



# **The Journey into Inclusive Education: a Case Study of Three Emirati Government Primary Schools**

**الإتجاه نحو التعليم الدامج:  
دراسة حالة لثلاث مدارس ابتدائية حكومية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة**

**by  
Nadera Emran Alborno,  
MSc Computing Science  
BSc Computer Science and Statistics**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

**at  
The British University in Dubai**

**June 2013**

© Nadera Alborno 2013; British University in Dubai; UAE

**Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. All rights reserved.**

**The Journey into Inclusive Education: a Case Study of Three Emirati  
Government Primary Schools**

التوجه نحو التعليم الدامج:  
دراسة حالة لثلاث مدارس ابتدائية حكومية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة

by

**NADERA EMRAN ALBORNO**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

at

**The British University in Dubai**

**June 2013**

**Thesis Supervisor  
Professor Eman Gaad**

**Approved for award:**

Prof. Mel Ainscow  
External Examiner

Christopher Robertson  
Internal Examiner

Prof. Paul Gardiner  
Chair of Examiners

Prof. Abdullah Alshamsi  
Chair of Research Degrees Committee

Date: 14 May 2013

## DECLARATION

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warrant that the content of this thesis is the direct result of my own work and that any use made in it of published or unpublished copyright material falls within the limits permitted by international copyright conventions.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

## **Abstract**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) officially launched the general rules for the provision of special education programmes and services under the theme 'School for All' in May 2010. This initiative represents the first practical measure by the MOE to implement the Federal Law 29/2006 with regards to the rights of individuals with disabilities and equal access to education; this was in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN 2006), which was signed and ratified by the UAE.

This research study investigates the implementation of the educational provisions introduced through the 'School for All' initiative in the context of three primary government schools in the UAE. The study adopted a qualitative research approach, using a multiple case study methodology, to provide a rich and contextualised picture of the implementation from the perspective of the various stakeholders (principals, teachers, students, parents as well as Ministry officials). Data was collected using qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews, participatory and non-participatory observations, as well as an analysis of documentation and artefacts related to the three schools. The data from each school has been recorded in a context-situated case study format, this was followed by a cross-case analysis that allowed for the collective understanding of the nature of inclusive education in Emirati government primary schools, following the implementation of 'School for All' initiative.

Over the last two years (2011 – 2012), fifty government schools have joined the initiative, where access has been granted to students with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities to be educated in mainstream classrooms. The provisions and services provided by the initiative have so far concentrated on five school aspects, namely: (1) staff training and development, (2) school structures with respect to students' placement, accommodations and

modifications, (3) support services such as speech therapy, (4) assistive technology and (5) community awareness. The 'School for All' initiative aims to introduce a shift towards inclusive education in an attempt to better serve the disabled population. This study explores how the implemented provisions have helped the case schools move towards inclusive cultures, through the development of inclusive policies and practices. It also elicits issues related to inclusion from the stakeholders' perspectives, as any successful school reform needs to consider their viewpoint and feedback. It draws on the 'Index for Inclusion' developed by Booth and Ainscow (2011) in exploring the barriers, as well as the resources to learning and participation with respect to the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and practices. This Index was specifically chosen as it provides a flexible and adaptable framework for developing and evaluating inclusive schools.

Themes emerging from the data identify positive system characteristics that should be supported and encouraged, as well as the areas of concern and gaps in practice that need to be addressed in future development plans at both school and Ministry levels. The lack of specific research or reliable data in relation to the implementation of the Federal Law concerning the rights of people with disabilities in the UAE has prompted this research; this study contributes to bridging the research gap in this area

## ملخص

قامت وزارة التربية والتعليم في الإمارات العربية المتحدة رسمياً بإرساء القواعد العامة لبرامج وخدمات التربية الخاصة تحت شعار "المدرسة للجميع"، وذلك في شهر مايو من عام 2010. تمثل هذه المبادرة المقياس العملي الأول للوزارة بالنسبة لتنفيذ القانون الاتحادي رقم 29-2006 والخاص بحقوق الأفراد من ذوي الإعاقة فيما يخص موضوع المساواة في حق التعليم، وقد تم إصدار هذا القانون بموجب ميثاق الأمم المتحدة حول حقوق الأفراد من ذوي الإعاقة الصادر في عام 2006 والذي تم التوقيع والتصديق عليه من قبل دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

تعنى هذه الدراسة البحثية بفحص وتدقيق مجالات ومعايير تطبيق قواعد هذه المبادرة التي تم تقديمها تحت شعار "المدرسة للجميع"، وذلك في ثلاثة مدارس ابتدائية حكومية في الإمارات العربية المتحدة. ولقد اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على أسلوب البحث النوعي وذلك باستخدام منهج الحالات المتعددة من أجل تقديم صورة دقيقة وواقعية عن تطبيق المبادرة من خلال عرض آراء ووجهات نظر جميع الأطراف المشاركة من مديري المدارس، المدرسين، الطلبة، أولياء الأمور وأيضاً آراء ووجهات نظر السادة المسؤولين في الوزارة.

تم تجميع البيانات عن طريق استخدام المناهج النوعية للمقابلات الشبه منظمة والملاحظات، كذلك من خلال تحليل الوثائق والمستندات وأيضاً نتائج الإنجازات الفردية في كل من المدارس الثلاث. وقد تم تسجيل البيانات في شكل حالة دراسية خاصة لكل مدرسة على حدة، واستتبع تجميع هذه البيانات تحليل آخر لكل الحالات الدراسية معاً، مما يعطى تفهماً كاملاً لطبيعة دمج ذوي الإعاقة في المدارس الحكومية في الإمارات بعد تطبيق مبادرة "المدرسة للجميع".

خلال العامين الماضيين (2011-2012) شاركت خمسون مدرسة حكومية في هذه المبادرة حيث تم توفير الفرص للطلبة من ذوي الإعاقة الجسدية أو الحسية أو العقلية لكي يتلقوا التعليم في الفصول الدراسية العامة. ركزت هذه المبادرة التي تكفل توفير الخدمات اللازمة على خمسة جوانب هامة بالنسبة لهذه المدارس وهي: (1) تدريب وتطوير هيئة التدريس ومجموعة العاملين مع الطلبة من ذوي الإعاقة - (2) التصميمات الهيكلية لمباني المدرسة بحيث تتواءم مع احتياجات الطلبة المكائنية وكذلك التعديلات والتدخلات اللازمة لدعم العملية التعليمية، (3) الخدمات المساندة كعلاج النطق وتنمية المهارات اللغوية، (4) الوسائل التكنولوجية المساعدة، (5) توعية المجتمع بأهمية الدور الذي تقوم به هذه المدارس نحو الطلبة من ذوي الإعاقة.

إن مبادرة "المدرسة للجميع"، تهدف إلى التغيير نحو نظام التعليم الدامج من خلال محاولة تحسين الخدمات المقدمة للأفراد من ذوي الإعاقة . وتوضح هذه الدراسة نوعية خدمات الدعم والمساندة التي تم تطبيقها في المدارس المشاركة ودورها المساهم في دفع هذه المدارس للإتجاه نحو ثقافة وآفاق الدمج التعليمي وذلك من خلال تطوير سياسات وممارسات الدمج . إن هذه الدراسة تثير الموضوعات المتعلقة بنظام الدمج من خلال وجهات نظر وآراء الأطراف المشاركة ، حيث أن تلك الآراء ووجهات النظر تلعب دوراً هاماً في تحقيق ونجاح الإصلاح المدرسي المنشود .

إعتمدت هذه الدراسة على "مؤشر الدمج" الذي وضعه Booth and Ainscow (2011) حيث يكشف كلا من الحواجز ومصادر المشاركة والتعليم فيما يتعلق بالأبعاد المدرسية الخاصة بالثقافات والسياسات والممارسات في المدارس الثلاث المشاركة في المبادرة، ولقد تم إختيار هذا المؤشر على وجه التحديد نظراً لكونه يقدم إطار عملي مرن وقابل للتعديل في مجال تطوير وتقييم مدارس الدمج .

إن نتائج البحث أظهرت مجموعة من الممارسات والموضوعات الإيجابية التي يقترح أن تؤخذ في عين الإعتبار وتوضع في حيز التنفيذ وأخرى تتطلب المتابعة والمعالجة من خلال خطة التطوير المستقبلية على مستوى كلاً من المدرسة والوزارة .

