



# Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice of Inclusion in the United Arab Emirates

By

Mariam Ali Juma Khalfan AlGhawi

Dissertation submitted In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Masters in Education (Special Needs)

December 2007

Dissertation Supervisor

Dr. Eman Gaad

## DISSERTATION RELEASE FORM

<b>Student Name:</b> Mariam Ali Juma Alghawi	<b>Student ID:</b> 20050071	<b>Programme:</b> Master in Education (Special Education)	<b>Date:</b> 30/12/2007
---	--------------------------------	---	----------------------------

**Title: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice of Inclusion in the United Arab Emirates**

I warrant that the content of this dissertation is the direct result of my own work and that any use made in it of published or unpublished copyright material falls within the limits permitted by international copyright conventions.

I understand that one copy of my dissertation will be deposited in the University Library for permanent retention.

I hereby agree that the material mentioned above for which I am author and copyright holder may be copied and distributed by The British University in Dubai for the purposes of research, private study or education and that The British University in Dubai may recover from purchasers the costs incurred in such copying and distribution, where appropriate.

I understand that The British University in Dubai may make that copy available in digital format if appropriate.

I understand that I may apply to the University to retain the right to withhold or to restrict access to my dissertation for a period which shall not normally exceed four calendar years from the congregation at which the degree is conferred, the length of the period to be specified in the application, together with the precise reasons for making that application.

**Signature**

## **Dedication**

To My Father ALI ALGHAWI

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my special thanks and sincere appreciation to my mentor Dr. Eman Gaad for her continuous support and helpful advice throughout my study period. I would not have done it without her belief in my abilities. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my tutors Dr. Mick Randall and Prof. Fentey Scott at the British University in Dubai for their support in my educational development. Additionally I would like to express my gratitude to both the Emirates Group for granting me the scholarship and the British University in Dubai for the opportunity to pursue a higher degree.

Furthermore, I would like to say a big thankyou to my friends Hawa and Kholoud for being there for me. Sincere thanks to Dr. Aisha AlJalahama, Mrs. Najwa Zafran, Fatima Muhammad, Sultan Saif and Annemarie Neubecker, my advisors in my journey of working with special needs. Particular thanks are due to M.B. who planted indirectly in my mind the goal of achieving a higher degree. I owe additional special thanks to M.A.K who provided me with strength and power to face the daily life crisis. In addition, I am indebted to Mr. John Askew for his great help.

Last but not least, I am most grateful to family for their help and support. My Mother Noora, Brothers Juma and Rashid, sisters Aisha, Muna, Alya, and Maitha , Aunt Aisha and Uncles; Taleb, Jaffer, and Khalid. Additional thanks for the little angels of my family: Amna, Ali , Hind, Ahmad and Mansoor ..

**'Inclusion is not a goal that can be reached  
But a journey with a purpose'**

**(Mittler, 2000:133)**

## **Abstract**

Inclusion is an international phenomenon and a world wide movement which means catering for students with special needs within the regular classroom with the appropriate support. Educating a student with special needs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is relatively new. The country itself is a fairly new developing country which was declared around thirty six years ago. The UAE has made significant progress in different areas including education. Inclusion of students with special needs in the mainstream schools is a new approach in education which the country is piloting now. Students with special needs used to be served in segregated special centres before the declaration of the new Federal Law no. 29/2006 for the rights of disabled persons which includes education as a fundamental right.

This research aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the inclusive educational approach the country is currently adopting by presenting a set of recommendations which may improve the provision for students with special needs in the country. The research was conducted using various data collection methods. A triangulation of methods was used to ensure the validity of the data which included observation, interview and documents review. The finding of the research indicates that there is a huge gap between the theory of inclusion presented by the newer federal law and the practice where inclusion is implemented in some schools. Moreover, schools were found to be not ready for implementing inclusion and furthermore, attitudes are seen to be negative towards special needs. Additionally it was found that the educational system is a ridge and only caters for students who fall under the normal range.

In conclusion, the research emphasised the importance of preparing schools and the community before implementing the law. Moreover, the research offers a set of recommendations based on the findings of the research and the literature of inclusive education to improve the provision of special needs in the country.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	Vii
List of Acronyms	x
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
This study, the research gap and the significant of the study .....	2
Purpose of the study and Methods .....	3
Research questions.....	4
Organization of chapters.....	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
Chapter 2 : Background .....	7
Background of the research.....	7
The researcher .....	7
The United Arab Emirates (UAE).....	8
Education in the UAE .....	9
Special Education in the UAE.....	10
The Movement towards Inclusion.....	12
The UAE Federal Law no. 29/2006.....	15
The MoE Plan for Special Education.....	16
Chapter 3 : Review of the Literature .....	18
Methods Used in the Literature Review.....	18
Discussion of the Literature Review .....	19
Special Needs.....	20
Mittlers' Working Towards Inclusive Education.....	20
Inclusion; Goal or Journey .....	20
Definition of Inclusion.....	21

Inclusion and the Social Context.....	22
Inclusion in an International Context .....	22
Attitudes towards Inclusion.....	23
Barriers & Challenges of Inclusion.....	24
Successful Inclusion.....	24
 Chapter 4 : Methodology.....	26
Rational behind the Research.....	26
Source of Evidence.....	27
Observation.....	28
Interview.....	28
Document Analysis.....	29
Validity and reliability .....	30
Participant Selection.....	30
Data Analysis and Interpretation.....	30
Methodological Challenges, Ethics and Limitations.....	30
 Chapter 5 : Findings and Discussion.....	35
Philosophy regarding students with special needs.....	36
Why Inclusion.....	37
Categories of Special Needs in the UAE.....	38
Attitude towards inclusion .....	38
Systems/Processes for entry to and exit from educational services.....	39
New rules and policies.....	40
Evaluation ,Assessment and Examination.....	41
General Education VS Special Education.....	42
Professional Development.....	42
Training.....	43
Personnel.....	43
Educational Service Delivery.....	44
SENCOT.....	45
Differentiation.....	45
Curriculum.....	46



Continuum of Services.....	46
Parent Involvement.....	47
Parents as Partners.....	47
Collaborative Contract.....	47
Summary .....	48
 Chapter 6 : Conclusion, Recommendations & Suggestion.....	50
Conclusion.....	50
Recommendations.....	51
Further research suggestions.....	54
 Chapter 7: References .....	55
 Appendices.....	61

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

UAE	United Arab Emirates
MoE	Ministry of Education
DoSNs	Department of Special Needs
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoH	Ministry of Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
EFA	Education For All
SENCOT	Special Educational Needs Consultant Teacher
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right. It is not a privilege for a few but a basic right for all. Education has been stressed as a basic human right since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which called for free and compulsory education for all children in all nations. Since then many international instruments and United Nation's conferences and declarations called for it. However, still some children could not gain access to education. Many of those are children with special needs. Around 140 million children are out of schools and most of them are children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2005). The special education field has developed during a period of time and tried many approaches to address the needs of students with disabilities. Inclusion in education is the latest trend worldwide and on top of the international agendas of many countries. According to Mittler (2000) Inclusion is a phenomenon. It was called for in the International declaration "*Education for All*" (EFA) at Jomtien (1990) then emphasized at the Salamanca Statement and Framework (1994). Additionally it was called for at the World Education Forum at Dakar (2000) (further details on chapter 2, section 2.6). Inclusion is seen by UNESCO as:

"a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children" (UNESCO, 2005).

Throughout this study the UNESCO's definition will be adopted. Yet the study will be focusing on the inclusion of students with disabilities in the mainstream schools rather than all other types of special needs.

Educating students with special needs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is relatively new. The education system in the country itself is new as well as the country. However, a dramatic development has occurred in the education system throughout the decades since the forming of the federation of the seven states. The Ministry of Education (MoE), in the National Report (1996), stated that it was aiming at integrating students with special needs in the general curricula. Special education provision has been through different stages from segregation of the students with special needs to the inclusion of them in the mainstream schools. Inclusion is a worldwide movement (Mittler, 2000); hence the UAE recognized the importance of the equal opportunity in education for all by declaring the Federal Law no.29/2006 for the rights of persons with special needs which included education as a fundamental right. As a result of the Federal Law the responsibility of educating students with special needs shifted from the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) represented by the special centres to the MoE represented by the Schools. Therefore, the Implementation of inclusion in some of the government schools by the MoE became a pilot project as a response to the new Federal Law and the outcomes would be used to improve the provision for those with special needs in the country by providing recommendations towards the end of the research.

### **1.1 This study, its significance and the research gap:**

There have been many earlier research papers done on inclusion worldwide but very few have been done on the community of the UAE. The ones which were conducted in the UAE were about the attitude of teachers towards inclusion (Gaad, 2004; Gaad & Khan, 2007). Some other research was done on a case study of a single child with a certain special needs and how successful was including this child in a mainstream school. This research study is significant because of the lack of studies of a similar type in the community of the UAE. Moreover, giving access to students with special needs in the mainstream schools is something new and the country is piloting it officially for the first time. There are almost no similar studies of piloting the project of including students with special needs in the UAE. Hence this is a comparatively new area of study; I have decided to explore it in depth and to be among the firsts who would investigate inclusion as a new approach in education in the UAE. The choice of the topic was partly determined by the fact that my

placement was at a high position as a decision maker in the MoE where inclusion is adopted. Exploring this field will benefit me professionally in my work as a key person in planning and implementing different educational services for students with special needs and including them in schools.

As a response to the new Federal Law no. 29/2006 the MoE in the UAE piloted including students with different disabilities in the mainstream schools. These schools were chosen based on the principals' acceptance and willingness to try a new model of educating students with special needs. Mittler (2000) emphasized the positive role of professional leadership in making inclusion successful and in making schools inclusive. Schools were approached towards the end of the last academic year 2006/2007. Supervisors of special needs were trained and were chosen to train schools' staff and teachers in order to prepare them to include students with special needs in their schools.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study and Methods:**

The study aims to examine the gap between theory and practice of including students with disabilities in the schools of the UAE at the time of conducting this research ( Appendix C, Figure/ 1). Furthermore, the research proposes a set of recommendations to bridge the gap and improve the education of those with special needs. To carry out this research an action research approach was adopted for it aims at arriving "at recommendations for good practice that will tackle a problem or enhance the performance of the organization and individuals through changes to the rules and procedures within which they operate" ( Denscombe, 2002 as cited in Bell, 2005:8). An exploratory case study strategy was used to reach an in depth understanding of the current system of educating students with special needs. In this research qualitative data collection methods were used. A triangulation of document review, interview and observation was used to ensure the validity of data.

As this research seeks to identify and bridge the gap between theory and practice in inclusive education in the UAE, it was important to separate a section on the background of inclusion and education in general. Hence inclusion is seen as a new trend and a international phenomenon (Gaad & Khan, 2007). Different movements

towards inclusion will be considered as the “theory” of this research study and will be compared to the practice of implementing inclusion in schools of the UAE in order to identify the gap between them and bridge that gap with a set of useful recommendations. A great part of theory will focus on the UAE new Federal Law no.29/2006 for the rights of persons with special needs for it the main reason the UAE is adopting inclusion in education. In addition the MoE action plan for special education will be used to examine and compare the implementation of inclusion in piloted schools in the UAE.

