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# **Inclusive Education: America and Saudi's Attempts at Including Students with Intellectual Disability in the Classroom**

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### Abstract

Inclusive education aims to have access for students with disabilities to have the same educational opportunities as other students without disabilities. The USA is a well-known leader in the field of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability because of their long experience, approximately 50 years ago. Whereas Saudi Arabia has recently started to implement inclusive education in their school system. Thus, this paper aims to perform the following: (1) present the history of including students with intellectual disability in inclusive classroom settings in the USA and Saudi Arabia, (2) discuss main factors that have helped Americans improve their inclusive education practices, and how Saudi authorities can follow their steps, and (3) highlight some suggestions for authorities in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to improve practices of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability. In conclusion, Saudi authorities need to focus on the following to enhance practices of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability: (1) improve laws and regulations by issuing new acts and adjusting some of the previous ones regarding inclusive education, (2) improve special education teacher preparation programs in universities by, for instance, adding courses about inclusive education, (3) improve collaboration and connection between general and special education teachers because collaboration between them is a significant factor for the success of inclusive education, (4) establish more disability organizations and research centers focus on producing and developing evidence-based research and practices toward inclusive education for students with intellectual disability.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, Saudi Arabia, America, intellectual disability, regular classroom.

## ملخص الدراسة

يهدف التعليم الشامل إلى وصول الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة إلى نفس الفرص التعليمية مثل غيرهم من الطلاب غير المعاقين. تُعد الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية رائدة في مجال التعليم الشامل للطلاب ذوي الإعاقات الفكرية بسبب خبرتهم الطويلة ، منذ ما يقرب من ٥٠ عامًا. بينما بدأت المملكة العربية السعودية مؤخرًا في بتطبيق التعليم الشامل في المدارس السعودية. تهدف هذه الورقة العلمية إلى ما يلي: (١) عرض التسلسل التاريخي لتطبيق مفهوم التعليم الشامل للطلاب ذوي الإعاقات الفكرية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية والمملكة العربية السعودية ، (٢) مناقشة العوامل الرئيسية التي ساعدت الأمريكيين على تحسين ممارسات التعليم الشامل لديهم ، و كيف يمكن للمسؤولين السعوديين في وزارة التعليم الاستفادة من التجربة الأمريكية ، و (٣) تسليط الضوء على بعض الاقتراحات للمسؤولين في وزارة التربية والتعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية لتحسين ممارسات التعليم الشامل للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية. في الختام ، لتعزيز ممارسات التعليم الشامل للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية، يحتاج المسؤولين في وزارة التعليم السعودية التركيز على ما يلي: (١) تحسين القوانين والأنظمة من خلال إصدار قوانين جديدة وتعديل بعض القوانين السابقة التي تتعلق بالتعليم الشامل، (٢) تحسين برامج إعداد معلم التربية الخاصة في الجامعات السعودية عن طريق ، على سبيل المثال ، إضافة مقررات حول التعليم الشامل، (٣) تحسين العملية التعاونية والتشاركية بين معلمي التعليم العام والخاص لأن التعاون بينهم عامل مهم جداً لنجاح التعليم الشامل، (٤) إنشاء المزيد من الجمعيات العلمية ومراكز الأبحاث جتى تساعد على إنتاج البحوث وتطوير الممارسات القائمة على الأدلة نحو التعليم الشامل للطلاب ذوي الإعاقات الفكرية.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** التعليم الشامل، السعودية، أمريكا، الإعاقة الفكرية، الفصل العام.

**Introduction**

Disabled children were once seen as unwanted and segregated from other children due to a lack of understanding. Their education was later completed at special schools. In recent years, there has been a trend toward enrolling impaired children in the same schools as non-disabled students. Educators now believe that each child should be able to learn in his or her own unique style. The Salamanca Statement and the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) defined the notion of inclusive education. All governments have been advised to implement the principle of inclusive education as a matter of law or policy, enrolling all children in ordinary schools unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise, according to the report. The primary assumption is that the school should accommodate all students' educational needs, regardless of their disabilities or restrictions.

"All children study together, wherever feasible, regardless of whatever obstacles or differences they may have," according to UNESCO (1994). Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to their students' diverse needs, accommodating both different learning styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education for all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use, and community partnerships.' Inclusive education encourages parent and community involvement in the development and delivery of services for children in general, and disabled children in particular.

