educating disabled children (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Barton, 2016).

Positive effects have been found on the student development with disabilities by implementing information and technology systems, as it is an important part of successful organizations. Recently, computer-assisted teaching in reading can increase accessibility of disabled students (Anderson, 2015). Such programs concentrate on the aspects of interpretation and phonemic awareness which gains popularity in primary schools. When the organization and administration of schools do not incorporate in implementing new technologies, they prepare students to face future developments and make difficulties to achieve their objectives. Researchers and educators classify two different barriers, which create hurdles for integrating disabled children in primary schools successfully.

Uluyol & Şahin (2016) reviewed extrinsic barriers like time, provision, assets, and training of teachings whereas they refer to intrinsic barrier attitudes and beliefs. Researchers have found that if students with special needs are offered exposure to the program, it can truly enhance the learning experience for these students. Since competence and confidence are the critical components of successful integration in primary schools; therefore, learning resources should be present in several different ways that allow disabled students to organize and absorb new knowledge (Vaz et al., 2015). Nikolopoulou & Gialamas (2015) grouped the barriers as teacher level barriers which include lack of time and lack of confidence, whereas school level barriers involve lack of effective training of teachers in the department of special education and solving technical problems. A study of Koehler et al (2014) revealed that teachers face problems in conducting inclusion classes, which produces a negative effect on collaboration with normally developing children, only specialized staff can make this teaching-learning process easy to integrate disabled children successfully.

In addition, lack of resources and approach towards acquiring modern technologies are inclusive in school level barriers. The strength of networking systems, access to the internet, special educators, and expert technicians can prove to be successful in the classroom for disabled students, which help them in creating good communications with their teachers and parents as well. Student reading achievement has significantly increased. In conclusion,

this review section gives a synopsis of the previous systems studied and examined to support the successful integration of children with disabilities to identify what more can be developed to provide ease and opportunities to such children.

2. Method

2.1 Study Design

The prospective study design is adopted for achieving the determined objective of the research. The quantitative approach is adapted for performing the research which was carried out at the Primary School of girls in Saudi Arabia. The study was carried out in the academic year 2017 to 2018.

2.2 Study Sample

In the study, the total sample constitutes of 240 individuals, derived from the 30 integrated school population. The survey sample constitutes of 120 teachers who were responsible for handling and teaching the special need children in their classes only, 30 headmasters of the school, and 90 teachers who teach to all the special need children in the integrated school (Table 1). A total of 40% of the participants were between 41-50 years followed by 29.2% participants between 31-40 years, 28.3% participants between 20-30 years, and only 2.5% between 51 years and above. A total of 45.8% of the participants have more than 10 years' experience, 28.3% have less than 5 years' experience, and 25.8% who have between 5-10 years' experience. The majority of the participants 68.8% have a Bachelor in Education qualification, and 31.3% have a Diploma in Education qualification.

Table 1. Demographics

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Head Teacher	30	12.5 %
Classroom Teacher	120	50.0 %
Special Needs Teacher	90	37.5 %
Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
20-30 years	68	28.3 %
31-40 years	70	29.2 %
41-50 years	96	40.0 %
51 and above	6	2.5 %
Job Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	68	28.3 %
Between 5-10 years	62	25.8 %
More than 10 years	110	45.8 %
Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Diploma in Education	75	31.3 %
Bachelor in Education	165	68.8 %

2.3 Data Collection

The data in the study was collected using the survey approach. The closed-ended questionnaire was divided into three parts. In the questionnaire, the number of items was the same for the first and third section while the items for section two were six. The questions in the questionnaire were based on the 5-point Likert Scale.

2.4 Data Analysis

The survey data was evaluated by employing the use of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) which produced results in the form of descriptive and inferential data. The data gathered was subject to assessment of the students' academic performance using the chi-square, ANOVA, and T-test.