### **1.3 Research Questions:**

Hedrick, Bickman & Rog (1993) in Mertens and Mclaughlin (2004) suggested that “the research questions operationalize the subjective of the proposed research.” Moreover, Punch (1998 as cited in Robson, 2002: 59) claimed that good questions are those which are clear, specific, answerable, interconnected and substantively relevant. Therefore this research aims to answer the following questions:

- Is the education system in the UAE inclusive?
- Are there any gaps between theory and practice in the inclusive education in the UAE? If so, what are they?
- What could be recommended to improve the provision of students with special needs?

### **1.4 Organization of Chapters:**

The research study is arranged around eight Chapters. It begins with an introduction about education in general and special education as a focus. This is followed by a brief background of the country in which the research is conducted and information about the educational system of general and special education where the education system is dual in the UAE and that is mirrored in the special education field of the country. The methodology of conducting the research follow the background, then a review of the literature is presented. The findings are discussed thoroughly as an obvious gap was found between the theory of inclusion

and the practice of it in those pilot schools. The study finishes by presenting a set of recommendations which aims to improve and develop the provision of those with special needs. Two chapters were separated towards the end of the research one for references used in this study, the other one for Appendices.

### **1.5 Definition of Terms:**

This research Study used some terms and this section defines each of those terms.

*Person with special needs:* “Any person with a permanent or long-term, total or partial physical, mental, sensational, communicational, educational, or psychological impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities’ (the UAE Federal Law no.29/2006 )

*Students with Special Needs:* “students with physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other condition... disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas and groups” (The Salamanca Statement and Framework, 1994 and UNESCO, 2004:6), The UAE defined Person with special needs as: “Any person with a permanent or long-term, total or partial physical, mental, sensational, communicational, educational, or psychological impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities “ (The Federal Law 29/2006). Throughout this research the term of students with special needs means those with different type of disabilities as stated in the Federal Law.

*Inclusion:* “inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (UNESCO, 2005). The UNESCO’s definition will be the adopted

definition for inclusion throughout this research. In the UAE Inclusion to some people means physical placement of a students with special needs in regular classroom which is not true.

*Inclusive Education:* ‘schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.” (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Education, 1994: para 3)

*Government Schools:* Schools which falls under the authority of the Ministry of Education of the UAE.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1 Background of the Research:**

The research was conducted in the UAE's government schools under the authority of the MoE. The specific focus of the study was on the education of students with special needs with regard to including them in the government schools in the country as a pilot project in response of the new Federal Law no.29/2006 for the rights of persons with special needs. The schools which were investigated in this research are at the primary level. The choice of schools in the study was based on the principals' willingness to pilot new methods. In order to include those students the MoE created an action plan for the special needs' services and trained the supervisors of special needs on it and were asked to train schools in the same. The model for training the supervisor was a "*train the trainers*" model due to the large number of schools expected to be trained and limited number of trainers in the Ministry's level.

#### **2.2 The Researcher:**

The researcher's background is a Bachelor degree in special needs. I have started my career as a teacher for a special class in a primary school in the UAE. I remained as a teacher for a special class for two years where I taught students with special needs at grade 1 to 3 in this class. Then I worked as a resource room teacher where I worked with students with special needs as well for five years (refer to section 2.4 in this chapter for an explanation of special class and resource room). Then I was promoted to the position of a supervisor of special needs. My main responsibility was supervising teachers of special needs in the schools of one of the emirates in the UAE. Next, I was promoted to the position of a supervisor in the special needs department at the main office of the MoE. I stayed for two years in this position and lastly I was promoted to vice director of the department of special needs in the main office of the MoE. The research is of interest to me personally

and professionally. On the personal level I am interested in the future of students with special needs, and on professional level for my position as a decision maker at the Ministry's level. Additionally, it is of interest to me as a researcher who seeks enriching the research on the special education field.

### **2.3 The United Arab Emirates (UAE):**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation which consist of seven sheikhdoms which was formally known as the Trucial States. The seven Sheikhdoms (states or emirates) are: Abu Dhabi which is the largest and the capital city of the country, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Qaiwain, Ras Al Khaimah, and Fujairah. The UAE was formed on December the 2nd, 1971 after independence from Britain. It is governed by a supreme Council of Rulers of the seven emirates which is the highest political authority in the federal government. The country is ruled by appointed families and there are no elections or political parties (Bradshaw & et al, 2004). However, the UAE has 40 members of the Federal National Council which was formed recently (Sheikh Mohammad website). The UAE is located in the south eastern corner of the Arabian Peninsula (see appendix A/1). Neighbouring countries are the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia. It is bordered by the Persian Gulf (Arabian Gulf) to the north and Gulf of Oman to the east (see appendix A/2). The total land area of the UAE is 83.000 sq km (32.278 sq m) inclusive of 20 islands (Sheikh Mohammad website).

The UAE is a fairly young developing country with an estimated population of 4.4 million in 2007 (Sheikh Mohammad website). The population consists of diverse cultural groups with diverse spoken languages. However, Arabic is the official language of the country and Islam is the religion. The Emirati (UAE nationals) component is about 20% of the total population. Beside the Emiratis there are various nationalities such as those from other Arab countries, Iranians, Filipinos, Indians, and large numbers of Europeans and Americans (Gaad, 2001). The mixture of nationalities is called "expatriates" or "expats" for short and they form about 70% of the total population. The UAE moved from being a sheikhdom desert to a modern country benefiting from the discovery of oil which is the major source of

income. Accordingly a significant change has occurred in all sectors in the UAE including economy, social development, health and education (Gaad, 2006).

## **2.4 Education in the UAE:**

Although, the UAE is a fairly young country, it has developed rapidly in many aspects of life including education. The Educational system was started in 1953 by the opening of the first formal school in the country in state of Sharjah. By the year 1971 the (then named) Ministry of Education and Youth was formed and the expanding of formal schooling started from that time (MoE website). A remarkable change has been noticed in the education field in the UAE in the last few decades. The education system in the country is dual, represented by the governmental sector which is funded by the government of the UAE and the other educational system which is the private sector (Gaad, 2006). Education is compulsory until grade 9 and free for all UAE nationals. Non nationals attend private schools which cater for the diversity in their needs (Bradshaw, 2004; Gaad, 2001). The Education system consists of basic education and higher education with a total of twelve years of schooling. The basic education has two cycles: cycle 1 is for grades 1 to 5 and cycle 2 is for grades 6 to 9. High school is for grades 10 to 12. Special education is provided mostly at grades 1 to 3 for special classes, and at grades 1 to 9 for resource rooms (see section 2.5). The curriculum used in government schools is the national curriculum which was created to match the development goals and values of the country, while the private schools follow the curriculum of the country they belong to; furthermore, there are many schools which are internationally accredited.

Both sectors, governmental and private, are under the authority of the MoE although the role of the MoE varies in both of them (Bradshaw & et al, 2004). In the government sector the MoE has a broader role from hiring teachers to ensuring the quality of education. On the other hand, the Ministry's role within the private education sector is mostly licensing the private schools (Bradshaw, 2004). The country has strong Islamic values which have an impact on the education system in the country (Bradshaw & et al, 2004). The philosophy behind education in the UAE

is based on the Islamic human rights which are universal human rights as well. These are as stated in Bradshaw (2004:50):

- The right to equality.
- The right to social welfare and the basic necessities of life.
- The right to dignity and not to be abuse or ridiculed
- The right of education.

Significantly noticed, UAE national teachers were not enough to cover all schools and subjects for a long time; therefore the country's government hired teachers from other countries to staff the schools (Rough, 1997). As the development of the educational field has been undertaken since the initiating of the formal education system, and as the country has catered for students in general education a new need has arisen to cater for students with special needs in the education system.

## **2.5 Special Education in the UAE:**

Over the past two decades a huge change has been going into the field of special education (Friend & Bursuck, 2002). It is a universal concern to provide proper education for all, including students with special needs. Education for all is called for internationally in various forums and conferences. Examples are the Dakar World Education Forum in April, 2000 and the Salamanca World Conference on Special needs in June, 1994. Both emphasized the importance of giving access to all children including those with special needs to regular mainstream schools (See chapter 2, section 2.6 for more details). The UAE is one of the countries which have adopted a policy for educating students with special needs, though at the beginning it was in segregated settings. Educating students with special educational needs (SEN) in the UAE is currently the responsibility of the educational organizations as was stated in the Federal Law no.29/2006 for the rights of persons with special needs (Federal Law 29/2006-article 12). Prior to the declaration of this law educating students with special needs was the responsibility of three Ministries; the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) used to provide informal education for children who stay permanently in hospital for one reason or another. On the other hand, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) used to provide education for children with special needs in a segregated setting outside the mainstream school called “Centres for Special Needs’. They do still exist but are changing in function as the move towards catering for special needs in schools is implemented under the authority of the MoE. Those centres used to adopt mostly a welfare model with less education. The MoSA supervise the centres in the all emirates except the emirate of Abu Dhabi, where its centres falls under the authority of a separate association. Both MoSA and this Association are moving towards inclusion of education for their children in the mainstream schools by collaborating with the MoE.

The MoE started catering for students with special needs by the year 1980 by opening four special education classes served 40 students in different elementary schools in the UAE (Abood, 2005). Special classes are full time services for a group of students with special needs. These classes are allocated in the mainstream schools with a small number of students who are taught by a teacher with a special needs background. Those students in the special classes had learning problems and most of them were intellectually disabled. Those classes were varied from grade 1 to 3 at the basic level of education. By 1985 the special classes were expanded to cover more schools. Currently there are 239 special classes in the year 2006/2007 (Appendix M). Slow learners and under achieving students were included while students with intellectual disabilities were excluded and sent to Centres of Special Needs under the authority of the MoSA. The reason for transferring them there was that their IQ was below 70 and they were making insufficient progress in the schools. Students who could not progress academically and meet the outcome of their grade level were shifted to evening special education classes and those below 70 in their IQ score were shifted to Centres of Special Needs (Abood, 2005).

In 1990, resource rooms were opened in the elementary schools in the country. Resource rooms are a part time service for several groups of students who join those rooms during their school day twice or three times a week according to their needs. Each group consists of 10 to 12 students. Teachers of those rooms are qualified teachers and with a background in special needs. Currently there are 227

resource rooms for the year 2006/2007 (Appendix M). Furthermore, in 2000 a new service was added to the special needs provision which was speech and language therapy. Additionally students with sensory disabilities or mild disabilities could enrol in schools but with no support. There are almost 420 students with different disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools for the year 2006/2007 (Appendix M). Both the special classes and the resource rooms in the schools were regulated by the MoE and followed the Department of Special Needs in the Ministry. This department was previously known as the Department of Special Abilities before the re-organization of the Ministry of Education on December, 2007 (Appendix Q).