إن الحاجة لبحثٍ علمي مفصل وليبانات موثوق بها تتعلق بتنفيذ القانون الإتحادي الخاص بحقوق الأفراد من ذوي الإعاقة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة قد أدت إلى القيام بهذا البحث ، وإن هذه الدراسة تسهم في سد الفجوة في هذا المجال.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my beloved family:

My father, my backbone, who is my true inspiration for hard work and achievement

My mother, my soul mate, who lovingly taught me the art of giving

My brothers and their families who always believed in me

My children (Omar and Talal) who are my love and joy

My dear husband, my best friend, who made it all possible and always makes my life

complete

Thank you all for your unconditional love, sacrifice, and patience that enabled me to fly and

achieve my dream



## **Acknowledgements**

This journey would not have been possible without the support and guidance of many people. First and foremost I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to Professor Eman Gaad for her encouragement, advice and leadership. Not only did she selflessly give her time, support and effort, she was always willing to go above and beyond. She has also been my mentor and facilitator for many successful research opportunities that have made me the person I am today. I am also thankful to Dr Jane Leadbetter, my co-advisor from Birmingham University, who was supportive and generous with her time and insightful comments.

I would like to also express my gratitude to my teachers Dr Eugenie Samier and Dr Clifton Chadwick for their dedication and continuous encouragement. Dr Samier was a true inspiration; her tutorials always infused so much knowledge and innovation, while her enthusiasm was infectious. Many thanks also go to the library and the Academic Success Unit staff at BUID for their timely and continuous support in facilitating access to academic references. Many thanks also due to my colleague Dr Mulhim Al-Doori, who tirelessly encouraged me to go for this degree and always inspired me to aim higher.

I would also like to remember and mention all the wonderful moments (and the challenging hours) during the journey with my great cohort (Class of 2009). I deeply appreciate all the brilliant friendships, and I am so grateful for all their support, care and guidance.

I would also like to acknowledge all the educators and children, who allowed me to share their journey and received me in their classrooms with warmth and hospitality. I also express my deepest gratitude to Mrs Noura Al-Marri (The Head of Special Education) and all her team in the Ministry of Education, for their invaluable assistance in providing access to the

schools as well as never failing to find the time to meet with me despite their very busy schedules.

Writing a thesis was one of the most challenging experiences, without the invaluable assistance of my dear friend and editor Dr Iman Toema, this work would not be possible. I would also like to thank May Khawaja and Fatima Bokhari for their invaluable suggestions and continuous encouragement, and Lana Dajani for providing the required translation to increase the trustworthiness of my work.

I have been blessed throughout my life with great friends, but the beauty and value of these friendships shine through testing times. Thanks to you Rula, you walked with me through many highs and lows. Thanks to all my dear friends, you believed in me when I doubted myself, you cheered me up when I was really down, you were thoughtful and understanding when I could not share or be there for you. Thank you for all your prayers and good wishes.

Finally, I am indebted to my beloved parents, husband and children for not only granting me the opportunity to follow my dream, but also for their love, motivation and encouragement through every step of the journey.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Purpose and rationale	11
1.3 Significance	13
1.4 Assumptions and limitations	14
1.5 Organisation of the chapters	16
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	<b>18</b>
2.1 Social Model of Disability	18
2.2 Debating inclusive education	25
2.3 Index for Inclusion	31
2.4 UAE and inclusion: history and current issues	36
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b>	<b>42</b>
3.1 Research design	44
3.2 Site selection	47
3.3 Participants	49
3.4 Ethical considerations	51
3.5 Data collection methods and study conduct	51
3.5.1 Participant observations	54
3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews	56
3.5.3 Document collection and analysis	57
3.6 Pilot study	59
3.7 Role of the researcher	62
3.8 Trustworthiness	64
3.9 Methodological challenges	66
3.10 Analysing the data	68
<b>Chapter Four: Findings</b>	<b>76</b>
4.1 ‘School for All’ - a descriptive account	77
4.2 Case A - Inclusion!! Only because we have to	86
4.2.1 Transforming into ‘School for All’ (Research question one)	87
4.2.2 Exploring inclusive education (Research question two)	96
4.2.3 Inclusion...Only because we have to!!	107

4.3	Case B – Trapped inclusion	107
4.3.1	Transforming into ‘School for All’ (Research question one)	109
4.3.2	Exploring inclusive education (Research question two)	118
4.3.3	Trapped inclusion	126
4.4	Case C – We are the champions	127
4.4.1	Transforming into ‘School for All’ (Research question one)	128
4.4.2	Exploring inclusive education (Research question two)	138
4.4.3	We are the champions	148
4.5	Summary	148
<b>Chapter Five: Discussion, conclusion and recommendations</b>		<b>150</b>
5.1	Introduction	150
5.2	Issues related to the implementation of the provisions provided by ‘School for All’ initiative	153
5.2.1	Teacher training and development	153
5.2.2	School structures	156
5.2.3	Support services	163
5.2.4	Assistive technology	164
5.2.5	Awareness programmes	166
5.3	Issues related to inclusive school dimensions	169
5.3.1	Inclusive school cultures	169
5.3.2	Inclusive school policies	176
5.3.3	Inclusive school practices	182
5.4	Reflections on the use of the ‘Index for Inclusion’ as a guiding tool, in the UAE context	190
5.5	Conclusion	192
5.6	Recommendations	199
5.7	Personal gains and recommendations for further research	205
5.8	Final Thoughts	208
<b>References</b>		<b>210</b>
<b>Appendices</b>		<b>221</b>
Appendix 1: School consent forms (English / Arabic)		
Appendix 2: Ethics form		

- Appendix 3: Request to Ministry & authorisation (English / Arabic)
- Appendix 4: Summary of data collected in the Pilot study and Interviews with Head of Special education Department
- Appendix 5: Observation guides
- Appendix 6: Interview guides
- Appendix 7: Work plan and data collection schedule
- Appendix 8: Ministry of Education statistics
- Appendix 9: 'Index for Inclusion' (Indicators)
- Appendix 10: Sites and participants information
- Appendix 11: Tabulated summary mapping findings from Cases A, B and C to research questions (Summary of data collected).

## **List of tables**

Table 1.1 Structure of the education system in the UAE

Table 3.1 Rationale for case study approach using Yin (2009)

Table 3.2 Sample codes for collected data filing

Table 3.3 Mapping of research question 1(RQ1) to data collected from interviews, observations and school documents

Table 3.4 Mapping of research question 2 (RQ2) to data collected from interviews, observations and school documents

Table 4.1 Timeline of ‘School for All’ progress

Table 4.2 Students serviced by ‘School for All’ initiative in Case A school

Table 4.3 Special educational needs in the zone area of Case B

Table 4.4 Types of disabilities included in mainstream classrooms in zone area of Case B

Table 4.5 Students serviced by ‘School for All’ initiative in Case B school

Table 4.6 Students serviced by ‘School for All’ initiative in Case C school

## **List of figures**

Figure 1.1 The study framework

Figure 1.2 Provisions available for students with disabilities in the UAE

Figure 4.1 Hierarchy for inclusive education learning environment (MOE 2010, p. 25)

Figure 4.2 ‘School for All’ provisions and services

Figure 4.3: Comparison of the attainment over 2 years for 2 students with disabilities

## **List of abbreviations**

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADEC	Abu Dhabi Education Council
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BUID	British University in Dubai
CP	Cerebral Palsy
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DS	Disabled Student
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LD	Learning Disability
MOE	Ministry of Education
MET	Multi-disciplinary Evaluation Team
MES	Multi-disciplinary Evaluation Summary Report
MSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RDC	Resource Development Centre
SENCO	Special Education Needs Coordinator
SST	School Support Team
TA	Teacher Assistant
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPIAS	Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

The UAE Ministry of Education (MOE) officially launched the general rules for the provision of special education programmes and services under the theme ‘School for All’ in May 2010.

It comprised of the following:

- A framework for the inclusive education of disabled students in the form of sets of criteria that define the special education categories,
- Services and roles of schools, teachers and specialists,
- Examination systems and the educational considerations for each category (MOE 2010, p. 17).

‘School for All’ was initiated in accordance with the UAE Federal Law No. 29/2006 on the Rights of People with Special Needs (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006), amended by Law No. 14/2009 of the Rights of People with Disabilities (Gaad 2011, p.74), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006).

The Federal Law (No 29/2006), represents the formal recognition of the rights of disabled people and contains chapters that regulate welfare, social, economic, health, educational, professional and cultural rights and services. This recognition has its foundation in the UAE constitution which was drafted in 1971 as an interim constitution; this was later amended to become permanent in 1996 (UAE Cabinet 2010; Alahbabi 2009). Article 14 in the constitution emphasises equality and social justice for all citizens, whilst Article 16 identifies society’s responsibility to protect, assist and enable “people who cannot look after themselves” and guarantees welfare and social security legislation to regulate matters accordingly (UAE Cabinet 2010).