3. Results

The results obtained from chi-square statistics have been presented in table 2 for the difficulties hindering the successful integration based on the occupation, age, experience, and qualification of the respondents. On the basis of occupation of respondents, the results have shown that lack of medical services, teacher qualification, special needs facilities, society's view on integration/special needs, social role of parents, educative programs for parents, role of parents in the learning process, teacher morale in integration, and role of child enrolment in school significantly hinder the successful integration ($P < 0.001$). Considering the age of the respondents,

Chi-square statistics have presented that teacher qualification, inflexibility of the school curriculum policy, special needs facilities, society's view on integration/special needs, social role of parents, educative programs for parents, role of parents in the learning process, teacher morale in integration, and role of child enrolment in school significantly hinder the successful integration ($P < 0.001$). Based on the experience of respondents, it has been revealed that inflexibility of the school curriculum policy, special needs facilities, and society's view on integration/special needs, social role of parents, educative programs for parents, and role of parents in the learning process, and teacher morale in integration significantly hinder the successful integration ($P < 0.001$).

Table 2. Chi-Square for the difficulties which hinder successful integration based on age, experience, and qualification of respondents

Item	Occupation			Age			Experience			Qualifications		
	Chi-Square	D.F.	P	Chi-Square	D.F.	P	Chi-Square	D.F.	P	Chi-Square	D.F.	P
Lack of medical services	69.589	8	0.000	14.029	12	0.299	14.342	8	0.73	18.957	4	0.001
The inflexibility of the school curriculum policy	7.730	4	0.102	95.098	6	0.000	17.433	4	0.002	20.522	2	0.000
Teacher qualification	131.448	8	0.000	88.552	12	0.000	43.801	8	0.000	36.769	4	0.000
Special needs facilities	70.057	8	0.000	162.879	12	0.000	35.447	8	0.000	35.860	4	0.000
Society's view on integration/special needs	25.933	8	0.001	89.124	12	0.000	25.489	8	0.001	28.315	4	0.000
The social role of parents	69.565	8	0.000	36.469	12	0.000	29.297	8	0.000	28.084	4	0.000
Educative programs for parents	79.465	6	0.000	28.902	9	0.001	31.857	6	0.000	37.530	3	0.000
Role of parents in the learning process	49.380	8	0.000	50.904	12	0.000	41.860	8	0.000	35.626	4	0.000
Teacher morale in integration	155.611	2	0.000	43.538	3	0.000	53.987	2	0.000	40.582	1	0.000
Role of child enrolment in school	65.682	8	0.000	63.388	12	0.000	19.643	8	0.73	0.876	4	0.928

One-Way ANOVA has been used to examine the statistical differences among the responses of the participants based on their occupation, age, experience, and qualification with respect to the difficulties, hindering the successful integration. Table 3 has shown the statistical differences for the difficulties hindering the successful integration with respect to the occupation of respondents. The study has found no statistical differences among the responses with respect to the occupation of participants.

Table 3. The results of ANOVA for difficulties which hinder successful integration and the respondents' occupations

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F. Ratio	Significant
Between Groups	4.213	2	2.107	23.594	0.000*
Within Groups	21.162	237	0.089		

Table 4 has shown significant differences based on the level of difficulties and the occupation groups. The Scheffe test was used to examine the differences between the means and found significant differences between the level of difficulties and occupation groups among respondents. The findings have indicated that head teachers' group was more prone to these difficulties as compared to the classroom teachers' group ($P < 0.001$) and the special need teachers' group ($P < 0.001$).

Table 4. Scheffé Test for difficulties which hinder successful and the respondents' occupations

	Head Teacher (1.8467)	Classroom Teacher (1.4617)	Special Needs Teacher (1.6467)
Head Teacher (1.8467)			
Classroom Teacher (1.4617)	0.000**		
Special Needs Teacher (1.6467)	0.007*	0.0.000**	

Table 5 has shown the ANOVA results for the difficulties hindering successful integration based on the ages of the respondents. From the findings, it has been revealed that there are no statistically significant differences among the responses with respect to the age group (20-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, 51 years and above).