Significantly, it was noticed that the schools which falls under the authority of the MoE used to accept certain and less obvious categories of special needs. An example of this is that students with learning difficulties were enrolled easily in schools as it is not an obvious disability which can be seen. Other obvious categories of special needs like students with Down syndrome or physically impaired students were not accepted at schools and sent to the centres of special needs where they might not be enrolled even in the centres if their IQ was above 70 as these centres accepted children with IQ bellow 70 (Gaad, 2001; Gaad, 2004). The government centres are open for UAE nationals (Emiratis) and private centres are open for other nationalities. Remarkably, all centres are isolated outside the mainstream schools and fall under the Ministry of Social affairs not the Ministry of Education.

## **2.6 The Movement towards Inclusion:**

This section will list the international calls and laws in response to the global movement towards inclusion in education for those with special needs. Those calls, laws and movements will be considered as the theory of this research and will be compared to the practice of inclusion in the piloted school. The Next section will be enlightening the new Federal Law for the rights of persons with special needs.

The history of special education is summarised by Casey (1994 as cited in Brusling & Pepin, 2003) as moving from neglect in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to segregation until the

60s to the inclusion in the present. Currently the special education field worldwide focuses on inclusive education. Inclusion or inclusive education is a “human right, it is good education and it makes good social sense” (Lorenz, 1998). The philosophy behind inclusion is globally recognized as all children have the right to be educated in a mainstream class with age-appropriate settings and with needed support provided for them. Many international conventions, declarations, resolutions, conferences and forums emphasized the right for responsive chances of education for all and on equality in education. Examples are: The Universal Declaration of Human right (1948), the United Nation’s Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (1975), the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien “Education for All” (1990), the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993), the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca (1994), the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000), the Millennium Development Goals (2000), EFA Flagship on the Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion (2001) and the United Nations Disability Convention (2005) ( UNESCO, 2005)

*Following are some of the most important movements toward inclusion*

### **2.6.1 The Universal Declaration of the Human Rights:**

The right of education was first called for in the movement of human rights in the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights (1948). It ensured the right to free and compulsion elementary education for all children: “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 be 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” (Universal

Declaration of Human Rights, art.26). Therefore, “everyone has the right to education” became the universal declaration of human rights.

### **2.6.2 The World Declaration on Education for All:**

The World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien (1990) proclaimed the call for education for all through meeting basic learning needs by enabling every child or adult to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs (The World Declaration on Education for All, 1990: Article1/1). It emphasized the “education for all” principal by universalizing access and promoting equality. There should be no discrimination in access to learning opportunities to all and people with special needs included: “The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system.” (The World Declaration on Education for All, 1990: Article 3/5).

### **2.6.3 The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action:**

The Salamanca Statement & Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, (1994) has set the basic principals of inclusion in education and emphasized access and equality to and of education. Inclusion was defined in the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994) as:

“.....Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups.”

(The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on special Needs Education, Para 3)



#### **2.6.4 The World Education Forum in Dakar:**

The principle of inclusion in education was adopted by the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994) and was emphasized at the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) (UNESCO website). The World Education Forum adopted the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (EFA) and it has set out basic goals for Ensuring that all children have access to completely free and compulsory primary education by 2015. The focus of the Dakar Forum was on marginalizing in education and girls' education. The 3<sup>rd</sup> goal of the forum called for: "Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes" ( The World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000).

#### **2.7 The UAE Federal law no.29/2006:**

By the year 2006, a new Federal Law for the rights of persons with special needs was declared. The law in general aims at protecting the rights of the person with special needs by providing them with appropriate services. In the education field the law guarantees access to equal opportunities of education with all educational organizations for students with special needs. Therefore the MoE started piloting projects of including some students with special needs in the mainstream classes (details of the Law can be found in section 2.7). Article 2 of the law presented the aim of adopting such a law as: "This law aims at protecting the rights of the person with special needs and providing him with all needed services appropriate to his capacities and abilities. His special needs shall not be a reason to refrain the person with special needs from obtaining the said rights and services, especially those related to the special care, social, economical, health, educational, professional, cultural and entertaining services." (The Federal Law no.29/2006: Article 2). Education was one of the several rights given to persons with special needs. The law did not insist on schools to be the only place for providing education to students with special needs. On the contrary, it has given many options for providing education to students with special needs. Article 9 stated in general the role of special centres for students with special needs. Additionally Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15 are concerned with education of those students. In order to get a full

idea about the background of implementing inclusion in education as a pilot project in the UAE, a brief summary of the Law is presented.

Article 9 said that: “The Ministry shall establish, in collaboration with the competent authorities centres, organizations, and institutes specialized in the care, training and rehabilitation of persons with special needs, these centres, organizations, and institutes shall hold the following responsibilities:-

- a. “....
- b. Provide the special education for persons with special needs. “

While Article 12 said: “The State guarantees to the person with special needs access to equal opportunities of education within all educational institutions, professional preparation institutions, adult education, and continuous education, whether in normal or private classes when necessary, .....”.

In addition article 13.14 and 15 emphasized education as a fundamental right for persons with special needs (refer to Appendix for the Law’s Articles). As a response to this Federal Law, the MoE of the UAE created a plane whereas educational services for students with special needs were piloted. The MoE plan for implementing inclusion and enhancing the special needs services is presented in the next section.

## **2.8 MoE Plan for Special Education:**

In order to implement and pilot inclusion projects in different selected schools, the MoE in the UAE, represented by the Department of Special Needs, adopted an action plan to enhance the services given to students with special needs in schools, which falls under the authority of the MoE. This plan not only addresses inclusion as a basic feature of it, but it also includes other objectives and plans for educating students with special needs in the government schools. However, most of what is in it is relevant to the subject of this research.

The Department of Special Needs (DoSNs) adopted a strategic plan which consists of 5 initiatives (see Appendix E for the details of the plan). The initiatives consist of the following:

- 1- To change the attitude about the potential of students with disabilities and their educational achievement.
- 2- To develop new systems and procedures for access to educational services.
- 3- To improve the quality and skills of all personnel working with students who have special needs.
- 4- To expand the continuum of educational services available to students with disabilities and to students who are gifted/talented
- 5- To enable parents to take an active role in their children's education.

The DoSNs piloted these initiatives in the inclusion project in a number of schools which were selected carefully. An Inclusion project is where access is given to students with different disabilities to government schools officially. The total number of included students in a number of mainstream schools is 62 students. Categories of students who were chosen to be officially included fall under mild to moderate disability. No severe disability was piloted this academic year. Examples of included students are: visually impaired, hard of hearing, Down syndrome, physically impaired and autistic children. The difference between before and after the declaration of the law with regard to enrolling students with special needs is that those who were enrolled before the law were in schools as a result of personal effort from their parents in obtaining a special exemption from the Minister. These people were getting no support from the Ministry whereas after the law was passed those students were officially enrolled in schools by the Ministry with support provided.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The primary purpose of a literature review in this study is to investigate previous research conducted on the area of inclusion which is the subject of this research. Mertens & McLaughlin (2004) stated that: “the review of literature serves as an essential resource for planning, conduction, interpreting and reporting research in special education”. Although, much of research have been written in the field of educating children with special needs worldwide; very few was written about educating students with special needs in the UAE.

#### **3.1 Methods used in literature Review:**

Various databases were searched to identify research and journals on both inclusion and educating students with special needs. Birmingham University’s e-library was searched online. The main databases used in it were SAGE Journals and Swetswise. Several search terms were used to ensure the identification of all possible relevant studies and articles. Search terms included different key words like: United Arab Emirates, Special Needs, Education Reform, United Arab Emirates, Inclusion, Education in the UAE, types of inclusion, definition of inclusion, definition of special needs, inclusion worldwide, inclusion policy, etc. An additional resource for identification of the relevant research was the paid database of Questia. Many articles and research papers were obtained from this paid site as they could not be found on free sites. Moreover, the physical library of The British University in Dubai was used to obtain text books related to the subject. The focus of the research was on the reform of the education of special needs and inclusive education. Categorizing students with special needs and identification of them were not relied on heavily for the reason of it being a big subject which needs a separate study that may focus on Categories of special needs and their identifications.

### **3.2 Discussion of the literature Review:**

I found it more convenient to work on this section of discussing the literature by dividing it into sub sections. The thinking behind this was that it would be much easier to work on it myself and to follow it up by the reader. It is essential for any researcher to adopt a framework in reviewing previous research. Similarly, it is important the way this review is presented. Bell (2005) described the theoretical framework as an exploratory device “which explains either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied- the key factors, constructs or variables- and the presumed relationships among them” (Miles and Huberman, 1994 as cited in Bell, 2005:103). I agree with Clara Nai in Bell (2005:104) when she says that: “having read so much, it took me a while to reconcile what I can present in a condensed review.” Articles written in special education field and on inclusion were so many and the time was limited by few months. Nai continues: “it seems so unfair that only a fraction of the months of painstaking reading could appear in print. Putting sentiments aside, I have decided to classify the factors affecting participation under some major headings for ease of consolidation” (Nai, 1996 in Bell, 2005:104). Therefore this section was divided into sub sections with clear headings and coherent organisation of factors relevant to inclusion.

Inclusion is a wide subject; it is the most recent phenomenon in the special education field worldwide (Mittler, 2000) and on top of the global agenda. Educating students with special needs was seen through various lenses and has been through different stages from neglect to segregation until inclusion. (Casey, 1994 as cited in Brusling & Pepin, 2003 ; Mertens & Mclaughline, 2004). Many articles in different journals and books were reviewed by the researcher which were relevant to the history of special education. Categories of special needs were also examined through different articles and more articles were reviewed on the reform of education in general and in special education. The majority of reviewed articles were related to inclusion.

### **3.2.1 Special Needs:**

Inclusion has its origins in special education. Special education as a term was replaced by special educational needs. The newer term which is special educational needs refers to students with disabilities or any needs which are required to be addressed while they are in school which prevent them from learning. (UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED, 1997). "the term 'inclusion' has become part of the new official rhetoric of special needs education" (Daniels, 2000:1). Special Education and Special educational needs were defined in many articles and journals by many researchers. According to Mittler (2000:9) "Special educational needs (SEN) terminology has survived so long because it is not easy to find an acceptable substitute".

### **3.2.2 Mittler's "Working towards inclusive Education, Social Contexts":**

Mittler's (2000) book (*Working towards Inclusive Education, Social Contexts*) was interested in the researcher's point of view for its clearness and organized sequence of ideas, furthermore, the book presented inclusion in a social context where it said that inclusion does not start in school only; it starts from home and the community. Mittler's book explained inclusion in its social context. Additionally, it touched on all important issues related to inclusion which the researcher found in many other articles but only as parts not as a whole as this book presented it. It was difficult to determine which chapter of the book is more important than the other, as each chapter completes the previous one and connects to the coming one. Thus the researcher found Mittler's book valuable to her research and relied on it heavily in this study and count it as a primary source.