## Conceptual framework

Inclusive education is both a philosophy and a practice based on certain teaching and learning ideas (Peters, 2007). The phrase "inclusive education" is defined as the education of children and youth with disabilities in general education classrooms alongside their non-disabled peers (Peters, 2002). The philosophy of inclusive education is founded on everyone's entitlement to a high-quality, equal-opportunity education that helps them reach their full potential while also respecting their human dignity. Inclusive education entails more than just physical integration, thus students with disabilities must have access to suitable academic support systems in addition to accessible classrooms and infrastructure. Flexible curriculum (for some children), sufficiently prepared teachers, and a welcoming school community attitude that goes beyond tolerance to acceptance are examples of these supports.

At the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, 92 states and 25 international organizations signed the Salamanca Statement, which included the following:

Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the more effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system. (UNESCO, 1994, p. 2)

The Salamanca Statement's concept of inclusive education is based on the concept of social fairness and is congruent with a social model of disability. This concept of inclusive education is based on four assumptions:

- Every student comes to school with a unique set of needs and abilities, therefore no two children are alike.
- It is the general education system's job to be attentive to all students.
- A responsive general education system has high expectations and standards, flexible and relevant academic curriculum and instruction, an accessible environment, and teachers who are well equipped to meet all children' educational requirements.
- Schools and communities working together to generate citizens for an inclusive society who are educated to enjoy the full benefits, rights, and experiences of societal life constitute progress in general education.

### **Inclusive education for students with intellectual disability**

Individuals who have been diagnosed with an intellectual disability frequently have problems with their cognitive abilities and behavior. These may include the following: (1) certain skills, like as language and motor skills, develop slowly, (2) intellectual capability develops slowly, (3) learning social skills is difficult, and (4) practical life skills develop slowly (such as self-care, safety, travel, etc.) (Almalki, 2021). Because of these delays and difficulties, individuals with intellectual disability frequently struggle to learn and keep up in school.

In principle, inclusive education means that all children, regardless of their individual traits, should be allowed to attend their neighborhood schools (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994). Children (with or without disabilities) who attend conventional schools are more likely to finish school, pursue further education and/or training, find work, earn

acceptable wages, and actively engage in their communities (United Nations [UN], 2007). Children with disabilities, on the other hand, who do not have the opportunity to attend school are more likely to become illiterate, which reduces their prospects of finding adequate work as adults and leads to poverty (UN, 2007).

There are many advantages of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability either for the students themselves, or for students without disabilities, or also for teachers (Grima-Farrell, Loughland, Nguyen, 2019). For students with disabilities, communication with peers improves children's cognitive, physical, verbal, social, and emotional development. It also helps in a mastery of functional skills and abilities. It also helps focus on the students' talents and abilities in the learning process. Lastly, involvement in public life and the development of pleasant relationships with other peers. Other advantages from students without disabilities side could be: the development of a tolerant attitude and a natural view of persons of various features, establishing and maintaining friendly relationships with others who are unlike themselves, social collaboration with persons who are not like them, and the development of a non-standard technique and innovation in order to attain a common goal. Lastly, inclusive education is also helpful for teachers who teach in an inclusive classroom. These advantages appear in: a deeper grasp of students' particular features, learning numerous instructional strategies for productive work that takes individual differences into account and examining students' perceptions in order to gain a deeper knowledge of various events and to develop a holistic picture.

**Inclusive education from an international perspective**

Inclusion of students with intellectual disability in regular education settings has become a major global concern. To promote student access to and achievement in the general education curriculum, evidence-based approaches that can be adopted across settings are required (Hagiwara et al., 2019). The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006. Article 24 claims the right to education of individuals with disabilities, stating that children with disabilities “can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live” (UN, 2006, p. 17).

One of the advanced countries in the field of inclusive education for students with disabilities is the United States of America. Since the initiation of the special education field in the USA, the field of special education has been developed to support and educate children with impairments (Van Drenth, 2005). At the beginning, special education services in the USA supported children with hearing and visual impairments, and these services also helped children with mental impairment (Van Drenth, 2005). Helping individuals with intellectual disability officially started in the Pennsylvania state, and the first “mental ill section” was established in Pennsylvania Hospital in the 1940s (Rotatori, 2011). However, the services that were provided at that time were unsatisfactory. Physicians and professionals used to ask families with a child having an intellectual disability to put the child in the hospital and forget him/her (Keystone Human Services, 2014). Although the history of special education in the USA is not bright, the USA is considered to be one of the countries that have started early to help children with intellectual disability.