Table 5. The Results of ANOVA difficulties which hinder successful integration and the respondents' ages

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F. Ratio	Significant
Between Groups	4.251	3	1.417	15.831	0.000*
Within Groups	21.125	236	0.090		

*P < 0.001.

The Scheffe test has been used to indicate the significant differences between the specific age group and the level of difficulties. The findings have revealed that there is a significant difference between the age group 51 years and above as compared to the age group 20-30 years, 31-40 years, and 41-50 years ($P < 0.001$). In addition, the results have also found the insignificant difference between the age group 20-30 years as compared to the age group 31-40 years and the age group 41-50 years ($P > 0.005$) (Table 6).

Table 6. Results of the Scheffé Test on the difficulties which hinder successful integration and the respondents' ages

	20-30 Year (1.6118)	31-40 Year (1.5371)	41-50 Year (1.5365)	51 and Above (2.3833)
20-30 Year (1.6118)				
31-40 Year (1.5371)	0.544			
41-50 Year (1.5365)	0.473	1.000		
51 and Above (2.3833)	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*	

Note. *P < 0.001.

With respect to the experiences of respondents, the findings have indicated that there are no statistical differences among the responses of the teachers ($P > 0.005$). The Scheffe test was implemented to test the differences between the means of the results acquired from the ANOVA test (Table 7).

Table 7. The results of ANOVA the difficulties which hinder successful integration and the respondents' experiences

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F. Ratio	Significant
Between Groups	0.103	2	0.052	0.484	0.617
Within Groups	25.273	237	0.107		

The findings have indicated that the means of the difficulties, hindering the successful integration were insignificant in three group’s experiences in the primary schools. The highest level of the mean of the difficulties which hinder successful integration was found among the group of fewer than 5 years’ experience, and the lowest level of the mean was found among the group with between 5-10 years’ experience ($P > 0.05$) (Table 8).

Table 8. Results of the Scheffé Test on difficulties which hinder successful integration and the respondents’ experiences

	Less than 5 Years (1.6118)	Between 5-10 Years (1.5613)	More than 10 Years (1.5691)
Less than 5 Years (1.6118)			
Between 5-10 Years (1.5613)	0.679		
More than 10 Years (1.5691)	0.699	0.989	

With respect to the qualifications of respondents, the findings have indicated that there are no statistical differences among the responses of the teachers ($P > 0.005$). The results of ANOVA shown in Table 9 indicate that there are significant differences ($P < 0.05$). The differences lie between staff with the Diploma of Education qualification and the Bachelor in Education qualification. The highest level of the mean of the difficulties which hinder successful integration in the primary schools was among those who have Bachelor in Education qualification (1.6084) compared to the lowest level of mean which was among those who have Diploma in Education qualification (1.5135).

Table 9. The results of ANOVA difficulties which hinder successful integration and the respondents’ qualifications

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	D.F.	Mean Square	F. Ratio	Significant
Between Groups	0.461	1	0.461	4.405	0.037*
Within Groups	24.915	238	0.105		

Note. * $P < 0.05$.

4. Discussion

The results of the study detailed that the involvement of various factors impacts the inclusion of the primary schools. The results highlighted that achievement of consensus at a wider perspective is difficult considering various associated variables. The results reveal that support, experience, and perceived competence are to some degree associated with the alteration impeding factors in the integration of the primary school (Falkmer et al., 2015). Correspondingly, the present study results contribute to the knowledge accumulation, which helps in unlocking the complicated patterns to increase the positive attitude concerning inclusive schools. Primarily, the present study contributes knowledge in the area concerning the gender, age, experience, and qualification, which impacts their competence and attitude towards teaching in an integrated primary school environment.

Based on the responses, it was found that there was no impact of participant’s occupation on the integration of the primary schools. Ismail, Basheer & Khan (2016) concluded the same results stating that integration was perceived beneficial by both special education teachers and regular teachers. In the same context, it is asserted by Atta, Shah and Khan (2009) that with the provision of the training and education, teachers would be able to cater to the needs of the special needs students, which increases the success plausibility of the integration in the education programs.