### **3.2.3 Inclusion: Goal or Journey?!!:**

Mittler (2000:133) stated that: "Inclusion is not a goal that can be reached but a journey with a purpose". On the other hand, Evans in Daniels (2000:69) claimed that: "Including students with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools remains a goal for most education systems around the world." On the other

hand, Villa & Thousand (2005:5) claimed that “inclusion is a belief system, not just a set of strategies”. In spite of the argument around whether inclusion is a journey, belief or a goal, it was agreed that it should be approached and tackled carefully. As a researcher I found Mittler’s statement of inclusion being a journey more favourable, especially when I related it to my experience of working with special needs throughout my career (refer to chapter 2, section 2.2 for the researcher’s background).

#### **3.2.4 Definitions of inclusion:**

Many researchers in the literature of special needs argued about whether inclusion is of benefit to students with special needs or not; however, most of them agreed on the philosophy behind it. Every child has the right to get an appropriate education: for education is a basic human right. Inclusion was mixed up with integration in special needs’ field. Integration claimed in Norwich as cited in Daniels, 2000:8) that it: “reflects physical placement in the mainstream and the expectation that the student assimilates, as it said, to the unchanged mainstream system”.

On the other hand, many definitions have been found in the literature about inclusion. It means different things to different researchers yet it should be approached carefully. Mittler (2000:p2) claimed: “inclusion involves a process of reform and restructuring of the school as a whole, with the aim of ensuring that all pupils can have access to the whole range of educational and social opportunities offered by the schools.” Additionally, inclusion was defined in Bennett et al, 1997 as “serving students with a full range of abilities and disabilities in the general education classroom, with appropriate in-class support” (Roach, 1995 as cited in Bennett et al, 1997). A newer definition for inclusion which is the adopted definition of this research stated that: “inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (UNESCO, 2005). Through reviewing different articles and

books, inclusion seems to be touched from different aspects by different researchers. However, the researcher of this study understands inclusion as simply as educating students with special needs in the mainstream schools with their peers of the same age with appropriate support.

### **3.2.5 Inclusion and the Social Context:**

The social context of inclusion was clear in Mittler's approach. Mittler (2000) emphasized the schools because "what happens in schools is a reflection of the society in which schools function" (Mittler, 2000:p1). Therefore, those who work in those schools have the same beliefs and attitudes as others in the society. Mittler (2000:1) claimed that "Those who work in schools are citizens of their society and local community, with the same range of beliefs and attitudes as any other group of people". Therefore, it is essential to spread special needs awareness in the community and society in order to make people of this community who work in schools accept educating and working with students with special needs.

### **3.2.6 Inclusion in an International Context:**

Inclusion is an international movement and on top of global agenda at many places. Many countries adopted inclusion in their education. However, few were succeeded to some extent in implementing it in their schools. I will not examine the international movement towards inclusion in many countries specifically, however I will summarize what was said in Daniels (2000) about inclusion in many countries. Evans in Daniels (2000:p.70) claims that "most countries in the world provide special schools to educate widely varying percentages of their special needs students" and " few countries have achieved the level of inclusion whereby all students, however seriously disadvantaged, can be effectively supported in mainstream classrooms" (Evans in Daniels,2000:p.70).



### **3.2.7 Attitudes towards inclusion:**

“Attitude towards inclusion affects its success” (Gaad, 2004:160). Therefore, the attitude towards inclusion was studied in different places of the world. Some researchers agreed with inclusion and others disagreed with it. However, each of them has its rationales behind their attitude. Researchers with inclusion sought it as a mean for a personal, social and communicational skills development. Additionally they sought inclusion as cost effect tool. They see inclusion of beneficial to students with special needs or without. “Learners with special educational needs will gain academically and socially and will improve their self-esteem” (Mitchell, 2007). He carries on saying that: “other learners will gain an appreciation of the diversity of their society, a greater recognition of social justice and equality, a more caring attitude and also academically” (Mitchell, 2007). While those against inclusion claimed that by implementing inclusion the more able students may experience boredom (Daniel & king, 1997). According to Norwich as cited in Daneils (2000:8) inclusion has been criticized by Booth (1996) “he argues that reference to inclusive schools implies that inclusion is an attainable state and that good practice can be identified”.

Limited studies conducted in the UAE to research the attitude of teachers towards educating students with special needs. The UAE general education teachers tend to have negative attitude towards educating students with special needs in the regular classroom (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004), while teachers in private schools in Dubai favour traditional special education service delivery model over full inclusion (Gaad & Khan, 2007). However, a study on the attitude of general education teachers and special education teachers toward inclusions showed that special education teachers were less resistive toward inclusion and they had greater positive attitudes towards inclusion than general teachers ( Alahbabi, 2006). Additionally teachers’ attitude may differ according to the severity of the disability (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004). Teachers who accepted the idea of inclusion refused including students with intellectual disability (Gaad, 2004).

### **3.2.8 Barriers & Challenges of Inclusion:**

There are many barriers and challenges of inclusion in the previous research. (Mittler, 2000:9) claimed that: "The challenge of inclusion is that it aims to restructure the system to cater for the whole range of individual needs". Additionally, Sebba with Schader in Mittler (2000) argued that the main challenges for inclusion lies in the attitude of teachers towards special needs. Once those teachers experienced having a child with special needs in their class; their attitude changes positively. Moreover, Mittler (2000:111) also claimed that the: "major obstacle to inclusion lies in the practice of testing, assessing and classifying children". Different researchers saw different aspects as challenges to inclusion. for implementing inclusions different aspects should be examined and many practices should be changed. According to Millter (2000) in order for inclusion to be successful it need appropriate preparation, continuing professional development and support.

### **3.2.9 Successful inclusion:**

A magic formula for inclusion is stated in Mitchell (2007) as: Inclusive Education = V +P+ 5As+ S+ R+ L

V = Vision

P = Placement

5As = Adapted Curriculum, Adapted Assessment, Adapted Teaching, Acceptance, Access

S = Support

R = Resources

L = Leadership

The above formula summarized many researchers opinion about successful inclusion. Many of them agreed on the basic factors of successful inclusion as the following: Administrative procedures, funding, professional development, assessment, accountability and curriculum (Mittler, 2000::Daniels, 2000: Mitchell, 2007). Mittler, (2000) for example sees effective schools which have: professional leadership, shared vision and goals , a suitable learning environment, purposeful teaching, high expectations, positive reinforcement, monitoring progress, pupil's right and responsibilities, home-school partnership and learning organization.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Scientific research in Cohen *et al* (2000:45) aimed to “ensure education a maturity and sense of progression it at present lacks.” Additionally, Mertens and McLaughline (2004) stated that “most would agree that research is a progress that brings data to bear on a problem.” Action research is one of the different approaches in the research field. Robson (2000:215) stated that the purpose of the action research is “to influence or change some aspect of whatever is the focus of the research.” Hence the purpose of this research study is to identify the gap between theory and practice in inclusion in the schools of the UAE and to come up with a set of recommendations to improve the provision of those with special needs, action research was chosen as the approach to research inclusion of students with special needs in the pilot mainstream schools. Case study is one of the most common research strategies. It can be used to study a single situation or a system (Yin, 2003). I choose to use a case study strategy to research my study for the reason of it allowing the researcher to research in depth (Bell, 2005). However, findings can not be generalized to other context as information gathered can be subjective. Furthermore, I will give as much background details as necessary while conducting this study.

#### **4.1 Rationale behind the research:**

The rationale behind conducting this study was the movement towards inclusive education in the UAE's schools due to the declaration of the new Federal Law no.29/2006 for the rights of disabled persons or persons with special needs as it used to be called. This law was issued as a response to the global movement towards inclusion in education of students with special needs. In addition the subject is of interest to the researcher on the professional level as a decision maker in the MoE of the UAE where inclusion is adopted recently.

## 4.2 Source of Evidence:

There are different data collection approaches in conducting any research. One is the qualitative data collecting methods. A qualitative research is “thought of as an approach to research that uses methodologies designed to provide a rich, contextualized picture of an educational or social phenomenon.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001 as cited in Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004:35). Hence Inclusion is considered a phenomenon in much research; therefore, the qualitative methods were used to collect the data and analyze it. Inclusion is newly practiced in the UAE, it will be investigated and upon obtaining the findings a set of recommendations will be proposed to improve the provision of those with special needs.

Cohen et al (2000:44) defined Methods as: “the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction. ”Research approaches have existed as a response to the different research needs whether the approach is quantitative or qualitative (Hara, 1995). In order to investigate the newly adopted inclusive education in the country a number of qualitative methods were used to collect data needed to carry out this research. Qualitative research methods are used when the researcher wants to observe in detail from her or his viewpoint. As Maanen (1979 claimed in Hara, 1995:351+): “the researcher is placed as a key point of research. In consequence, the researcher’s personal knowledge and research experience fully influence the research.”

Multiple data collection methods (triangulation) were used in conducting this study to reinforce the validity of findings (Bell, 2005; Yin, 2003). Triangulation “involves checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data.” (Mertens & McLaughline, 2004). Triangulation is defined in Cohen et al (2000:112) as: “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour.” Therefore, observation, interview and data analysis were used in the research.

#### **4.2.1. Observation:**

Observation was used in collecting data relevant to this research. Different settings were observed consisting of lessons where students with special needs were taught. Additionally various meetings relevant to inclusion were observed. According to Bell (2005) observation requires considerable skills. Observation is usually done either on a participant basis or non participant basis. Mertens & Mclaughlin (2004) favoured being a non participant observer over a participant observer. However, I was a participant observer in different settings of observation because of my role as a decision maker in an educational organization where inclusion, which is the topic of this research, is implemented. I was aware of the challenges arising from being a participant observer throughout the observation periods and therefore used interview as cross reference evidence. Where I interviewed a group of people from different observed settings, additionally I analysed the documents resulting from some meetings. An example is the minutes of meetings to ensure the validity of observations' notes. Observation is time consuming; therefore a limited number of observations were conducted to collect data relevant to the research. A coding scheme was used in transferring observations from the field notes into text on papers.

#### **4.2.2 Interview:**

The second method used in collecting data needed for the research was the interview. Youngman in Bell (2005) claimed it easier to analyze an interview if it is more structured in its questions. However, Semi-structured interviews were used while collecting the data for this research. Robson (2000) claimed that semi-structured interviews have a set of questions but words in it can be modified upon conducting the interview. Words and questions can be changed or omitted according to whether in the situation the interview sees the need for change or omitting with particular interviewees. According to Cohen et al (2000) semi-structure questionnaires in the interview are used to control the reliability. Questions of the interview will be piloted on a small group of people before using it. Few of the interviewees are my peers or colleagues who work with me. I realize the ethical problem of interviewing a peer interviewee. Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989 in Cohen

el at (2000:66) raised the issue of peers interviewing: "Doing participant observation or interviewing one's peers raises ethical problems that are directly related to the nature of the research technique employed. The degree of openness or closure of the nature of the research and its aims is one that directly faces the teacher researcher." Therefore a triangulation was used to overcome this obstacle.