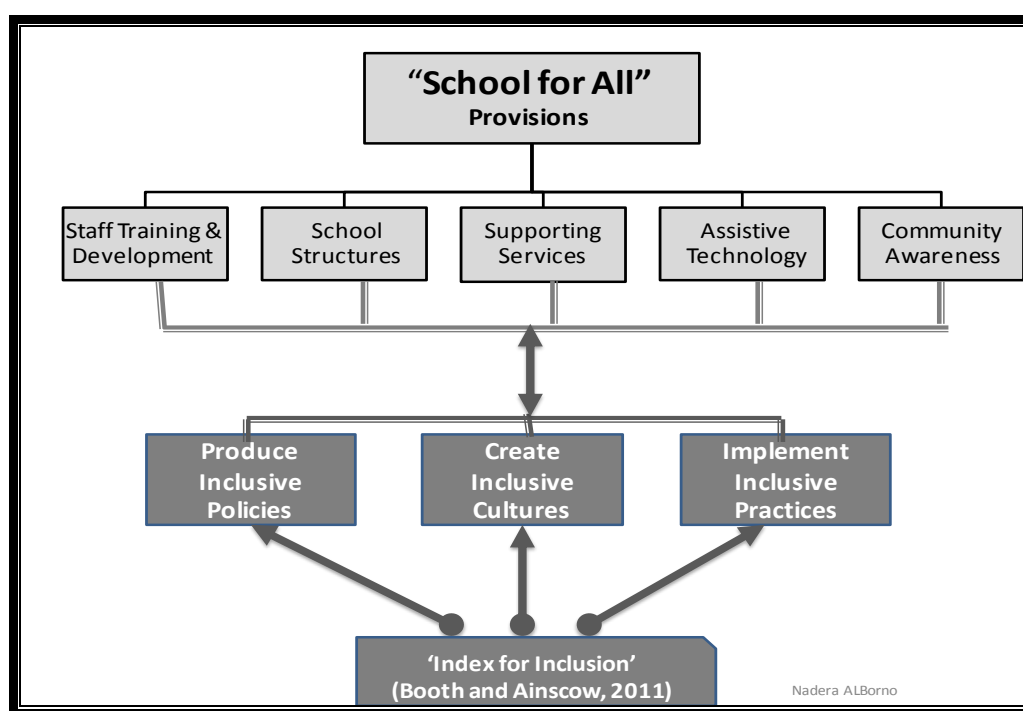


This research study investigates the implementation of the educational provisions introduced through the ‘School for All’ initiative in the context of three government primary schools in the UAE. Over the last two years, fifty government schools have joined the initiative, where access has been granted to students with moderate physical and intellectual disabilities to be educated in mainstream classrooms.

This study was first inspired by a video depicting a number of smiling Emirati students with various physical and intellectual disabilities in a government school classroom, sharing school day activities with their non-disabled peers. This video was played during the official launch of the ‘School for All’ initiative in May 2010. The happy smiles on the little faces with the glowing eyes, together with the infectious enthusiasm of the speaker, who was the principal of one of the pilot schools that had been implementing the initiative since 2008, provided the first seed for this research study. The next six months were spent researching the initiative through careful reading and analysis of the book of guidelines (MOE 2010), which revised the Federal Law (MSA 2006) with respect to education of children with disabilities and reading all the available articles about education in the UAE (Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Arif & Gaad 2008; Bladd 2010; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad 2004; Gaad 2011; Gaad & Khan 2007; Gaad & Thabet 2009; Hamid 2008). More data was obtained through interviewing the Head of the Special Education Department (see Appendix 4) and conducting discussions with a number of principals, teachers and parents from the pilot schools that have been implementing the initiative since 2008/2009. These discussions took place during introductory workshops about the ‘School for All’ run by the Ministry of Education, aiming at introducing inclusive education to prospective schools.

Finally the focus of the study was formulated as it became clear that the provisions introduced by this initiative have so far concentrated on five school aspects, namely: (1) staff training and

development, (2) school structures with respect to students’ placement, accommodations and modifications of the learning environment, materials, teaching methods and assessment (3) support services such as speech therapy and physiotherapy, (4) assistive technology and (5) community awareness. Accordingly, this study was structured with the aim of investigating the implementation of the aforementioned provisions in three government primary schools in order to illustrate the resulting inclusive schools’ cultures, policies and practices based on the ‘Index for Inclusion’ developed by Booth and Ainscow (2011). The following figure (1.1) illustrates the study framework.



**Figure 1.1: The study framework**

The Index was specifically chosen as it consists of a comprehensive set of indicators that covers the three school dimensions. It also provides a flexible and adaptable framework for developing and evaluating inclusive schools with respect to cultures, policies and practices.

This study uses a qualitative methodology within an interpretive framework, dictated by the need to present a detailed exploration of the transition of the three Emirati primary schools into inclusive education. Instrumental multiple case study approach was used to investigate the educational provisions in the three schools, using qualitative data collection methods of semi-structured interviews, participatory observations and document analysis. The researcher identified with the position of a participating explorer, seeking to understand, document and critically analyse the perspectives of all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents and administrators) with regards to their daily practices in implementing the new inclusive initiative. The interaction between students, teachers and administrators was observed within their natural settings through committing extensive periods of time in all three schools (Creswell 1998, p. 16; Ghesquie`re et al. 2004, p. 174).

## **1.1 Background**

The UAE is a young developing country that is striving for economic, social and cultural excellence. The last decade has witnessed heavy investment in the education sector as the Government recognised the importance of effective educational outcomes to match the pace of fast moving economy. This section gives a brief background about the education system in the UAE to help set the landscape, and clarify the purpose and rationale for this study.

The education system in the UAE is relatively new; formal education was only introduced in 1953, when the Kuwaiti educational mission established the first school in the Emirate of Sharjah. This was followed by similar projects funded by other Arab countries such as Saudia Arabia, Egypt and Qatar resulting in a fragmented education system in the UAE, since each school was staffed by the funding country and followed their respective curricula (Gonzalez et al. 2008; Ridge 2011).

It was not until 1971, following the foundation of the Federal State, that the Ministry of Education (MOE) was established to run 47 schools (previously run by the Kuwaiti Government). Education became compulsory until Grade 9, but curricula were still borrowed from neighbouring countries. In 1985, the Emirati curriculum that resulted from the National Curriculum project (launched in 1979) was finally adopted by all government schools and some of the Arabic speaking private schools, which opted to follow the Ministry of Education curriculum (Gardner 1995; Gonzalez et al. 2008; Ridge 2011; UNESCO 2011).

The current education system is organised in four educational stages: two years in pre-school stage (Kindergarten), five years in primary stage (cycle 1), four years in preparatory stage (cycle 2) and the last stage consists of three years of secondary education (cycle 3) (see Table 1.1).

Age	Academic Stage				
3-5	Pre-school (Kindergarten)				
6-10	Cycle 1 – Primary School – Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5				
11-14	Cycle 2 – Preparatory School Grades 6,7,8,9				
15-17	Cycle 3 – Secondary School Grades 10, 11,12	OR	Institute of Applied Technology	OR	Military or Police schools

**Table 1.1 Structure of the education system in the UAE**

Based on the 2010/2011 Ministry of Education Report (see Appendix 8) (Ministry of Education Research and Studies Department 2011; UNESCO 2011; UAE National Bureau of Statistics 2011), the UAE has 1,198 schools, of which 725 (60.5%) are public schools following the curriculum prepared and monitored by the Ministry of Education; the remaining 473 (39.5%) schools are privately owned, mostly operating in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. Private schools follow up to 13 different curricula; predominantly British, American and

Indian systems. They are licensed and regulated by the MOE and, more recently, have been monitored by Government entities such as KHDA (Knowledge and Human Development Authority) in Dubai and ADEC (Abu Dhabi Educational Council) in Abu Dhabi. The total number of students in government schools is 268,272 students (33%), and the total number of students in private schools is 545,572 students (67%) mostly in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which reflect the diversity in the UAE population; where Emirati nationals comprise only 11.5% of the total population. Education is compulsory until the end of cycle 2 (Grade 9) and free for all nationals (Emiratis) in government schools. Tertiary education is also free for Emiratis in national universities, colleges and institutes.