On the other side of the world, Saudi Arabia is one of the countries that has started late in helping children with intellectual disability. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 (World Factbook, 2010), which makes the country newer compared with the USA. The education system in Saudi Arabia was founded 78 years ago (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2010). The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia free and appropriate education for all students, and it also special education services to students with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2018). However, the special education field in Saudi Arabia is considered to be new. The Department of Special Learning was established in 1962, and this department aimed to provide an appropriate education for three main categories of disabilities: (1) students with deafness, (2) students with blindness, and (3) students with intellectual disability (Alquraini, 2013).

The aim of this paper was divided into the following three areas: (1) present the history of including students with intellectual disability in inclusive classroom settings in the USA and Saudi Arabia, (2) discuss the main factors that have assisted Americans to improve their inclusive education practices for students with intellectual disability and how Saudi Arabians can learn from the American experiences, and (3) highlight some suggestions for policy makers in the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to improve inclusive education for students with intellectual disability.

## **History of Inclusive Education for Students with Intellectual Disability**

The United States of America has a long history of including students with intellectual disability in the regular classroom while Saudi Arabia is considered one of the recent countries that have started inclusive education for students with intellectual disability. The following section presents the history of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability in the United States of America and Saudi Arabia.

### **Inclusive education in America**

Prior to 1820, there was not any type of special education services provided to children with intellectual disability at all. There was ignorance about children with intellectual disability from the government and the community (Trent, 1994). Around the mid-1880s, some places provided a few services for individuals with intellectual disability, and these places used to be known as “indoor relief” (Trent, 1994). Furthermore, in the late 1880s and the early 1900s, individuals with intellectual disability commonly live in institutions, and an increasing number of these public institutions emerged even though they were not funded well (Trent, 1994). Finally, during the 1940s and the 1950s, considerable number of individuals with intellectual disability stayed at state institutions (Keystone Human Services, 2014).

In the mid-1960s, families decided to stand beside their children with intellectual disability. Therefore, the organizations of parents asked to educate their children with intellectual disability in private facilities (Rotatori et al., 2011). Consequently, the government of the USA decided to move people with intellectual disability from psychiatric institutions to local mental health homes or facilities (Uniteforsight, 2013). This endeavor helped increase the level of school access for individuals with intellectual disability (Learningrx, 2014).

Prior to 1975, students with intellectual disability still did not receive appropriate education in the USA. For instance, according to the Office of Special Education Programs, one of five students with disabilities received special education services in public schools even though these services did not meet their needs (Alquraini, 2013). A huge step for including children with disabilities in regular education classrooms was taken in 1975 by the Congress (Crf-usa, 2014). The Congress refused teaching students with disabilities in separate classrooms, and thus made a new act, which was the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (This act was renamed as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) in 2004). This act required schools to provide adequate and appropriate education for children with disabilities by teaching them with non-disabled students in regular classrooms. This does not mean that all students with disabilities must be placed in regular classrooms, but they must be placed the basis of their own needs in a “least restrictive environment” (Crf-usa, 2014).

**Inclusive education in Saudi Arabia**

The field of special education in Saudi Arabia is considered a newer field compared with the field of special education in the USA. Prior to 1958, children with disabilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did not receive any type of education (Alnahdi, 2020). Families who had children with disabilities tried to teach their children some basic skills, such as reading and writing, while other families (wealthy families) sent their children to other Arabic countries, such as Jordan, that provided special education services at that time. These families used to send their children to stay in special school institutes for most of the school year. In 1958, the Saudi government decided to educate children with disabilities, particularly those with deafness and blindness (Alquraini, 2013). However, no attention was paid to children with intellectual disability at that time.

In 1962, the Saudi government decided to establish the Department of Special Learning, and the main purpose of this department was to provide an appropriate education for three categories of disabilities: (1) students with deafness, (2) students with blindness, and (3) students with intellectual disability. In addition, the Department of Special Learning opened three special schools in the main cities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Almalki, 2021).