Interviewing is also time-consuming, so besides face to face or personal interviews I used telephone interviews. Robson (2000:282) sees the telephone interview as an effective method of data collecting in regard to time as : "The major advantage, particularly if the same to be reached is geographically dispersed, is the lower cost in terms of time, effort and money." In recording the data from the interview, audiotapes were used whenever feasible, as tape recording the interview makes the interviewer concentrate more on the interview and the subject under discussion. However, I was aware of the cultural sensitivity of recording an interview and permission was sought before recording any interview. Transcription was made depending on selecting the relevant passages. A summarized account of the interview was adopted. Transcriptions were sent back to participants to check if those notes reflected what they said and meant.

#### **4.2.3 Document Analysis:**

A third method used in collecting data relevant to the research's subject was document analysis. Permission was sought from people concerned before using any document. Different type of documents were examined and analyzed. Memoranda, official letters, speeches, reports and minutes of meetings were investigated and notes were taken whenever needed. The amount of data available is huge, only relevant documents were selected and examined. Certain documents were placed at the appendices section in this research for their importance to the research study.

### **4.3 Validity and Reliability:**

Validity and reliability were considered while conducting this study. Cohen et al., (2000:105) claimed that: “in qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher”. Furthermore, reliability in qualitative research “can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched.” (Cohen et al., 2000:119). An example of that is two researchers researching the same subject can have reliable findings although those findings might be different (Cohen et al., 2000:119).

### **4.5 Participant Selection:**

Participants were selected based on their willingness (Appendix U). They were approached by the researcher and asked for permission either for an interview or an observation setting (see Appendix S for interview protocol). They were assured anonymity and confidentiality. Real names were held back and instead numbers were given.

### **4.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation:**

After collecting the data needed from different sources, a word-processing program was used to record and analyze the relevant data. Furthermore, the data was written, reviewed and edited while analysing. In addition, multiple copy of everything was kept (refer to Appendix V for research process and procedures).

### **4.7 Methodological Challenges, Ethics and Limitations**

Methodological challenges, ethics, limitations, bias and ethical issues related to the research are discussed under one title. I faced several issues within this research.



The main issue for me was the conflicting roles of being a researcher and a decision maker. Robson (2002:65) claimed that: "participants in real world studies may sometimes be involved without their knowledge". However, I am aware of my own possible bias and for the validity of data I used multiple data collection. Cohen et al (2000) said that while seeking truth, our choices may be limited by being ethical:

"a matter of principald sensitivity to the right of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leave one ignorant of human nature."

(Cavan, 1997 as cited in Cohen et al , 2000:56)

Creating a code of ethical practice as claimed in Cohen et al (2000) can resolve all possible ethical issues. The author listed the benefits of having such a code when doing research. The most important one is that such a code of practice "makes researchers aware of their obligations to their subjects and also those problem area where is a general consensus about what is acceptable and what is not" Cohen et al, 2000:71). Furthermore such a code of ethical practice makes the researchers think of other ways to research the subject.

As a researcher I am aware of the challenges, limitations and barriers that may face me while conducting my study, furthermore I am aware of my own bias and the ethical issues that I may encounter. All the above can be summarized in the following points:

- The biggest challenge I faced was to keep in within the words limit of this research despite all efforts, reason is inclusion is a wide ranging field, and since it is a new approach in the UAE, many aspects related to implementing it cannot be ignored in the investigating.
- Inclusion is a wide area to investigate; it cannot be covered in one single piece of research. This study will focus on investigating a single pilot project of inclusive education which is in progress in the UAE in respect of bridging the claimed gap between the theory and practice of inclusion.

- The research done in the field of inclusion in the UAE is limited. All literature which will be reviewed is about other countries which are of different backgrounds and cultures from the UAE.
  
- Inclusion has many issues attached to it, such as the identification issue of special needs, and the categories of special needs. In order for me to keep my focus on my research subject, I will adopt the Federal Law's definition of special needs and their categories. I will not touch base on the identification of special needs, for it is a big subject and will be recommended in the area of further research in the last chapter of the study. Data collected was filtered, summarized and narrowed down to the level of data relevant to the subject of study.
  
- Many researchers agree with inclusive education for students with special needs, on the other hand, many others disagree with it. I will avoid in my research concentrating on a single attitude towards inclusion. I will include and review both the literature which supports and that which does not support inclusion for the maximum coverage of the subject.
  
- The focus of the study will be on a single situation which is the pilot project of inclusion. It is similar to a case study which has its advantages and disadvantages. One advantage of choosing a single situation is that I will be able to research my topic in depth. However, generalisation is not always possible in a single situation like the case study. In addition, it can be criticized regarding the value of studying a single event (Bell, 2005). While conducting this research I will be aware of the disadvantage of this approach and will work on avoiding that by finding how far my study is similar to others studies of the same nature.
  
- The language of the collected data will be in Arabic. The reason is that the investigated schools are government schools and Arabic is the main media of instruction. This is a big challenge I may face as a non native English speaker. All the data will be translated into English by the researcher.

- Schools subjected to investigation may feel threatened or insecure especially with my position as a decision maker in the Ministry of Education. I will avoid that by assuring them those names and positions of participants will be held back and that they will be anonymous. Furthermore, my visit to those schools will be on a postgraduate student's level. Confidentiality was assured to the participants and Personal privacy was respected.

- One approach of data collection will be conducting interviews. I am well aware that interviews are time-consuming and it may take a huge amount of the researcher's time. Recording and analyzing the interview should be clear and honest. The recording on an interview can be culturally sensitive. In such cases I will use the technique of note taking instead of recording the interview. Additionally, interviews need a skilful interviewer to investigate motives and feelings behind the responses to the questions asked. For that I will keep detailed records of every interview with the original response. Moreover, interviewees are my peers or colleagues, a factor which may give rise to ethical issues of which I am aware and so will avoid it by using a multiple data collection method to ensure the reliability. In addition, I will assure them that my role is as a researcher only while working on this research.

- The researcher's own bias is one of the biggest challenges that can face any researcher. Therefore, he or she should be aware of his or her own bias towards the topic of investigation. In spite of my awareness of that it is very easy to fall into the bias trap so I will work on avoiding it by using a wise and critical interpretation of data. Consequently, I will record all the feedback from the interviews and observations and use a triangular method of collecting data.

- The different roles of the researcher are recognized while conducting this study. I am aware of my roles as researcher, advocate and decision maker at the Ministry where inclusion is piloted. Collecting data from participants may be affected by the authority and status of the researcher as a decision maker on a national level. Nevertheless, I am assuring participants that data collected is for the sole use of this research and will not be used in any other situation.

- Due to ethical issues and cultural sensitivity, voice or video recording or photographing were limited. Permission was sought before recording any participation.
- The change in the MoE where country is going through reform of education in general and special education in particular.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, findings and discussion of findings will be presented in parallel with each other. The chapter is divided into main sections based on the initiatives created by the MoE and DoSNs which is in charge of running and enhancing the special needs services in the country. At the beginning of each section the findings will be presented. That will be followed by a discussion of those findings as a sub-section. A separate chapter on the recommendations will follow this chapter and will be presented in a clear sequenced way.

The DoSNs at the MoE in the UAE - as mentioned in chapter 2 (section 2.8) - created five initiatives to improve the service of special education in the country as a response to the new Federal Law no. 29/2006 for the rights of the persons with special needs. Those initiatives will be used as framework to evaluate the current situation in the schools piloting inclusion. These five initiatives are as follows: 1- philosophy regarding students with special needs, 2- systems/processes for entry to and exit from educational services, 3- professional development, 4- educational service delivery and 5- parent involvement..

Through different data collection methods used in this study, a gap was identified in five different areas which will be discussed separately in this chapter ( Appendix C, Figure/ 1). The philosophy regarding students with special needs is the first area where a gap was seen between what was stated in the different theories behind inclusion and in the practice of what is happening in the piloted schools. A second area where a gap was found via investigation is the system of providing the service of special needs in those schools. A third area is a gap in the professional development needed to make this inclusion work. A fourth area where a gap between theory and practice was found is the educational service delivery. Assistive technology was not considered in the schools piloting inclusion as the infrastructure of schools found not to be adequate and accessible for students with special needs. Washrooms, doors, ramps, etc in the schools were not accessible for those with physical impairment. Moreover, the IEP was found in place with some students but it was not understood as it should be. It found some schools were even not trained on using it. The fifth area is parent involvement and role in the education of their children.

All the above sections will be discussed thoroughly by comparing what is in the theory of inclusion and what is happening in practice in order to identify the gap between them. On the other hand, positive points were found while researching the gap in inclusion at the piloted schools. Different areas were found which are considered points of strength in this study. Including students with disabilities officially in some schools for the first time in the country's history is the strongest point. Another point is the support the Ministry is giving now to those schools and the site visits which did not happen earlier despite the desperate need of teachers and staff. Furthermore, the training plan which the Ministry is committing to for the supervisors of special needs who shall in their turn deliver it to schools and teachers, can be counted as a strong point in the project. An additional point of strength is the piloting a new policies and rules for the special education system within this pilot project of inclusion. Also, the raising of financial support to fund the different projects for the special needs is an obvious strong point. Although those findings are valuable, they should not be generalized to similar situations because of the uniqueness of this study as mentioned earlier in chapter one (section 1.1).

*The following are the research findings and their discussion*

### **5.1 Philosophy regarding students with special needs:**

The philosophy behind inclusion was not identified in the piloted schools. A special need as a term was found to be a confused term in most of the schools which are piloting inclusion. Categories of special needs were found to be not identified by most of the schools' staff. For them students with special needs are those who used to be served in a special class. Those were students with less obvious disability. An example of those is students with learning difficulties. Whereas students with more obvious disabilities like Down's syndrome are not known to some teachers (Appendix G/5). The DoSNs expanded the category of special needs to 13 disabilities whereas in the past fewer were identified. For that reason the department created a document on criteria for each category which will help schools to identify the different possible types of disabilities which in future may be served in the MoE schools. Moreover, an expansion of the special needs services was created 'Continuum of services' (Appendix H). The attitude of the staff of the piloted schools towards students with special needs was found to be of a sympathetic type.

However, teachers were found to be willing to work with students with special needs when the necessary support is provided. Furthermore, it was found that the DoSNs in the MoE in the UAE has made much effort to help schools piloting inclusion by setting out a training plan where the special needs supervisors are supposed to deliver them to schools' staff in order to help schools to be inclusive (Appendix F/1). In addition, the department is doing site visits for these schools to help the staff in the pilot project.