As for disabled students, the special education system has gone through considerable changes in the last 40 years, following the foundation of the Federal Government in 1971. The population of people with disabilities in the UAE, according to Bradshaw et al. (2004), is aligned to the worldwide average of 8 to 10% of the total population; however there are no reliable surveys unfortunately of the exact numbers or percentages of prevalent types of disabilities in the UAE. Historically, services for disabled individuals have been rendered by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA), where in 1981 there were only two rehabilitation centres serving 200 students with varying physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. The number of centres increased to reach twenty in 2002 catering for up to 2,000 students (Abdat 2010, Khamis 2007), all overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA). This increase reflected the population rise and other possible reasons such as the recognition of the need for rehabilitation and awareness of services provided. Currently, there are 40 rehabilitation centres across the UAE serving a total of 3,995 students; the centres vary in their structure and the services they provide. There are five federal centres in various emirates that are run by MSA providing services only to Emirati students (564 students), and another 13 local

government centres (mainly in Abu Dhabi and Dubai) serving 1,288 students. In addition, there are twenty-one centres that are either privately owned or run by non-profit organisations serving all nationalities; however they are licensed, monitored and regulated by MSA (UAE National Bureau of Statistics 2011; Abdat 2010). These centres predominantly provide rehabilitation and employment training as well as therapy and counselling services rather than formal education; most of them do not run programmes for possible future integration or inclusion in mainstream education (Gaad 2011).

As for the formal education of disabled students, it was not until 1980 that organised efforts by the Ministry of Education (MOE) towards disabled children began. The need for services in mainstream schools was recognised following an extensive survey conducted by the Ministry which identified the prevalence of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms, mainly speech and language disorders and learning difficulties (Abdat 2010; Gaad 2011). As a result special classrooms, run by special education teachers, started to appear in government schools where students, mostly with learning difficulties, and fewer students with physical and sensory disabilities were educated. It is a full-time service in the mainstream school, where interaction with mainstream students was limited to play time or activity lessons. However, these early provisions did not include students with intellectual disabilities, while students with sensory and physical disabilities were sometimes allowed to enrol in schools; there was no provision of support services. This exclusionary model of services in mainstream schools was the trend prevalent during the eighties in many countries around the world such as the UK, USA and Canada (Lupart and Webber 2012; Porter 2008; Skrtic 1996).

Educational support for students with disabilities in government schools was based on early intervention schemes starting at Kindergarten or Grade One in primary schools (Bradshaw et

al. 2004). Children were referred to special classrooms in UAE schools by subject teachers as a result of difficulties in coping with mainstream programmes. The referral usually took place following the assessment by a school based team of educational psychologist as well as speech and language pathologist (Bradshaw et al. 2004, p. 52). Students in special classrooms were also referred by Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) or Ministry of Health (MOH).

Gaad(2011) maintained that IQ testing was the main implemented criteria, where students with an IQ less than 75 were referred to centres, while those with IQs above 75 were referred to the schools with special classrooms. The special classrooms only lasted until Grade three, after which students would be placed back into mainstream classrooms, if they could progress academically; otherwise they are referred to rehabilitation centres.

In 1990, there was a move towards a less restrictive environment by establishing special resource rooms in government primary schools where students with learning disabilities could be supported on a pull-out basis in small groups, while spending the rest of the day in the mainstream classroom. In 2000 speech and language therapy was added to the repertoire of services provided in schools by the Department of Special Education that was established in MOE to govern provisions and services for disabled students in both public and private schools.

Finally in 2006 with the introduction of the Federal Law 29/2006 regarding the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UAE began to witness a major transformation to the special education policy. More disabled students started to enrol in mainstream classrooms and, for the first time, included students with intellectual disabilities. It should be noted that the 'School for All' initiative was born as a direct result of the Federal law 29/2006, where Chapter two specifically talks about the education of disabled people, with four specific

articles 12, 13, 14 and 15, which clearly support the inclusion of disabled students in mainstream schools aided with appropriate provisions:

The State guarantees for the person with special needs equal chances in education in all the educational and pedagogical institutions, the vocational qualification, teaching of adults, the continuous teaching in the regular classes or in special classes; if necessary, with providing the curriculum in the language of sign or Braille and any other methods as necessary. The special needs do not constitute intrinsically an obstacle hindering from applying to enrol, join or enter any educational institution whether governmental or private. (MSA 2006, p.7)

Recently the drive for inclusive education has also been reinforced in the UAE national charter, represented by the UAE Vision 2021, which specifies inclusive education for people with special needs as one of its objectives:

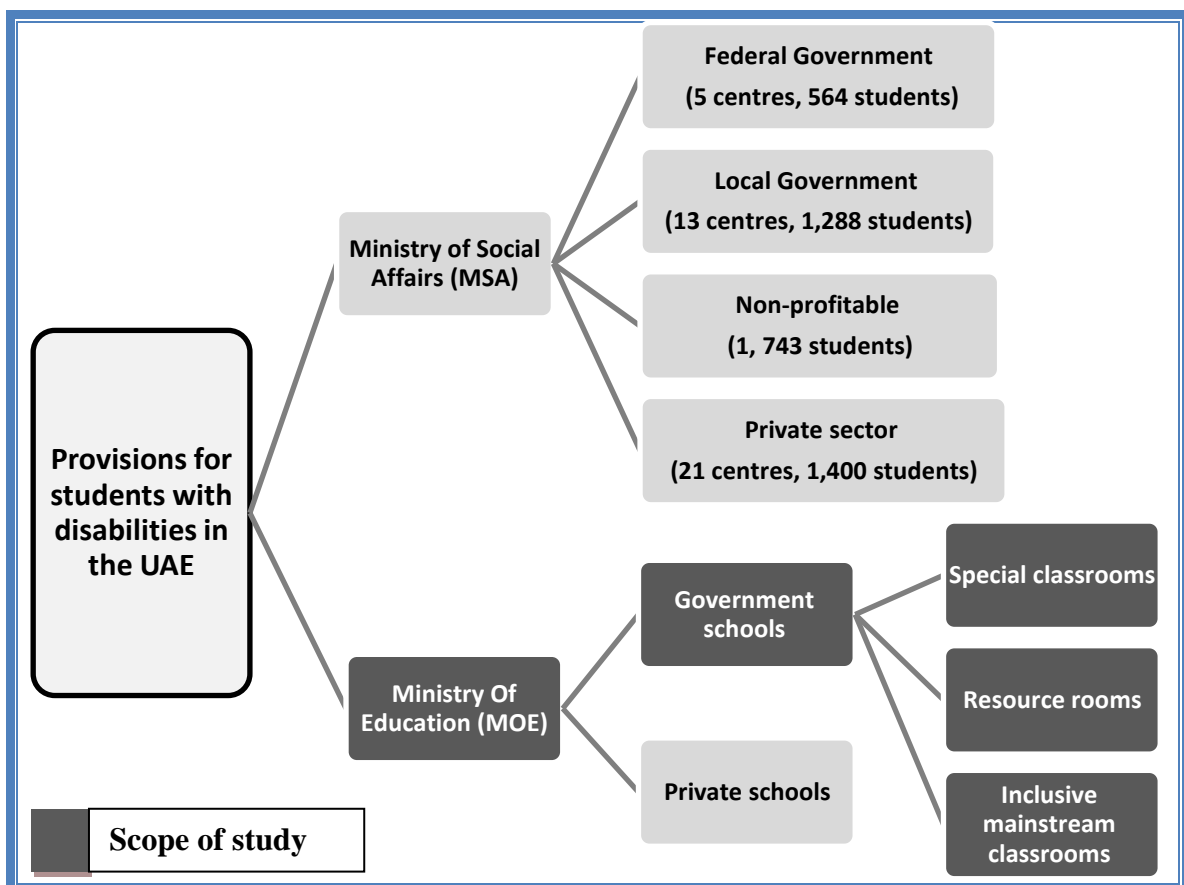
Education will provide equality of opportunity and balanced outcomes for all students. Special needs students will be properly integrated within the education system with the benefit of support programmes and infrastructure that guarantee fair access. (Vision 2021 2011, p. 23)

The UAE also ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010 (Gaad 2011) confirming its commitment to the rights of people with disabilities to enjoy equal status with their able bodied counterparts with respect to living conditions, health, rehabilitation, education and employment. Article 24 in CRPD stipulates that countries should grant students with disabilities the opportunities to access ‘appropriate’ and ‘inclusive’ education. The UAE ratification imposes the duty of compliance with the CRPD provisions and allows for monitoring by the relevant UN committee. The movement towards inclusive education in the UAE is clearly rooted in a discourse of equality and social justice similar to that in many countries around the world, including the UK and the USA (Lindsay 2007, p. 2). The Federal Law 29/2006 was drafted to adhere to international



standards and western theory, at the same time it also has a firm grounding in Islamic law and cultural heritage. It stems from a combination of the teachings of the Qur'an which states the care for disabled people to be a human right, defined as part of the individual's duties towards others (Shaikh 2009, p. 3), as well as the vision of the founder of the UAE, the late HH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who proclaimed that 'The greatest use that can be made of wealth is to invest it in creating generations of educated and trained people' (Embassy of the UAE in Washington DC 2009).