The first informal attempt to include students with mild intellectual disability for part of the day in a public school was in 1984 (Alnahdi, 2020; Alquraini, 2013). This attempt occurred only in one school in the east coast of Saudi Arabia. Although this attempt was informal and in only one school, it was considered to be the beginning of

including students with disabilities in inclusive education. It was also considered to be the first attempt to practice the rights of students with special needs to study in a public school. However, this does not mean there were legislations for educating students with intellectual disability in inclusive education at that time.

The weakness of the special education system and special education services in Saudi Arabia made the Saudi government consider how to improve the field of special education. Therefore, the Department of Special Education in the Ministry of Education met with professionals and faculty from universities to review the entirety of special education policies in the USA, including IDEA, and came up with new regulations. In 2001, the first regulations for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia were established (The Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI) (Alquraini and Rao, 2018; Alquraini, 2013). Finally, no new regulations have been established for students with disabilities, specifically for students with intellectual disability since 2001.

RSEPI stated that students with mild and moderate intellectual disability have the right to study in public schools. However, they study in their own separate classrooms with an opportunity to socialize with regular students during breakfast time and school activities (Alnahdi, Saloviita and Elhadi, 2019). Therefore, students with intellectual disability spend most of their day in their own classrooms with special education teachers, which means that these are not inclusive classrooms.

## **Main Factors of the American Experience of Inclusive Education**

In terms of comparing the history of special education in Saudi Arabia with that of the US, the special education field in Saudi Arabia is still in the developing stage (Ministry of Education, 2018). It has not achieved as much progress as the field of special education in America. Currently, the field of special education in Saudi is similar to the field of special education in the USA in the 1960s (Alahmadi, 2009). Therefore, it is highly recommended that the Saudi Ministry of Education use the experience of Americans including students with intellectual disability in an inclusive classroom as a successful model in a developed country to enhance special education services for students with intellectual disability in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, this will help the Saudi Ministry of Education to avoid all the mistakes that the American system made in delivering special education services to students with intellectual disability in the US. This will also help the Saudi experts transferring the excellent ideas and practices that have been done in including students with intellectual disability in the USA to Saudi Arabia.

On the basis of the history of including students with intellectual disability in the least restrictive school environment in the USA, here are five main factors that may help Saudis officials achieve successful inclusive education for students with intellectual disability in Saudi Arabia (Table 1).

**Table 1. Factors for improving inclusive education for students with intellectual disability**

Laws and Legislations
Teacher Preparation Programs
Sharing Responsibility
Establishing Organizations
Research Centers

### **Laws and legislations**

One of the most important factors that has helped the field of inclusive education in the USA to be improved is having clear acts and legislations regarding this aspect. Acts and legislations, such as IDEA (2004) and No Child Left Behind (2011), have helped giving students with intellectual disability their educational rights in the least restrictive school environment (Crf-usa, 2014). This means that a student with an intellectual disability, on the basis of his condition, can study in a regular classroom with students without disabilities. He also has the right to obtain all services while he is studying in a regular classroom, such as being assisted by the one sitting next to him. Lastly, families in USA have the right to sue school in case they do not provide an inclusive education for their children with a disability.

In Saudi, legislations regarding inclusive education for students with intellectual disability are somewhat well written. However, the implementation of these legislations is not excellent. For instance, on paper, Saudi legislations have mentioned that all students with intellectual disability must receive free and appropriate education in the least restrictive school environment. Practically, students with intellectual disability do not receive appropriate education in the least restrictive

environment because almost of students with intellectual disability still receive education in their own separate classrooms (Alahmadi, 2009). This makes the benefit of laws and legislations ineffective, making students obtain the minimum benefits of the goals of inclusive education. Therefore, Saudi authorities in the Ministry of Education should do the following to enhance the field of inclusive education in the Kingdom: (1) develop old legislations, (2) create new legislations consist with this period of time, and (3) ensure the excellent implementation of these legislations.

### **Teacher preparation programs**

The field of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability has increased over the past five decades in the USA. Students with intellectual disability receive their educational services alongside their peers without disabilities (Isaac & Dogbe, 2020). This is because special and general education teachers are prepared to provide educational services for all students with and without disabilities in an inclusive school environment.