The results of the study found that the difficulty in the integration was more prominent among the head teachers group as compared to classroom teachers’ group and the specials need teachers’ group. These results align with the findings of the De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert (2011), which found that older teacher often exhibits negative attitudes towards inclusion of the students. It is because this group of teachers has limited or lack of training concerning the aspects related to the teaching in integrated schools. Therefore, these teachers may experience difficulty in adapting to the new ways for teaching or controlling the special need group, which requires new or

additional skills as well as alteration in the teaching strategies, which may deviate from the school's objectives.

The results of the present study also showed no association of experience in terms of difficulty with the integration of the schools. Vaz et al. (2015) stated that this may be because less experienced teachers can be trained to be effective in infusing positive attitudes towards inclusion. This training helps them develop a more positive attitude as compared to their experienced counterparts (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). However, these results are found conflicting with the study of McCrimmon (2015) which highlighted that experience of the teacher does impact the integration. It supplements that teachers who have no experience with special needs students often struggle in determining the solutions to their problems.

The current study showed no difficulty in terms of age in the successful integration of the primary schools. Dukmak (2013) stated similar results in his search on the UAE teachers, asserting that age had no impact on the integration of the primary schools. However, the inclusion perception varied among the younger age groups (20-30 years) as compared to the older ones. This is corroborated by the study of De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert (2011) which highlights that age impacts the integration of the education system at different stages. The study results suggest that teachers need to be provided with effective training for enhancing their knowledge pertaining to the special need education, which enriches their knowledge for identifying the difficulties through different ways that can be adopted for overcoming it.

5. Conclusion

Based on the achieved results, the study concludes that there exists a need for improving teachers' knowledge horizon pertaining to the successful integration of the disabled children among the primary schools in Saudi Arabia. The results reveal that the perceived skills and knowledge of the teachers and headmasters are lacking, which must be improved. Therefore, initiatives for professional development are suggested to be implemented to fill in the devoid, which impacts the ability of the teacher for successful inclusion. Along with it, provision of the learning resources, support, and avenues for practicing implementation of effective special education strategies can accelerate the teachers' competence and enhance their knowledge for the inclusion of the students in the primary school. This training and support can help bridge the gap between theory and practices making inclusion successful.

6. Study Implications

It is quite easier to remove barriers by resolving and reducing the reasons for the occurrence of these barriers. Educators, school principals, and teachers needs to collaborate to overcome any of the obstacles and break down the above mentioned barriers in integration in primary school. Teachers and School principals can increase their pertaining knowledge to increase integration disabled childrens in primary schools. Such informations maybe helpful to teacher educators as they pursue to better understand what these teachers can bring to inclusion context and provide course content and educational experiences that will help teachers develop the knowledge and natures which will prepare them to be successful teachers for all students. This involves knowledge of how to provide instructions that meets the needs of a wide range of students, how to access and effectively manage resources and strong commitment to teaching students with disabilities.

In Saudi Arabia, the findings of this study have implications on the inclusion agenda of the Ministry of Education. With government policy and eventually legislation supporting inclusive education in place. Teacher's training can be beneficial impact on the attitudes of children without disabilities towards their fellow's classmates with disabilities.

7. Study Limitation

The study observed some limitations, which can be overcome by future studies. Such as the present study was limited to the assessment of the primary school's teachers in Saudi Arabia only. The limitation to a certain region impacts its results in terms of generalizability, which can be improved by conducting the same research in another region. Future studies can add more insights by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the profound issues pertaining to the teacher gender, which remained unexplored in the present study. It helps in further understanding the impact gender has on inclusion activities as well as its associated benefits. Aspects such as physical contact with the students and the classroom factors can solely be assessed for further evolving the research area concerning the inclusion of the primary school.

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