As a result segregated special classrooms in government primary schools are slowly being abandoned as students are transferred into mainstream classrooms with support services provided by special education teachers, educational psychologists and therapists (MOE 2010).



**Figure 1.2 Provisions available for students with disabilities in the UAE**

This brief review shows how the educational field in the UAE has undergone significant changes, and how the Government has taken its first important foundation step of committing to reforms by setting the policy and establishing the guidelines for application. Figure 1.2 depicts the current situation with respect to the various provisions available for students with disabilities in the UAE; it also clarifies the scope of this study to be limited to primary government schools that are currently implementing the ‘School for All’ initiative.

## **1.2 Purpose and rationale**

‘School for All’ initiative aims at introducing a shift towards inclusive education in order to provide a better service for the disabled population. The purpose of this study is to unravel how the implemented provisions of the ‘School for All’ initiative have helped the case schools move towards achieving more inclusive cultures, through the development of inclusive policies and practices. The study will lead to much needed identification of positive system characteristics that should be supported and encouraged, while recognising areas of concern and gaps in practice that need to be addressed in future development plans at both school and Ministry levels.

The development of inclusive practices can only be achieved effectively if they are based on illustrating and critically exploring the experiences of previously included students in government schools, as well as the various stakeholders (Gaad 2011, p.80). It is important to track and monitor progress, and assess the results at each stage to best inform future planning. Porter (2008, p. 7) shares a similar view as he contends that inclusion is “not a one- time job, successful inclusion requires persistence and innovation to sustain the effort and to develop approaches to meet the new challenges that emerge over time”. Therefore, this study contributes to the, currently, limited body of knowledge available on special education in the UAE and aims at producing recommendations that can inform future policy and practice.

This study was prompted by an interest in exploring the newly introduced inclusive initiative, especially that this initiative constitutes the first practical measure that the UAE Ministry of Education (MOE) has committed to in accordance with the Federal Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

It was also influenced by a pre-inclusion research project (Gaad & Thabet 2009) that was conducted on UAE government primary schools which assessed the needs in order to achieve effective inclusion of disabled students in mainstream classrooms. The pre-inclusion study resulted in a detailed action-plan for the adoption of inclusive education which was delivered to top decision makers in the country. Interestingly, it was noted that the elements of the ‘School for All’ initiative that are investigated in this study namely: (1) staff training and development, (2) school structures including physical environment and students’ placement, (3) support services, (4) assistive technology and (5) community awareness, were all part of the action-plan recommended by the pre-inclusion need assessment study (Gaad & Thabet 2009, p. 169).

Therefore, this research study has been conducted at a timely period in the Ministry of Education’s history and programme for inclusive education, as they embark on their third year of primary schools’ transition into more inclusive practices. There is a genuine need to investigate and review the current situation with respect to the implemented provisions in order to illustrate how these provisions have facilitated the schools’ move towards inclusive education for disabled students with respect to schools’ policies, cultures and practices.

The guiding question of this research study is:

How are three Emirati government primary schools moving towards inclusive education, following the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative?

In order to answer the above question, the following research questions will be addressed:

- RQ1. What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government primary schools, as a result of the ‘School for All’ initiative?
- RQ2. What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative?

### **1.3 Significance**

The value of this study arises from the lack of any specific research or reliable data relevant to the implementation of the Federal Law concerning the rights of disabled people in the UAE (Alahbabi 2009); the intention therefore is that this study will contribute to bridging the obvious research gap in this area as only a few publications are on offer (Gaad 2011).

The study will also elicit much needed information about the views of the stakeholders following the two year implementation of the inclusive initiative ‘School for All’. No study to understand the nature of inclusive education in UAE schools would be complete without describing the issues related to inclusion from the stakeholders’ perspective. Teachers, parents and school administrators are pivotal to this study, not just because they play significant roles in the implementation process; they also constitute a rich source of qualitative information. Frederickson and Cline (2002) share this view, pointing out that the main stakeholders in the education system are the children, families and schools, and any successful school reform would have to consider their viewpoint and feedback. This view is further reinforced by Lipsky and Gartner (1996), Porter (2008) as well as Hornby and Witte (2010) identifying that constructive parent involvement as well as the support of staff and students were main factors in ensuring effective and successful restructuring programmes for inclusive education.

Although interest in educational research in the UAE has increased in the last decade, literature specifically about the education of individuals with disabilities in the UAE is still scarce. This research attempts to contribute to filling this void, and the outcomes will be instrumental in understanding current school practices in order to aid future planning regarding staff development, school structures, interaction with parents or guardians, as well as further school dimensions that may arise during the study. Additional research will also be instigated to expand the knowledge base and the services available for the education of disabled students in the UAE.

#### **1.4 Assumptions and limitations**

The ‘School for All’ initiative includes both disabled students as well as those who are gifted and talented in all UAE schools (private and government). However, the focus of this study is on the educational provisions provided only for disabled students that have been enrolled in mainstream classrooms in government primary schools. The initiative covers six of the seven Emirates namely: Dubai and the Northern Emirates (Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Um alQuwein, Ras AlKhaimah) and excludes the Capital Abu-Dhabi where education is governed by a different entity, namely, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC).

As for the categories of disabilities, the ‘School for All’ guidelines (MOE 2010, p. 19-21) have identified the categories that are eligible to receive special education programmes and related services. This study will examine these categories as part of understanding the scope of the initiative. It will also attempt to provide an understanding of the concept of disability in the UAE context (Gaad 2011; Hamid 2008), knowing that disability is a disputed concept internationally with no general consensus (Barnes 2004; Norwich 2010).

Obstacles and limitations encountered:

- The time frame of the research study was of a great concern as it required an extensive number of interviews and observations across multiple sites that were geographically split. There were invariably delays in scheduling school visits due to busy school calendars and unexpected events. Although a whole calendar year was set aside for data collection and analysis, continuous revision of plans and schedules was needed and extended to include two additional months in the new school year (2012/2013). The main reason for these changes was due to the fact that teachers were reluctant to schedule any visits during the last month of the school year (June 2012).
- As this is a multiple case study conducted using three sites of government primary schools, the results cannot provide a representation of the UAE as a whole and cannot be generalised to other school districts. However, the results of the study can offer evidence, for and against, the inclusive initiative and its influence on the learning and participation of students with similar needs. It can also be adapted by other schools looking to implement the initiative, without being formulaic or prescriptive.
- Inclusion in mainstream schools through new legislation and initiatives such as ‘School for All’ is a very recent move in the UAE; as a result, continuous changes and amendments to legislation as well as the introduction of new initiatives is possible. Currently, there is significant commitment and enthusiasm from the various offices concerned within Government to put the law into action in both the public and private sectors. However, the efforts made are not federally unified for the whole of the UAE and most of the implementations are still in pilot stages in different Emirates (Gaed 2011). There are also many legislative obstacles that need to be resolved, specifically around the dual responsibility of both the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the

Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) concerning the educational provisions for disabled students (Gaad 2011). The study will focus on the provisions provided during the current year (2011/2012) by the Special Education Department in the MOE, and their effects on the schools cultures, policies and practices.

- A number of methodological challenges will also be identified in chapter three.

### **1.5 Organisation of the chapters**

The research study is organised into five chapters. In chapter one, background review of the UAE education system was presented, in order to help clarify the purpose, rationale and significance of the study. The research questions were also identified together with assumptions made as well as obstacles and limitations encountered. In chapter two, the literature review provides an overview of the different areas of literature and the historical development of theories and models such as the social model of disability, the ‘Index for Inclusion’, as well as international debates around inclusive education and the UAE perspective of ‘Inclusion’. The aim of this was to provide the background for the proposed study of the inclusive initiative in Emirati government primary schools. Chapter three describes the approach and methodology employed in this study together with relevant ethical considerations and the design of the data collection methods. In addition, a brief account of the pilot study is presented as well as the role of the researcher, measures of trustworthiness and the encountered methodological challenges. In Chapter four, the findings of this research study start with a descriptive account of the ‘School for All’ initiative, followed by three sections reflecting the three case schools studied. Each school account addresses the two research questions respectively. Finally, chapter five presents the discussion, which follows a thematic framework where school provisions are analysed based on the indicators provided by the ‘Index for Inclusion’ with respect to the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and

practices. The chapter also includes reflections on employing the 'Index for Inclusion', recommendations for both Ministry and schools with respect to barriers as well as resources to inclusive education, personal gains and areas for further research, as well as final thoughts.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

This study aims at exploring the transition of government primary schools into inclusive education. To understand the landscape and context in which this has taken place, it is vital to review the literature that captures and records practices in the development of inclusive education, in order to recognise and acknowledge the various arguments and debates within the controversial concept of inclusive education. The literature review will include a discussion of the social model of disability (Oliver 1996) as a framework for presenting the various arguments and debates regarding inclusive education (Collins 2003; Frederickson & Cline 2002; Hornby 1999; Kinsella & Senior 2008; Lipsky & Gartner 1996; Norwich 2010; Warnock et al. 2010; Wright 2010). It will also argue the use of the ‘Index for Inclusion’ by Booth and Ainscow (2011) as a tool to guide the review of school provisions with respect to inclusive practices, policies and cultures. A UAE perspective of ‘Inclusion’ is subsequently explored according to the Federal Law, guidelines of the ‘School for All’ initiative and Emirati cultural values in order to delineate the terrain for later findings and discussion.