To apply a successful inclusive education model for students with intellectual disability in the Kingdom, Saudi authorities should focus on the contents of teacher preparation programs in colleges. From the author point of view, Saudi authorities in the Ministry of Education should do the following:

- Most colleges in Saudi do not provide their pre-service special education teachers with classes regarding inclusive education, which makes these pre-service teachers less knowledgeable about the concept of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability. Providing this type of class is a must in this case, and making these classes practical will also help pre-service teachers to be more knowledgeable and confident.

- The period of field experience for pre-service special education teachers should be placed in schools that provide inclusive education for students with intellectual disability.
- Pre-service general education teachers in other majors, such as science and history, should take at least two classes in college to enhance their knowledge and practices about inclusive education. The first class should be an introduction to special education and the characteristics of students with disabilities, and the second class should be about inclusive education and how to work with special education teachers to achieve successful inclusive education for students with disabilities.
- The Ministry of Education should provide short courses to general and special education teachers who are in service regarding inclusive education.

### **Sharing responsibility**

One of the most important factors to achieve a successful inclusive education for students with intellectual disability is sharing responsibility (Vincent, 2019). Sharing responsibility professional relationships between special education teachers, regular education teachers, school administrators, parents, and ancillary personnel, and others (Ni Bhroin & King, 2020). This professional relationship between the previous parties should produce solutions to instructional problems that require the expertise of all relevant disciplines to work together (Mackey, 2014).

In the USA, students with intellectual disability can receive educational services in regular classrooms if their IEP teams agree on that (Grima-Farrell, Loughland, & Nguyen, 2019). Regularly, the essential duty of general education teachers is to utilize their aptitudes to teach students in educational plans directed by the educational system. Normally, the essential obligation of special education teachers is to give guidance by adjusting and creating materials to coordinate the learning styles, qualities, and uncommon needs of every one of their students. In specialized curriculum circumstances, the needs of singular students need frequently direct the educational programs (Mackey, 2014). In addition, general teachers bring content specialization, and special education teachers bring evaluation and adjustment specializations. Both acquire preparation and experience showing methods and learning forms. Their community-oriented objective is that all understudies in their group are given fitting homework and assignments with the goal that each is learning, is tested, and is taking an interest in the whole process of the study (Ni Bhroin & King, 2020).

Saudi Arabia has started recently to apply the concept of “inclusive education” to the regular education system. A year ago, the Ministry of Education made decided that students with disabilities, including students with intellectual disability, are going to be studying in regular classrooms together with students without disabilities (Alnahdi, Saloviita and Elhadi, 2019). The current situation for teaching students with intellectual disability is that they study in separate classrooms in

public schools. Special education teachers do their work toward these students without obtaining help from general education teachers at all. This means that special and regular education teachers have no experience in working and collaborating with one another. Thus, the question here is the following: Have the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom prepared special and regular education teachers to work together before starting the implementation of “inclusive education” for students with intellectual disability? Applying a new concept like “inclusive education” to the Saudi education system requires several important steps, and one of these steps is preparing special and public education teachers to collaborate with one another.

### **Establishing organizations**

Generally, no improvement will occur in the field of special education without facilitating the establishment of profit and nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the field of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability in the USA has been considerably improved in the last 20 years (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). This improvement has happened because of taking two steps. The first step, research: an extensive amount of research has been published regarding the effectiveness and advantages of teaching students with intellectual disability in an inclusive school environment (Hasannejad Reskati, Reskati, & Fakhry, 2017). Second step, laws: authorities have made decisions on the basis of the results of research, the first step, which has made students with intellectual disability transfer from separate schools and shelters to be included in public schools (Alquraini & Rao, 2018).

One of the best organizations that have helped the whole field of special education to be improved not only in the USA but also around the world is the Council of Exceptional Children (CEC). This nonprofit American organization was founded in 1922, and it is considered to be the largest international professional organization devoted to enhancing the educational experience of students with disabilities (Nitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Because of CEC and its fabulous work for over a hundred years, policy makers in the Department of Education in the USA have taken many decisions regarding inclusive education for students with disabilities after counseling CEC (Rotatori et al., 2011).