#### **5.1.1 Why Inclusion:**

The philosophy behind including students with special needs is that every child has the right to have access to appropriate education. That was stated in many international calls such as the Salamanca Statement and EFA, and also on the national level as was presented in the new Federal Law (chapter 2, sections 2.6 & 2.7). Some schools under investigation could not realize the philosophy of inclusion. When the reason for accepting the enrolment of students with special needs in those schools was investigated, the main reason found was to follow the directions of the MoE regarding enrolment of these students in the school (Appendix G/6). A Formal letter was sent to those schools with a list of the names of students with special needs who should be enrolled. However, the DoSNs made it clear in their procedures of inclusion for the special supervisors to approach the schools at the friendly level and that the willingness element should be considered (Appendix G/3). Some of those schools have not heard of the Federal Law which was declared in the country. Those which have heard about it did not realize that the government schools could have any role in it. Although schools were not mentioned as the only means of providing education within it, they are one option for giving education suitable to students with special needs. Mentioning all educational institutions in article 12 of the law made it clear that education can be provided in different organizations. For that reason the MoE started supervising the education happening within the special centres in the country which still have a large number of students with different disabilities (Appendix G/4). Different subject supervisors are visiting those centres and helping them to become more education oriented than welfare oriented.

### **5.1.2 Categories and Criteria of Special Needs in the UAE:**

Since it was found in the piloted schools that special needs is not understood, the DoSNs included in their plan an awareness program to spread the culture of special needs in the schools community. To some of these schools students with special needs meant those who used to be referred to a special class. In particular, students with less obvious disabilities were referred to special classes in the recent past. Now with the new Federal Law and the initiatives the Ministry is adopting, new categories of disability were added and identified (Appendix G/2). The categories of special needs were limited in the past to those with sensory impairment, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, autism and learning difficulties. The selection of which category was to be chosen for piloting inclusion was based on the possibility of high achievement. An example of this is students with sensory impairment. Furthermore, two students with autism spectrum were chosen to be included beside a few students with Down's syndrome (Appendix S). It was found in the schools piloting inclusion that some of the special needs categories are totally new to the school community such as social, emotional, behavioural disorder. The reason behind the discovery of new categories in schools is believed to be that they were not given access to schools prior to the federal law or if they existed in the school system, they were referred to a centre for special needs and excluded from the mainstream school setting because of their inappropriate behaviour.

### **5.1.4 Attitude towards Inclusion:**

In order to change the attitude about the potential of students with disabilities and their educational achievement, a philosophy plan was created regarding students with special needs. Before including any student with special need in the schools which are implementing inclusion at the current time, a presentation was given to various groups about special needs (Appendix F/2). Since the number of schools and their staff are large, the MoE chose the model of 'train the trainer' in which the special needs supervisors were chosen to be trained by the MoE so that they can then train all schools involved in the pilot projects. Changing the attitude towards special needs was one of the planned training sessions (Appendix F/1). When a number of those schools were visited and asked if they were prepared for any students with special need to be included in their schools. Most of school principals, the special education teacher and teachers of the regular class in which



the child is included, stated that there was no awareness presentation nor any specific training that happened in the school before this child joined them (Appendix G/5, G/6 & G/9). A teacher of regular class who had a child with disability included in her class said: "The child was dumped into the school at the beginning of the year with an official letter from the Ministry to accept him without any preparedness for the school and staff" (Appendix G/5). While a person with high position in the Ministry was asked if inclusion happened without planning for it said: "it was perfectly planned for, special supervisors were trained, and they were asked to train their schools. Each had from 1 to 3 schools in his or her Emirate which are piloting inclusion. They were given a training program which they had to deliver for the concerned party. Some did and some of them did not. When I questioned them they showed that it is a new practice for them and they are over loaded" (Appendix G/2 ). Additionally, some principals are considering having a child with special education as an opportunity for them to force their conditions so this child will be accepted in their schools. Example is of a previous pilot project of enrolling number of students with Down syndrome into one of the schools. At the end of the year the principal stated that those students will not be accepted next year unless all her conditions are fulfilled (see Appendix T for the conditions). Some of those conditions were unrealistic.

Many researchers have argued about the importance of preparing schools to make them inclusive. The philosophy behind inclusion should be clear for everyone working with a child with special needs. 'The move towards inclusion is not only a technical or organisational change but also a movement with a clear philosophy.'(UNESCO, 2005).

## **5.2 Systems/processes of providing the service of special needs:**

When investigated those pilot schools of inclusion were found to be following new rules and policy as a result of the need for implementing new approach in education. However, no official regulations or legislation were found to be in place. Different problems were found in the official registration of some students with special needs. Furthermore, assessment for those students with special needs was found to be problematic. Additionally, as a result of duality in education, it was mirrored in the special education field. Old systems and regulations of general education and special education were in contrast to each other. Some general education systems' rules were conflicting with the pilot project of inclusion. In addition there is a lack of funding for schools serving students

with special needs. Moreover, no monitoring system at a high level was found to follow up the implementation of inclusion. Individual efforts at the level of DoSNs were made to follow up what is happening on the ground in the implementing of inclusion.

### **5.2.1 New Rules and Policies:**

The Federal Law was declared but was not regulated. The Law is still not known to many people inside or outside the piloted schools of inclusive education. On the other hand, parents of students with special needs have more knowledge about the Law as their children are the direct beneficiaries of it. Moreover, the Federal Law did not specify inclusion as a right for the students with special needs. It is possible for education to be provided at centres in segregated settings or in schools in either segregated settings like the special classes or in inclusive settings like the regular classroom (Appendix D). Furthermore, this law required the establishing of a committee for education. At the time of conducting this research, no committee has been formed (Appendix G/4). Delay of establishing the education committee is a problem on the broader level, while in the internal level of the Ministry which is piloting inclusion in some schools, different problems regarding internal systems were found. Registration and examination were two major problem areas found in the process of including students with special needs in schools.

To overcome the interior system problems, initiatives were presented to solve them. Yet many problems of the same nature occurred. Example is the age-appropriate model which was chosen for the included students. This means including the students with special needs according to grade level with his peers. Mitchell (2007) claimed that “placement in an age-appropriate classroom in the learner’s neighbourhood school is a necessary (but not sufficient) requirement for inclusive education”. Earlier regulations of registration in government schools had many conditions before registering a child at his grade level. An example is that if a child is coming from home and has no report card from a previous class he had many registration problems. It is strongly believed that Inclusion works if there is a systemic change and national policy (Mittler, 2000). Therefore the Ministry is working on reforming the educational system for general and special needs. This reform will include every aspect, from registration until evaluation. It is argued that changing old practices and legislation needs time. One year of a pilot project is not enough: the practice is new and different problems accrue in different situations. However, change in the

special education has started from the declaration of the Federal Law and from those pilot projects the Ministry is undertaking. Yet the journey of inclusion is at the beginning.

### **5.2.2 Evaluation, Assessment and Examination:**

The examination and assessment system was found to be not responsive to the learners needs when it was examined in the piloted schools. It was based on traditional paper pen tests. Such tests “measures memory, not true learning” (Winebrenner, 1996:162) .Limited accommodations were found when a school was visited. Schools were not aware of the possibility in the MoE’s rules for accommodations but once they were told they seemed willing to try it. General education rules are rigid regarding registration and assessment. It was found to be testing based assessment and knowledge based. No flexibility in assessment was found. However, the MoE, represented by DoSNs, adopted the measuring of learners’ progress by the IEP in addition a portfolio assessment will be a replacement of pen and paper type testing. The department called for authentic assessment of students’ performance. Authentic assessment is the evidence gathered over time to show a students’ progress ( Udvari-Solner in Villa and Thousand, 2005). In addition to assessment problems, a gap was found in the evaluation system. Although it was stated in the Federal Law that the MoE shall commit to taking the necessary educational diagnosis (Appendix D, Art. 13), a lack of proper evaluation was found. Including those students in these schools was based on the results of an evaluation. The DoSNs called for forming an evaluation team in every Emirate (Appendix G/3 & G/10). This team consists of a special needs supervisor, psychologist, speech therapist, and whoever is needed for conducting a full evaluation and to come up with suitable recommendations and placement. Though there should be a team in every Emirate, some of those Emirates use the old practice of one person deciding the placement of the student with special needs where it should have been a decision taken by the team as a whole. Furthermore, some of the piloted schools had no idea about the evaluation of the child included in their school (Appendix G/6). When they lack the evaluation, students’ needs cannot be met and his/her being in school will not benefit him/her at all. Is it important for the school, the child’s teacher and the special needs teacher in the school to know the evaluation of the child so that they can work on building his Individualized Educational Plan/Program (IEP) based on his needs. The IEP is an official record the Ministry is striving to activate in the schools for students with special needs.

### **5.2.3 General Education VS Special Education:**

The Special Education was only treated as '*special*' and came at the end of any list (Appendix G/2). Many researchers argued that special education is a part of the general education; it is not separate from it. "Inclusive education is not something additional to or separate from the mainstream education provision but an alternative way of looking into educational development and responding to the diversity of learners' needs" (UNESCO conceptual paper, 2003). Inclusion, as a program from the special needs, should be linked to the broader system of education. Villa & Thousand (2005:8) claimed that: "system change initiatives in special education are paralleling systems change efforts in general education". A huge conflict was found between general education rules and special education practices. Inclusion is new in the field of special education as well as general education. Inclusion is piloted in few schools, however when it comes to general education's rules it creates problems in the piloted schools. A student who is a low achiever with high IQ had registration problems for months for the reason of allocating him to an age-appropriate class. He came from a private centre where his certificate is not recognized at the Ministry level which resulted in registration problems as one of the conditions is that the student should present a last class's report card to be allowed to register in a government schools if he is new. Rules of general education are rigid. Wedell (2005:9) argued that: "inclusion is not practicable within the rigidities of the current school system" Moreover, the funding system in the MoE is allocated for schools as a whole without consideration of students with special needs as no additional funding for them. The DoSNs tries to overcome this obstacle of funding by raising money from companies to support different projects for special needs.

### **5.3 Professional development:**

Professional development was one of the initiatives the MoE created to improve the service of special needs in the schools. When it was examined in this study there was found to be almost no proper training given for those who are working with students with special needs. This is despite of the MoE identifying the need for this area and setting a suggested training plan where the special needs supervisor is still under training in different topics (Appendix F/1). It asked for those trainings to be given to schools piloting inclusion. A training plan was set in which each supervisor attended a session every two

weeks and then trained his or her teachers the following week on the same topic. 'Train the trainer' was the model adopted by the Ministry to train as many as possible by targeting the special needs supervisors who are supposed to train schools' staff.

### **5.3.1 Training:**

Article 14 of the Federal Law emphasized the provision of training for those working with persons with special needs as follows: " ... shall guarantee the availability of training programs while at service so as to provide workers with state-of-the-art expertise and knowledge". Training for people working with students with special needs is essential. Preparing schools for including a child with special needs is essential and may affect the success of this practice. When one of the special supervisors was asked about the reason for not delivering such training for one of the inclusion schools, the answer was: "We are over loaded with other things besides training. We could not find the proper time to do so although it is on the top of our to do list" (Appendix G/10). On the other hand there is no monitoring program or system where different initiatives by the Ministry can be followed. An effort from the DoSNs was made to site visit some schools to ensure the work was done on the inclusive settings in those schools. Training is important to prepare teachers to work with students with special needs. Villa & Thousand (2005) emphasized the role of planning as it can make a difference. Gaad & Khan (2007) in a study on teachers perceptions about educating students with special needs in Dubai in UAE claimed that teacher recognize that in order to be able to meet the needs of their students, they need "additional training, support from administrators, and access to related services and resources as necessary" (Gaad & Khan, 2007).