#### **2.1 Social Model of Disability**

The educational literature includes considerable debates between various models of disability that provide the argument for inclusion and special education. This section will, predominantly, focus on the debates most related to inclusive education in primary schools. Traditionally (until the early 1970s), disability has been seen through a medical lens; it was interpreted as a problem arising from a deficiency in the body. As a result, medical care and rehabilitation of people with disabilities were mostly prevalent in health care policies; this resulted in segregated settings in education. The medical model is underpinned by what

Oliver (1990, p. 2) articulates as “the personal tragedy theory of disability”, where disability is viewed as a tragedy. Consequently, disabled people are identified as victims of a tragic happening or circumstances, resulting in policies that aim to compensate their suffering (French & Swain 2004).

Early innovative interpretation of disability was promoted by grass roots organisations that were controlled and run by disabled people such as the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in the UK. The meaning of disability was explored and reconstructed by disabled pioneers such as Paul Hunt and Vic Finkelstein (Finkelstein 2004), based on social exclusion rather than bodily impairment.

... In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people.

Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments; by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society. (UPIAS 1976, cited in Finkelstein 2004, p. 14)

The innovative idea of distinguishing between impairment and disability according to the UPIAS definition was later developed by academics such as Mike Oliver (1990, 1996), who introduced this concept to the world in 1983 with a book entitled ‘Social Work with Disabled People’. He succeeded along with other academics in adding academic credibility to this interpretation (Finkelstein 2004) and, as a result, the social model of disability was developed and later adopted by the legislators in the UK. The model shifts the focus from the limitations caused by individuals’ impairments, as described by the medical model, to the barriers imposed by society and the environment which limit access to equal opportunities (Abberley 1999; Albert 2006; Barnes 1991; Barton 2008). The model views people with disability as an oppressed group, where the social environment is the cause of the oppression rather than the impairment; inaccessible built environments, lack of sign language provisions, lack of reading

materials in Braille, lack of various sorts of assistive technology and hostile attitudes to name but a few. Consequently, it proposes that resources should be used to remove barriers and hazards in the surrounding environment to allow the full and equal contribution and participation of people with disabilities in their communities. This has resulted in a shift in political agendas towards barrier removal rather than confining policies to medical care, rehabilitation, segregated special education and social services.

Shakespeare and Watson (2002) also argue that the model had a liberating effect on disabled people, where the replacement of the medical view of intrinsic bodily defect with the social oppression view has empowered people with disabilities to mobilise against the oppressing social circumstances and to work towards equal rights, instead of merely depending on services based on charity and goodwill. Morris (2001) shares a similar view by adding that the social model of disability provided the language that described the experiences of prejudice and discrimination, thus promoting what Crow (1996, p. 56) describes as the “individual self-worth, collective identity and political organisation”.

However, the social model of disability has been criticised by many scholars such as Shakespeare and Watson (2002) who oppose the strong versions of the model for disregarding the health care needs and the causes of impairment for disabled people. They even argue for a paradigm shift towards a model that takes into consideration the disabled person’s experience of bodily impairment that can match the twenty first century more effectively; similar to the shift that occurred in the last century from the medical to the social model. They continue that as much as disability should not be reduced to a medical condition, it should also not be confined to being only an outcome of social barriers. They propose that disability and impairment are not dichotomous; instead they are different aspects to one experience requiring interventions to be delivered on both levels: the individual (medical) level such as

impairment prevention and rehabilitation, as well as the collective (environmental socio-political) level of removing disabling barriers.

The social model has also been criticised for ignoring multiple identities and the identity choices of disabled people. As Morris (2001) posits, the model does not reconcile gender, sexuality and ethnicity alongside or within disability. As a result it runs the risk of ignoring social identity of disabled persons; being male or female, straight or gay or from various ethnicities.

Crow (1996) also criticised the model for not recognising the personal experience of pain and limitation resulting from the impairment of people with disabilities. For example, chronic pain and illness resulting from impairment will persist and limit an individual's participation even after barriers have been removed. Therefore, the argument is to extend the social model so that it recognises the disabling effect of impairment as well as the environment. Albert (2006) responded to this line of critique by explaining that proper health care and social services are basic human rights which should be provided for all citizens including those with disabilities (UN 2006; articles 25 & 26). He also added that the "social model critique of the medical model of disability is, at least in part, about rejecting the medicalisation of disabled people, not rejecting medical intervention" (Albert 2006, p. 5).

Oliver (2004) also responded to a number of criticisms; firstly, that the social model neither ignores the limitations imposed by impairment, nor disregards the personal experiences of disabled people, especially as the model was actually formulated based on the experiences of disabled activists in the 1970s. However, he warns against dwelling over the negative effects of impairment:

There is a danger in emphasising the personal at the expense of the political because most of the world still thinks of disability as an individual, intensely

personal problem. And many of those who once made a good living espousing this view would be only too glad to come out of the woodwork and say that they were right all along. (Oliver 1996, p. 5)

Oliver went further and confirmed that the model was not a social theory; it meant to be a practical tool that was developed to create a collective consciousness to drive a movement towards combating discrimination and social oppression.

As a result of the lengthy debates over the social model, many other models have been developed in the UK based on critiques such as those presented above. The Social Relational model was one such example, developed by Carol Thomas (2004); it presents a materialist approach to disability. It explores the concept of 'impairment effect' as the various restrictions to activity resulting from impairment do not necessarily lead to disability as these restrictions are not socially imposed. For example, a blind person has an impairment effect of not being able to read text. This impairment effect only becomes a disability in the absence of a Braille code alternative and the necessary Braille code training. Therefore, disability results only from restrictions to activity that are socially imposed and recognised as social oppression. This definition renders the ability to acknowledge the relation between impairment and disability, yet it also confirms the causality between social oppression and disability. Reindal (2008, p. 144) shares a similar view where he maintains that "impairment that results in disablement differs according to time and changing circumstances" of environment, attitudes and ideologies, where he introduces the concept of sufficient and necessary causes of impairment to explore the relationship between impairment and disability. Therefore, according to Thomas (2004, p. 581) disability can be defined as "a form of social oppression on a par with other forms of oppression in our society associated with gender, race, class, and sexuality". Finally, Thomas (2004) concludes that the Social Relational Model

aimed at achieving clarity and consistency of the conceptualisation of disability to support and inform future academic research in disability studies, but in no way undermines the social advances achieved by oppressed groups adopting the social model of disability.

The affirmation model developed by French and Swain (2004) also builds on the strength of the social model of disability that seeks a society without structural, environmental and attitudinal barriers; it attempts to redefine the link between impairment and disability. The model reinforces the necessity of affirming an impaired positive identity and rejects assumptions of personal tragedy and abnormality as portrayed in the tragic view of disability and impairment. With an impaired body a person can live a full life made up of both positive and negative experiences. The model highlights the value of life with impairment and calls for disabled people to affirm their positive identity through visual arts, cabaret and song through developing the Disability Arts Movement. However, affirming the positive identity of disability leads to an understanding that it is good to be disabled. This understanding may in turn reinforce the distinction between able-bodied and disabled, hence reverting to the medical view of disabled due to impairment.

In North America, a social approach to defining disability that takes into account the disabling environment has also been developed by activists and scholars where people with disabilities are defined as a minority group within the tradition of US political thought. The resulting legislation such as the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) of 2002 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004, require schools to teach students with disabilities in a Least Restrictive Environment; the latter reflects a similar concept to the British barrier removal, but both concepts do not go as far as the British model in describing disability to be a result of social oppression.

Moreover, a social disability perspective is also apparent in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006), where people with disabilities are viewed as an ‘untapped resource’ and hence should be helped to reach their potential through education, employment and participation in all aspects of life. Barriers to their contribution such as prejudice and stereotyping, inflexible organisational procedures and practices, inaccessible buildings, transport and information, as well as the lack of suitable educational and training opportunities need to be overcome to allow for their effective contribution and participation in society.