By comparison, Saudi Arabia has some organizations that work toward helping children with intellectual disability, and most of these organizations are in the three main big cities, namely, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam. However, most of these organizations are considered to be small and somewhat new. Furthermore, some research has proven that the effectiveness of these organizations is considered to be limited (Alquraini & Rao, 2018). The author cannot think of one big well-known organization that has an active and effective role in the field of special education in Saudi. Therefore, authorities should encourage starting different types of organizations for children with intellectual disability, for example, organizations for families who have children with intellectual disability, organizations for public and special education teachers who teach students with intellectual disability, and organizations that care about the development of preparation and professional practice standards. Consequently, the field of special education in general and inclusive education in particular for students with intellectual disability will be improved as what happened in the USA.

## Research centers

Research in the field of special education is an essential factor for the development of special education services for students with intellectual disability (Nitchell & Sutherland, 2020). Accordingly, the USA has many research centers for individuals with disabilities distributed over the states. These research centers have been funded and supported for many years only to enhance all types of services that have been provided to individuals with special needs (Alnahdi, 2020; Alquraini & Rao, 2018). Specifically, some research centers are specialized in publishing research articles regarding inclusive education for students with disabilities, for instance, CEC has its own research center and journals that publish research studies regarding inclusive education, which is called: Division of Research.

Compared with that, the field of research in Saudi Arabia, the field of research regarding special education in general, and students with intellectual disability, particular is still in need of more improvement. The amount of research that has been published is limited and most of the research is about attitudes and perspectives. Little research studies have been published using experimental design. However, there is only one good example of a research center for individuals with disabilities in the whole Kingdom, and this research center is called King Salman Center for Disability Research (KSCDR), which was founded in 1991. KSCDR is considered to be an excellent example that must be replicated in the other states of the Kingdom. Therefore, Saudi authorities in the Ministry of Education should do two important things: (1) establish more research centers for people with disabilities to enhance special education services for them, including students with intellectual disability, and (2) support and fund university professors to do more beneficial research regarding inclusive education for students with intellectual disability.

### **Suggestions for Future General Educating Setting**

The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia is working extensively toward inclusive education in this period of time (Alnahdi, 2020). However, authorities in Saudi should know that some important factors must be found and implemented before starting the project of inclusive education for students with intellectual disability. Some of these factors have been mentioned previously in this paper. Implementing these factors will facilitate the implementation of inclusive education not only for students with intellectual disability, but also for all students with disabilities. The next section suggests and discusses important elements for Saudi authorities to enhance the general education setting for students with intellectual disability.

### **In-services general education teachers**

It is important to know the attitudes of general education teachers toward including and teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms. Al-Ahmadi (2009) investigated perspectives of Saudi general teachers (males and females) in public schools toward teaching students with learning disabilities. The researcher found that male teachers had more positive attitudes toward inclusive education for students with learning disabilities than female educators. If teachers appeared to have negative attitudes toward teaching students with learning disabilities in a regular classroom, then what would be their attitudes toward teaching students with intellectual disability in inclusive classrooms who are well known to have a harder situation? Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia should do the following:

- Start to educate general education teachers about the importance and benefits of teaching students with intellectual disability in an inclusive school environment. This step can be done by providing courses and workshops to educate general education teachers while they are in-services.
- Collaborate with other organizations, such as the Saudi Association of Students with Autism and KSCDR, to prepare in-service general education educators to work with students with intellectual disability.
- Provide general education teachers with one to two paraeducators to help them manage the class and make them feel less stressed from having students with intellectual disability in their classes.

### **In-service special education teachers**

Many Saudi teachers have graduated in the past thirty years from the department of special education (Almalki, 2021). These special education teachers were prepared under the old special education program. The old undergraduate programs do not include any information about new concepts in the field of special education, such as inclusive education, collaboration teaching, and assistive technology. Therefore, special education teachers who are in service currently must be updated regarding all the new aspects in the field including teaching students with intellectual disability in an inclusive classroom. This education can be done by providing them with extensive courses and workshops, and it can also be done by providing them with assistants in their classrooms because they currently teach students on their own without obtaining help from anyone.

**Educating families**

We cannot overlook the importance of families in this process, because, as Carrillo (2008) points out, the family is the first line of defense when it comes to coping with variety. As a result, one of the first objectives of an inclusive school is to support them. This educational model placed a high priority on families, their knowledge, their participation and involvement in education, as well as their ideas and beliefs about this educational model. Throughout reality, in the process of educational reform, families' beliefs become extremely crucial. Attitudes, as well as subjective norms, intents, and inclusive or exclusive behavior, are based on these ideas (Domenech & Moliner, 2011).