### **5.3.2 Personnel:**

By investigating those piloted schools a huge shortage in the personnel area was found. All the schools lack the specialists who can help in the education of a child with special needs in the school. Two examples of the personnel are a school psychologist and teaching assistant. Currently people with a psychology background are doing the evaluation of students with special needs, moreover their reports are heavily relied upon IQ tests when deciding from what setting this child can benefit. Another example is a

teaching assistant. There is no position called teaching assistant or aid in the MoE, but there was a need for those people to help the regular classroom teacher when a child with special needs was included in this class. A mother of a child with Down's syndrome was interviewed and she said she had to pay for an assistant aid for her child in order for him to be accepted in a mainstream school (Appendix G/7). This indicates that acceptance in schools is probably conditioned '*conditional approval*'. On the other hand, when a person with a high position in the MoE which is piloting inclusion was asked about the incident of a mother hiring an aid for her child she agreed on the importance of an aid teacher if needed for the child's benefit. Therefore, in some schools the Ministry asked a special education teacher to act as an aid for a regular teacher until the position of an aid teacher can be created (Appendix G/3). In addition, a shortage of speech pathologists was found in the included schools. The Ministry is trying to cover the shortage by nominating a special education teacher as an aid sometimes or by training them to be speech therapists. But the need for a specialist will not be solved in this way. A shortage of special education teachers has already arisen, and with those taken as speech therapists or assistant teachers no benefit can be clearly seen in the field of special needs. Inclusion is new in the whole education system and the need has arisen now for new positions to be created at the Ministry's level. Moreover, it was found that there were no incentives for teachers working with students with special needs.

#### **5.4 Educational Service Delivery:**

Another initiative in the DoSNs plan is enhancing the educational service delivery. It was found in the schools where currently inclusion is being piloted that service delivery is not as it should be. The SENCOT model was created in some schools, differentiation was not seen in the classes, the curriculum was not modified as needed for those students, accommodation was not taken into account, examinations were knowledge based and assessments were test based. Mentioned areas were considered as subjects of the training plan by the MoE to change the practice in each of them. In addition the IEP was created for every child with special needs (Appendix K). On the other hand an expansion of services noticed in some schools. Depends on the individual need of a student a placement was decided. Moreover, assistive technology was not on place in some of those piloted schools.

#### **5.4.1 The SENCOT:**

The SENCOT as a word is an acronym for Special Educational Needs Consultant Teacher. It is similar to the SENCO model from the U.K. However; it does not mean the assistant or aid teacher who is appointed for the need arisen from including different categories of special needs in mainstream schools. Some of the inclusion piloted schools have the SENCOT model which was of help to the included students and they were trained on it (Appendix G/4). This teacher helps in working with the regular classroom teacher to cater for different type of special needs. In addition SENCOT can provide ideas and ways of teaching and working on needed materials. Furthermore, they help in creating the IEP and following it up. Nevertheless, It was found in the piloted schools that teachers and principals mix up between the SENCOT teacher and the aid or assistant teacher. Job description was created for both of them by the MoE once this need was discovered.

#### **5.4.2 Differentiation:**

One of the biggest problems facing schools piloting inclusion was that teachers were not found capable of differentiating their teaching methods. The reason for this is that they did not get a proper training in it. The old model concentrates on teachers more than students. The teacher is talking all the time and students listening. Student centred learning is important to meet the need of any student with special needs. Since inclusion is “about responding to diversity” (Barton in Allan (1999), therefore differentiation should be the adopted model of structure. Differentiation defined in Tomlinson & Eidson (2003:3) as: “ ... systematic approach to planning curriculum and instruction for academically diverse learners”. Differentiation is one of the topics the supervisors were trained in. They supposed they trained their teacher in it. However, when a site visit was made to one of the piloted schools, the teacher was found not to be familiar with differentiation. The teacher was using marker and white board to explain a math lesson. The student included in this class seems to be confused and not following (Appendix B/1).

### **5.4.3 Curriculum**

“In any education system, the curriculum is one of the major obstacles or tools to facilitate the development of a more inclusive system” (UNESCO conceptual paper, 2003). Teachers in the piloted schools thought that as long as a student with special needs is included then there would be a special curriculum for him/her no matter what their disability is. The curriculum should be same for everyone, except some modifications can be made on the grade level curriculum if needed. Modification in curriculum content makes all learners successful and leads to an individualized curriculum based on the learners needs (Vaughn et al. 2003 as cited in Dukes & Dukes, 2005; Lavay & Rizzo, 2000). A ‘*responsive curriculum*’ was called for by many researchers. The responsive curriculum is the one which caters for the different needs of the learner. Some of the visited schools were not found to be catering for their included students’ needs by modifying their curricula when needed (Appendix B/1). The special education supervisors were trained in modification and were asked to train those schools. It seems this training did not happen, as some of the schools had never heard about modification and their request was for a special curriculum for the students with special needs (Appendix B/2). Udvari-Solrer et al. in Villa & Thousand (2005) claimed that engaging in curricular is an act of change. Therefore, teachers should be trained on adaptation (modification & accommodation) in order for them to understand how to respond to their student’s needs through their curriculum. Individualized curriculum content is a result of modification which is tailored for the need of the student. (Vaughn et al. , 2003 as cited in Dukes & Dukes, 2005). Moreover, Modification makes all students successful (Lavay & Rizzo, 2000).

### **5.4.4 Continuum of Services:**

The DoSNs expanded the services provided to students with special needs. A continuum of services was adopted by the department to enhance the services provided to students with special needs and to cover as many as possible of the students with special needs in schools. (Appendix G/3) It was found in one of the schools that full inclusion was not of benefit to the student with special needs currently, so a shared model was used in which this student takes two core subjects in a special class and the rest of his subjects are



taken in a regular classroom. This did not go against the law as the law itself gave options of placements as needed. In addition, it proves that there should be some flexibility in deciding the proper setting for the child. Full inclusion is not always the answer for everything for a student with special needs, though inclusion can be favoured.

## **5.5 Parent involvement**

The area of parent involvement is totally new in the special education system. Earlier all that parents were asked to do was to sign their approval of their children joining a special class. Currently it was found in the piloted schools the amount of parents' involvement in their children's education has enlarged. They are now asked to be involved in creating the IEP and be part of the IEP team for their children. On the other hand, a contract was required to be signed between parents and school to ensure that both parties understand their responsibilities towards the education of this student with special needs. This contract is called '*Collaborative Contract*' as translated from Arabic by the researcher.

### **5.5.1 Parents as Partners:**

Parents used not to have big role in their children's education. This changed after the declaration of the new Federal Law. Parents are now seen as partners in the education of their children with schools (Appendix G.11). They are considered while creating the IEP for the child. They are more involved in deciding and agreeing on what is best for their offspring. Fullan in Mittler (2000:151) claimed that "the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement"

### **5.5.2 Collaborative Contract:**

As a result of valuing the role of parents in the education of their children, the DoSNs suggested a form of contract which was called - as the researcher translated it from Arabic- a '*Collaborative Contract*' (Appendix L). It is a contract both parents and school representatives sign where each party's responsibilities are listed. Ethically I, as a

researcher, did not find it of benefit to the students. The parents are already involved in creating the IEP for the children, moreover they are asked to sign on it as an official document. Being again asked to sign documentation for the same purpose as the earlier IEP is not fair. Also 'contract' is a word used in the field of business or law. Neither factor is appropriate to the educational situations they, as parents, are involved in. Simply the IEP as an official document can replace this contract and result. That raises the question of how fair it is for parents to be compromised on their children's education!

## **5.6 Summary:**

Inclusion is a journey; it is not a destiny (Mittler, 2000). Villa & Thousand (2005:78) claimed that "transition to inclusive schooling no longer seems impossible", however it can not happen within a year in a country where segregation in education has dominated for a long time. This statement was drawn out from the results of this study as various findings resulted from studying in depth the piloting situation of inclusion in some schools. The findings of this research were organized with regard to the DoSNs in the MoE's action plan for special needs. Those findings can be summarized as follows:

A gap was found in the field of the philosophy behind inclusion. Many schools' staff did not know why they were including students with special needs in their schools. Many participants in this study stated that they included them to follow the Ministry's direction to enrol them. Another gap was found in the system and process of implementing inclusion. Although there is a federal law for the rights of special needs, it was found that regulation to activate this law is missing. Furthermore, the law did not specify schools as the only means of providing education. Thus education can still be found in the Special Centres in a segregated setting with supervision from the MoE of the educational quality. Another problem in the system was the lack of a data base for special needs. Only estimated numbers of students with special needs were found. To have a clear number of special needs in the country will help in planning for them. A third gap was found in the professional development area. No system for professional development was found in the piloted schools. Any training happening there was a single effort from the DoSNs to help in making inclusion work. Although a plan for training was set to train the trainers who were chosen to be the special education supervisors, a limited delivery of this training was implemented in the piloted schools. In addition, there is no incentive for those who work

with special needs or for those who are trained in a new practice nor there is any budget for training plan except some efforts from DoSNs to raise funds. A fourth gap was found in the area of service delivery. The old system of teaching and learning still dominates in a huge number of piloted schools. A shift towards more responsive learning is needed. Differentiation, modification and accommodation are important areas needing attention in those schools to make inclusion successful. The fifth gap was found in the area of parental involvement. Parents sometimes have to compromise to enrol their children in a regular mainstream school. The compromising was found to be ongoing even after enrolment their children.

On the other hand, points of strength were found while investigating the inclusive settings in the piloted schools. In spite of inclusion being recently adopted in the country, notably, several individual efforts were made before the official adoption of inclusion by actually including several students with special needs in the mainstream schools. Additionally, inclusion itself is a step forward in educating students with special needs. They used to be taken care of in segregated settings with limited education, but now they are in schools with their peers. Another point of strength is the training plan the Ministry is adopting for the new practices in special needs. Additionally, piloting new policies and rules to replace the old ones at the Ministry's level is definitely a point of strength in these inclusive schools. Moreover, raising funds to support different programs for students with special needs can be considered a positive point in the whole project whilst there is a limited budget for special needs.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

#### **6.1 Conclusion:**

UNESCO believes that inclusion is “a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil’s diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems, but as opportunities for enriching learning “ (UNESCO, 2005). To improve the educational opportunities and quality for students with different special needs, inclusion was adopted as a new approach in special education by the MoE in the UAE with a view to educate students with disabilities in the governmental schools. Special needs in this study means students with disabilities only as the term itself is wide and may include different special needs like poor children or abused children. The MoE represented by the DoSNs created new initiatives which will help to enhance the status of education for students with special needs in the governmental mainstream schools. At the time of conducting this research a pilot project for implementing inclusion is being implemented in the mainstream schools which were selected carefully based on the school principal’s belief and willingness. Those schools and this pilot project were under investigation in this research study for the purpose of identifying the gap between theory and practice of inclusion currently existing in the UAE. It also aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice by making a few recommendations to enhance the service of special needs and inclusive education. What is happening on the ground of implementing inclusion in those schools was compared to the theory of the different international movements, calls and laws for inclusion with emphasis on the UAE Federal Law no.29/2006 for the rights of persons with special needs.