In conclusion it can again be asserted that it is not the impairment that limits the inclusion of people with disabilities but socially constructed barriers, as proposed by the British social model of disability. Although the model has been criticised, mainly for confining the conceptualisation of disability to social barriers, many additions and extensions were suggested such as the models presented above; it is still central to disability debates and inclusive practices. This is illustrated by Terzi (2004, p. 141) in her critical review of the model where she argues that “... despite its internal limits, the social model of disability nevertheless acts as a powerful and important corrective to our understanding of disability, to simplistic views on the experience of disability and, more importantly, to the oppressive nature of some social arrangements”. This rationale provides a strong argument for utilising the social model of disability in investigating inclusive education in the UAE.

To date, the medical view of disability is prevalent in the UAE, where people with disabilities are still viewed as victims to a disability tragedy, who need individualised rehabilitation, segregated settings and therapeutic intervention. Cultural beliefs with respect to disability still revolve around the need to segregate students with disabilities in order to give them more specialised services, as a result children with disabilities are more likely to be stereotyped and

stigmatised (Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Arif & Gaad 2008; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad 2004; Gaad 2011; Gaad & Khan 2007).

The UAE has recently initiated the first Federal Law that calls for equal rights in education, health and employment as well as measurements to promote the implementation of these rights; the ‘School for All’ initiative (which is the focus of this study), is one step towards achieving this. On an international level the UAE has signed, and ratified, the convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). However, the call for these rights should not be confined to just a legal obligation. There is also a moral, religious and business case for these rights to be promoted and fought for by disability organisations that should become part of civil society (Alshamsi 2010). The social model of disability provides a most suitable tool to establish such a movement that is needed to combat all forms of discrimination and to divert all efforts towards removing the barriers in a disabling society rather than just alleviating the suffering of an impaired individual. The social model also provides the terrain to develop disability debates that should result in a UAE context-related definition of disability. As the framework of this research study is rooted in a discourse of human rights, social justice and equity, the social model of disability provides the most suitable basis for investigating inclusive education in government primary schools in the UAE.

## **2.2 Debating Inclusive Education**

The move towards inclusive education is part of the change brought about by the social model of disability (Oliver 1990). Inclusion of children with disabilities in their local community schools and accepting them as productive members in society is a universal struggle. Wright (2010, p. 153) maintains that “inclusive education is now established as part of a global agenda and as such national governments, and their agencies, strive to produce and implement policies to promote inclusion”.



Educating children with disabilities goes back to the mid 1800's where children in England, according to Frederickson and Cline (2002, p. 66), were segregated into special schools. Disability was looked at as a defect (medical model) and children with impairments were looked at as 'different' and hence they needed a different system for education. This led to the expansion of special schools and training centres in the early twentieth century, and some severe disabilities were even considered not fit for education. In 1948 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guaranteed for all children the right to free as well as compulsory elementary education, was central to the move towards education for all. Frederickson and Cline (2002) explain that through this declaration, people with disabilities were consequently viewed to have the right to access the same opportunities and options as other members of society. This was followed by many other declarations such as The United Nations Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the pivotal UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) and more recently the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (UN 2006); all of which endorse inclusion as the effective strategy to address diversity and the needs of all students based on human rights grounds as well as social, educational and economic justifications (UNESCO 2009, p. 9; Wright 2010, p. 154). The Salamanca Statement & Framework for Action on Special Needs Education states that:

...schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. ...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. (UNESCO 2005, p. 14)

Inclusive education is also clearly emphasised in the CRPD; in Article 24 it urges state parties to "ensure an inclusive education system at all levels" where:

Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability. (UN 2006, p. 24)

Although the UN legal instruments are not legally binding, they set an international standard and provide guidance for countries to follow. Also, this international movement towards recognising the rights of persons with disabilities and inclusive education has been reflected by policies and legislation in many countries around the world.

In Britain, the Education for Handicapped Children Act 1970 endorsed the policy that all children including those with severe handicaps have the right to education (under the auspice of the Department for Education rather than Health or Social Care). The Warnock Report of (1978) and the subsequent Education Act (1981) abolishing disability categories and introducing the term ‘special educational needs’ had a positive effect of setting the foundations for international action. In 2010 a change in equality legislation took place in the UK, where anti-discrimination laws were replaced by a single act (Equality Act 2010) to simplify the law and extend protection in certain areas. The law covers nine protected characteristics namely: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage, pregnancy, race and religion as well as sexual orientation. As for the disabled, the law is aligned with the principles of the social relational model of disability, where a person is considered disabled if a physical or mental impairment has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities (Department for Education 2012). It should be noted that this definition recognises the ‘impairment effect’ as defined above by Thomas (2004), thus identifying the interplay between impairment and disability. Consequently, schools are expected to provide reasonable adjustments to environments to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people as per previous legislation. However, the Equality Act goes a step further

(beyond previous legislation) by “extending the reasonable adjustment duty to require schools to also provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils” (Department for Education 2012). This duty was introduced in September 2012 in order to stress the need to remove barriers to participation, which emphasises the understanding presented by the ‘Social Model’ of disability.

Similarly in the USA, Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975 established the ‘zero reject principle’ that mandates entitlement to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) with a declared emphasis on the Least Restrictive Environment (Collins 2003). It was followed by US Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its 1997 and 2004 amendments that calls for Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all students to provide them with the opportunities for further education, employment and independent living.

As a result, the effectiveness of two separate systems, namely mainstream and special, has been challenged in recent years from various points of view, including the human rights movement, educational research, cost effectiveness and the users of the special educational system (Barnes 1991; Barton 2008; Kinsella & Senior 2008; Lipsky & Gartner 1996; Stainback & Stainback 1992) causing the movement for inclusion to gain greater momentum around the world. Consequently, each year more and more children who used to be confined to special schools or training centres are joining local schools, and being gradually accepted as valuable members of their local communities.

Inclusion is a contested concept and it has no universally agreed definition. Booth and Ainscow (2011) define it as a never ending process aiming at putting inclusive values into action, reducing barriers and mobilising resources. While the US National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion defines inclusion as provisions and services provided

for children with disabilities in neighbourhood mainstream schools and age-appropriate classrooms. UNESCO views inclusion as “a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as a problem, but as opportunities for enriching learning”. Thomas and Loxley (2007, p. 124) argue that “inclusion is about comprehensive education, equality and collective belonging”, and not merely serving children with special needs in mainstream classrooms. Similarly Booth and Ainscow (2011, p. 20) maintain that increasing inclusion involves “combating the exclusionary pressures that impede participation”. They also replaced the concept of ‘special educational needs and provisions’ with removing barriers and providing resources to improve learning and increase participation for all children. In considering the numerous views available in the literature, inclusion is trying to achieve a situation where the diverse needs of students are possibly met in a classroom within the mainstream neighbourhood school, through implementing the required policies, placements, practices and processes.

Although laws and legislation around the world strongly support the implementation of inclusion, debates around its conceptualisation and effectiveness, as the generally adopted educational strategy, are still taking place in educational circles (Collins 2003; Hornby 1999; Norwich 2010; Warnock et al. 2010). As a result there is a noticeable gap between policy and practice. Both opponents and proponents of inclusion agree on its basic notions of equity and justice, yet each has their own argument around its feasibility, necessity and practicality. Supporters of inclusion argue that there is enough research and practical evidence to justify that inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms is the fair, ethical and most effective way of educating both children with, and without disabilities (Lipsky & Gartner 1996; Stainback & Stainback 1985; Stainback & Stainback 1992; Thomas 1997). On the other hand, and with a similar weight of evidence, especially related to the effectiveness of

inclusive education, opponents argue that although the moral basis for inclusion is strong the performance of students lagged behind and suffered as a result (Collins 2003; Warnock et al. 2010).

Another debate takes place within proponents of inclusion, on whether to implement full inclusion or to provide inclusive services along a continuum (Forlin 2004; Forlin et al. 1996; Kauffman et al. 2005; Zigmond 2003). The question is whether full inclusion is actually feasible, and even whether mainstream is the best place especially for children with compounded disabilities and needs. Forlin(2001) questions whether it is economically possible to implement full inclusion, while teachers are not sufficiently prepared and not willing to accept the responsibility of creating inclusive environments? Kauffman et al. (2005) as well as Zigmond(2003) argue that appropriately targeted instructions in homogeneous groups is a more compelling social right for students with disabilities than full inclusion. However, they also recognise the shortcomings in special education in bringing about best strategies and techniques.