Authorities in Saudi Arabia should focus on all parties that have an important role in inclusive education to facilitate inclusive education for students with intellectual disability. One of the main parties is families who have a child with an intellectual disability. Many students have validated that working and collaborating with families will increase the change and benefit of including students with intellectual disability (Alquraini & Rao, 2018). As Domenech & Moliner (2014) mentioned, educating families can be done through:

- Aids families in developing a clear vision for their child and being more knowledgeable about inclusive education and current legislation,
- Aids families in the development of communication and advocacy skills so that they may effectively work with their child's school,

- Strengthens families' confidence and support networks so they may continue to participate in their children's education as valued partners,
- Provides service providers, including schools, with information and resources.

## Accommodation

Learning in the classroom might be difficult for students who have been diagnosed with an intellectual disability. For those who work with these students, especially teachers, it is your responsibility to accommodate the student's needs so that they may better access and learn the material (Ní Bhroin & King, 2020). An accommodation is a change in how the material is given to a student for them to be more engaged in their studies, and they are frequently made in the following five areas (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020):

- Scheduling (e.g., giving the student extra time to complete an assignment or test),
- Materials (for example, having the student work in a small group or with a partner) (e.g., providing the student with teacher notes or taped lectures),
- Advisement (e.g., breaking a lesson up into smaller parts, having the student work with a tutor), and
- Response of the students (e.g., allowing the student to respond orally or on a computer)

Since accommodation is a significant factor, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia should accommodate and modify classrooms in schools to achieve the goal of inclusive education. For instance, the physical environments of schools should be adjusted to help students with intellectual disabilities get into inclusive classrooms. Moreover, general education educators should assess students with intellectual disability by using different methods if needed. For instance, students with intellectual disability are allowed to take an oral exam instead of a writing exam. These kinds of accommodations will help transfer smoothly to inclusive education.

## **Conclusion**

Inclusive education for students with intellectual disability is a practice that has been implemented for many years in developed countries, such as America (Alnahdi, 2020). However, in Saudi Arabia, as a developing country, inclusive education is considered to be a trend in this period of time. The Ministry of Education is going forward to teach students with intellectual disability in the least restrictive school environment (Almalki, 2021; Alnahdi, 2020). However, the Saudi authorities should know that implementing inclusive education into the Saudi education system requires five important factors to ensure successful implementation for inclusive education. These factors could be summarized in the following.

Laws and regulations are extremely important in the field of education to ensure that what has been asked to be implemented has actually been implemented. Therefore, based on the first step, authorities should issue laws and regulations and adjust some of the old acts regarding inclusive education for students with intellectual disability. This step will help authorities to observe schools and ensure that they are precisely applying laws and regulations.

Designing excellent preparation programs for special education teachers could be a challenge. However, preparing teachers well is a significant element to enhance inclusive education practices for students with intellectual disability. This step could be done by adding an undergraduate course talking about inclusive education, and another practical course about implementing inclusive education. This factor is related to the following factor, which is how to make special and general education teachers work together and share responsibility toward teaching students with intellectual disability an inclusive classroom. Special and general education teachers should be prepared during college about how to work aside for the goal of inclusive education.

Establishing profit and nonprofit organizations that care for inclusive education for students with intellectual disability is another significant factor. In Saudi Arabia, there is a large need for organizations that could serve students, parents, and practitioners regarding the topic of inclusive education. The purpose of these organizations is to enhance the practices of inclusive education and take it to the next level. Founding this kind of organizations is a must during this period of time because the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has started to implement the concept of inclusive education into the Saudi school system.

Research is another important factor in the field of education, and other fields, to prove if a practice or an intervention is effective and appropriate to be implemented. Thus, an extensive amount of research should be done on the Saudi educational environment before applying the concept of inclusive education to Saudi schools. Research studies should focus on many aspects regarding inclusive education such as the following: (1) Are environmental schools in Saudi qualified for inclusive education for students with disabilities, (2) What barriers might prevent schools from applying inclusive education, and (3) What are the perspectives of general and special education teachers toward inclusive education for students with disabilities? This type of study will help authorities understand the Saudi education environment before starting to apply inclusive education.

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