Action research was used to carry out this research. To study in depth the subject of inclusion in the country a single case study was carried out. A qualitative and multiple data resource were used to collect the data needed for the study. A triangulation of observation, interviews and document analyses was used to ensure the validity of the findings. The limitations of the study were presented. A gap was identified, discussed and analyzed. The results of the discussion and the gaps identified were, hopefully, presented in a coherent and logical way. The findings proved that special education is developing

from segregated settings into more inclusive settings. However, a limited practice of full inclusion was found. Furthermore, findings were identified as relevant to the Federal Law and its implementation, the philosophy behind inclusion, funding needed, infrastructure needed, human resource issue, service delivery, professional development and parent involvement to make inclusion work. UNESCO statement suggests:” Some of the major causes of exclusion and segregation for children with disabilities include inappropriate teaching materials, inaccessible buildings, inappropriately designed curricula, inflexible and content-heavy curricula and untrained and unqualified teachers and staff.’ (UNESCO,2005). Inclusion is a step forward in educating students with special needs and “regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all “ (The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, Article 2). Recommendations to bridge the gap were presented towards the end of the research. In addition to those gaps, some points of strength were identified in the process of investigating the pilot project of inclusion. And we always shall remember; ‘*SUCCESS BEGINS SMALL!*’ (Villa & Thousand, 2005:132).

## **6.2 Recommendations**

To improve the approach to inclusion towards educating students with special needs, a set of recommendations will be presented in this section as a result of discussing the findings of studying the inclusion practice in some of the piloted schools in the UAE. Those recommendations aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice of inclusion in the UAE.

*The following are the recommendations*

- To create an awareness campaign by using every type of media available ( Radio, TV , Newspapers.... )
- To spread the philosophy behind inclusion in the community and in the schools.

- To change people's attitude toward special needs.
- To change the terminology used with special needs (example: using intellectually disabled instead of mentally disabled)
- To prepare schools for inclusion before implementing it.
- To raise the awareness about the Law related to the rights of person with special needs.
- To adopt a definition for special needs and categories with their criteria.
- To Work on activating the Federal Law by forming the 4 mentioned committees in the Law.
- To regulate the Federal Law by creating new rules to replace the old once in the general education of registration and examination.
- To adopt a responsive curriculum in education, which may cater for all learners' needs.
- To adopt a multi disciplinary evaluation in order to come up with the right placement for the child.
- To activate the role of the inclusion team in the education districts.
- To create a monitoring system at a high level to follow up the action plan in the field of school.
- To make sure students with special needs will be treated like their peers in regards of the progress report and report card.
- To create a funding system at the Federation level for students with special needs and their programs.

- To conduct more research about aspects related to inclusion in order to know the possible problems and plan for them ahead.
- To adopt a training plan on the national level and set a budget and incentives for teachers who are getting training.
- To active the individualized educational plan (IEP) for students with special needs.
- To replace the collaborative contract used between parents and schools with the IEP.
- To allow a greater space for parents involvement in their kids education.
- To move with the expansion of services in the special education (continuum of services).
- To train teachers on the modify curricula for all students.
- To allow for accommodations in the evaluation settings.
- To adopt the differentiation in the instruction used in the classroom by teachers.
- To expand the SENCOT model to reach high schools.
- To create positions at the Ministry level for new jobs, example is assistant teacher.
- To expand the pilot project of inclusion to include high schools.

### **6.3 Further Research suggestions**

Very little has been written about the inclusion of students with special needs in the Arabian Gulf region including the UAE except regarding attitudes to inclusion. Different aspects of the issue of inclusion need to be studied within the UAE community. Examples of this are: inclusion within the culture of the UAE, parents' acceptance of inclusion, evaluation of the inclusive education. The need for such research arises at the current time because inclusion is newly practiced in the UAE. That research may help the decision makers to predict the problems that may occur for inclusion in schools and find a solution for them before they can happen.



## CHAPTER 7

### REFERENCES

Abood, A. A. (2005), '*Almaserah*'; *Descriptive Study about Special Education's Practice in the United Arab Emirates*, Ministry of Education publications , Department of Special Abilities.

Alahbabi, A. (2006) K-12 Special and General Education Teachers' Attitudes toward the inclusion of Students with Special Needs in General Education Calsses in the United Arab Emirates. A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School of Education and Human Development of the George Washington University .

Retrieved from UMI ProQuest Digital Dissertaions

Available at : [http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/preview\\_all/3199632](http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/preview_all/3199632)

Accessed on : 21/2/2007

Alghazo, E. and Gaad, E. (2004) General education teachers in the United Arab Emirates and their acceptance of the inclusion of students with disabilities. *British Journal of Special Education*, **31**, (2), 94-99.

Allan, J. (1999) *Actively seeking Including pupils with special needs in mainstream schools*. London and New York: Falmer Press.

Alqaruty, I. , Alghazo, E. and Alhumaidi, M (2005) To what extent does the UAE's special education classes meet the criteria set by the Ministry in the Legislations Book for special education classes. *Journal of Educational Science*, **3** , (2).

Bell, J. (2005) *Doing your Research Project*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bradshaw, K. , Tennant, L. and Lydiatt, S. (2004) Special Education in the United Arab Emirates; Anxieties, Attitudes and Aspirations. *International Journal of Special Education*, **19** , (1) , 49-55.

Brusling, C. and Pepin, B. (2003) Inclusion in Schools: who is in need of what?. *European Educational research Journal*, **2** , (2) , 197-201.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000) *Research Methods in Education*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Daniel, L. G. and King, D. A. (1997) Impact of Inclusion Education on Academic Achievement, Student Behaviour and self-Esteem, and Parental Attitudes. *The Journal of Educational Research*, **91**, (2), 67

Daniels, H. (ed) (2000). *Special Education Re-Formed, Beyond Rhetoric?* London and New York: Falmer Press.

Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, 1975

Available at: [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/72.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/72.htm)

Accessed on: 14/12/2007

Dukes, C. and Dukes, P. (2005) Consider the Role and Responsibilities of the Inclusion Support Teacher. *Intervention in Schools and Clinic*, **14**, (1).

Friend, M. and Bursuck, W. (2002) *Including Students with Special Needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed) Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Gaad, E. (2001) Educating children with Down Syndrome in the United Arab Emirates. *British Journal of Special Education*, **28** , (4) ,195-203.

Gaad, E. (2004) Cross-Cultural perspectives on the effect of cultural attitudes towards inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, **8** , (3), 311-329.

Gaad, E. (2004) Cross-cultural perspectives on the effect of cultural attitudes towards inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities. *Inclusive Education*, **8**, (3), 311-328.

Gaad, E. (2004) Including Students with Exceptional Learning needs in Regular Schools in the United Arab Emirates. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, communities and Nations*, **4**

Gaad, E. (2004) Pre-service teacher's attitudes towards a career in special education in the United Arab Emirates. *College Students Journal*, **38**, (4) , 619-631.

Gaad, E. (2006) The social and educational impacts of the first national Down Syndrome support group in the UAE. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, **6**, (3), 134-142.

Gaad, E. Arif, M. and Scott, F. (2006) System analysis of UAE education system. *International Journal of Education Management*, **20**, (4), 619-631.

Hara, K. (1995) Quantitative and Qualitative Research Approaches in Education. *Education Journal*, **115** , (3), 351+ .

International Bureau of Education (1996) National Report of the United Arab Emirates on the Development of Education for the years 1993/1994-1995/1996 , National report presented to the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva. 30<sup>th</sup> of September – 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1996

Lavay, B. and Rizzo, T.L. (2000) Inclusion: Why the Confusion?. *JOPERD- The Journal of Physical Education, Recreating and Dance*, **71** , (4).

Mertns, D.M. and Mclaughlin, J.A. (2004) *Research and Evaluation Methods in Special Education*. California: Crown Prince.

Millennium Development Goals website

Available at: [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

Accessed on: 13/1/2007

Mitchell, D. (2007) *What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education: Using Evidence-based Teaching Strategies*. Routledge

Mittler, P. (2000) *Working Towards Inclusive Education: Social Contexts*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Robson, C. (2000) *Real World Research , A resource for social scientists and practitioner- researchers* .(2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Blackwell publishing

Rugh, W. A. (1997) The United Arab Emirates: What Are the Sources of Its Stability?. Contributors. *Middle East Policy*. **5**, (3), 17.

Sheikh Mohammed website

Available at: <http://www.sheikhmohammed.co.ae>

Accessed on 7/12/2007

The Flagship on Education for All and the Right to education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion

Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/education/efa>

Accessed on: 14/12/2007

The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

Available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enab/dissre04.htm>

Accessed on: 12/13/07

Tomlinson, C. A and Eidson, C. C. (2003) *Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 5.9*. Alexandria, Virginia. US: ASCD publications.

UAE Ministry of Education webpage  
Available at : <http://www.moe.gov.ae/>  
Accessed: 9/12/2007

UN convention on the right of child  
Available at: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>  
Accessed on: 12/13/07

UN Disability Convention  
Available at: <http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/un-draft-convention-alert.htm>  
Accessed on: 14/12/2007

UN Enable (2005). *Full participation and equality*. United Nations.  
Available at: [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)  
Accessed on : 14/12/2007

UNESCO (1994) The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. World Conference on Special Education

UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED, 1997  
Available at : <http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/>  
Accessed on : 15/12/2007

Unicef website  
Available at: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/>  
Accessed on: 13/12/2007

United Nations – Universal Declaration of Human Rights Adopted and Proclaimed by General Assembly 217A(111), 10 December 1948  
Available at: [www.un.org/overview/rights/html](http://www.un.org/overview/rights/html)  
Accessed at: 13/1/2007

Villa, R. A and Thousand, J. S. (ed) (2005) *Creating an Inclusive School*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed). Alexandria, Virginia. US: ASCD publications

Wedell, K. (2005) Dilemmas in the quest for inclusion. *British Journal of Special Education*, **32** (1), 3-11

Winebrenner, S. (1996) *Teaching kids with Learning Difficulties in the Regular Classroom: Strategies and Techniques Every Teacher Can Use to Challenge & Motivate Struggling Students*. US: Free Spirit Publishing INC.

World Declaration on Education For All ,  
Available at: [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all)  
Accessed 12/13/07

Yin, R. K. (2003) *Case Study Research; Design and Methods*, (3<sup>rd</sup> ed), UK, Sage Publications.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **APPENDICIES**