Cipani (1995) suggests that inclusive education does not necessarily produce desirable results unless it is backed up by a fundamental change to the school structures. This view is shared by teachers, who argue that the present rigid standards of grade level expectations, over-prescriptive curriculum and league tables carried out in most school systems makes inclusive practices of curriculum modifications and differentiated instructions very difficult (Stainback & Stainback 1985; Thomas & Loxley 2007, p. 127). Therefore, teachers call for a fundamental restructuring of the schooling system to support teachers in adapting instructions to the wider spectrum of abilities. Accordingly, Stainback and Stainback (1992) provide some implementation considerations for the success of inclusive education:

1. A team approach to solving problems
2. Peer involvement where all students share their learning experiences
3. Educationally challenging students by maintaining high expectations from all students, including the ones with disabilities
4. Maintain life function skills as extra-curricular activities to improve the learning experiences for students with disabilities.

Carrington (1999, p. 258) posits that inclusive education can be successful only if creating inclusive schools is not merely about rendering services to students with disabilities; it should be about establishing a ‘culture of difference’ within schools, where the notion of diversity is emphasised and differences celebrated. The role of a school cultures in developing and sustaining school reform has also been emphasised by Booth and Ainscow (2011) in the ‘Index for Inclusion’. This was developed in the UK to provide an approach for developing inclusive education through a systematic school review and development on three dimensions: school cultures, policies and practices. This tool is used in this study to support the exploration of inclusive services in primary schools in the UAE; a brief investigation of the Index is provided in the next section.

### **2.3 Index for Inclusion**

The Index for Inclusion was first published in 2000 by the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE) in Bristol (UK) based on collaborative work including teachers, parents, governors, researchers and representatives of disability groups. The index went through piloting and action research in UK schools before it was formally recognised and adopted by the government, where a free copy of the first edition was provided to all primary, secondary, special schools and local education authorities in England. Since then, the Index went through a number of iterations; the modifications and adaptations were mainly based on feedback and

comments regarding its use as well as observations by practitioners and researchers (Booth & Ainscow 2011). A second edition in 2002 was followed by adapted editions in 2004 and 2006 respectively for early years and child-care settings (Booth et al. 2006).

Not only has the Index been utilised in the UK context (where it was originally intended), it has also been translated in over 30 languages, including Arabic, and has been employed in many school systems around the world including Europe, Australia, Hong Kong (Carrington & Robinson 2004; Corbett 2001; Forlin 2004; Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau 2004; Nes 2009) and countries of the south such as India, South Africa and Brazil, as well as the Middle East (Engelbrecht et al. 2006; Williams 2003). Consequently, the third edition of the Index was published in 2011, in response to the numerous suggestions based on the translation and adaptation of the previous editions for many countries around the world (Booth & Ainscow 2011). The current edition revolves around two main concepts: (1) putting inclusive values into action and drawing together various processes such as environmental sustainability, non-violence, health promotion and global citizenship into a single coherent school plan, (2) identifying and removing barriers to learning and participation through mobilising resources. In addition, an innovative extension has been included with a set of indicators that could assist schools to develop curricula for all.

The Index adopts a broad view of inclusion, which is not limited to developing educational services for disabled students within mainstream settings. According to Booth and Ainscow (2011), inclusion is about minimising all the barriers to learning and participation that exist in any of the school dimensions; culture, policy, and practice for all students including the ones with disabilities. Barriers such as buildings and physical arrangement, school organisation, relationships amongst children and adults, attitudes of teachers and approaches to teaching and learning need to be addressed as part of a unified school development plan.

The 'Index' is divided into a set of indicators that represents suggested ways for developing each school dimension. For each indicator, a set of questions are attached which define the meaning of the indicator and the challenges that users are encouraged to investigate (see Appendix 9). The authors acknowledge that the 'Index' could be criticised for being too extensive and overwhelming for practical implementation, as confirmed by feedback from studies about the use of the Index in England (Norwich & Nash 2011). However, Booth and Ainscow (2011) suggest that the Index should be used as a comprehensive guide to assist educationalists to work together in developing plans that are most convenient, appropriate, and applicable to their circumstances. The Index describes a comprehensive development planning cycle to implement the material provided, which consists of five phases: (1) initiating the Index process; (2) finding out about the school; (3) producing an inclusive development plan; (4) implementing developments; (5) reviewing the Index process. Such a cyclical process reflects the definition of inclusion as a "never ending process" (Booth & Ainscow 2011, p. 20). However, the authors confirm the flexibility in employing the material in a gradual manner, perhaps focusing on one school aspect at a time, as long as the aim is "sustained inclusive development, not the completion of a project" as stated by Booth and Ainscow (2011, p. 50).

The Index has been utilised around the world in a variety of ways. In Queensland (Australia), the Index was incorporated in the implementation of the policy that guides the curriculum in Queensland's state schools (P-12 Curriculum Framework). Carrington and Robinson (2004) and Duke (2009) maintained that it was possible to connect the purposes of the Index with the outcomes of the project. The Index effectively enabled "participants to reflect upon the expectations they have for their students and how these expectations impact on their planning, teaching and assessment practices" (Duke 2009, p. 4). In Hong Kong too (Hong Kong



Education and Manpower Bureau 2004), the Index was adapted to the local context; through reorganising the indicators of the three school dimensions into the four domains of Hong Kong Quality Assurance Framework of School Education, they were able to highlight how the indicators could provide suggestions and ideas to update existing education development plans in a foreign context.

As for countries of the South, the Index served them well in creating awareness about the wider definition of inclusive education; identifying and removing barriers to learning and participation to all learners and teachers, not just the disabled (Booth & Black-Hawkins 2001; Engelbrecht et al. 2006). Using the indicators together with the attached questions also helped to create a wider understanding of the policies, cultures and practices in the schools which provided language and ideas for debate among all stakeholders, including the children. However, it also raised several challenges; in South Africa, although the Index suited the post-apartheid emphasis on anti-discrimination and developing increased participation, it contributed to initiative overload where the schools were already burdened with all sorts of initiatives to do with raising academic standards, promoting health, reforming curriculum, promoting safety, combating violence and racism. Although in theory the Index should provide the tools to integrate all these initiatives, the reality, according to Booth and Black-Hawkins (2001), is that it should be introduced gradually to allow for acceptance and successful integration by over-worked teachers. Another challenge concerned translation, where the Index was perceived as ‘too English’, not only linguistically, but also on issues and emphasis of the indicators (Booth & Black-Hawkins 2001, p. 31). For countries in the South where, for example, the emphasis on resources that were beyond the reach of stakeholders could be alienating, translation should take into consideration the linguistics, as well as the cultural nuances, values, and economic situation of the region.

A final example, from the Middle East illustrates how the ‘Save the Children Organisation’ had undergone projects to implement education reform in countries such as Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Palestine (Occupied Territories) using the material from the Index. The Arabic language Index was developed based on the first edition of the Index with adaptations based on a research project by UNESCO ‘Developing an Index for the South’ as well as other research conducted in the Arab region (Williams 2003). Piloting the Index in the region resulted in significant changes in the dynamics of the schools where it disrupted the status quo in the classrooms and introduced the concept of inclusion, although in a limited form of inclusion for children with disabilities only. Children and parents were given the opportunity to participate in coordinating committees, resulting in challenging beliefs, attitudes and educational approaches as well as identifying barriers to participation and learning. However, the main challenge continues to be the apparent complexity of the material which can be intimidating for practitioners. A reflection of this challenge was highlighted in the Middle East region regarding the acceptance of the Index, where one observer maintained that “teachers are not used to reading, books or other documents, and the supposition that the Index will automatically be taken up is a mistake” (Williams 2003, p. 5).

In conclusion, it is apparent that the main advantage of the Index is its flexibility which allows the adaptation of its material to the contexts of various languages, cultures and educational standards. The authors of the Index themselves encourage users to adapt and create their own ways of using the materials to achieve maximum benefits. This provided an opportunity for this research study to utilise the indicators and the associated questions as guidelines (adapted to UAE context) in investigating the current practices in the three Emirati primary schools as they were implementing the new inclusive standards of ‘School for All’. The material of the Index with respect to inclusive values, dimensions and related indicators

expanded and enhanced my understanding of inclusion, and helped in setting the framework for the study which guided the formulation of the interviews' questions and the observations' indicators at one stage, and consequently guided the data analysis process and setting future recommendations.

#### **2.4 UAE and inclusion: history and current issues**

In the UAE, a social approach to defining the rights of people with disabilities is also evident in the articles of the Federal Law (29/2006) that governs the rights of people with disabilities with respect to health, education and employment. Articles 12, 13, 14 and 15 concern education, and state that equal opportunities in all educational institutions for people with disabilities are guaranteed with the appropriate modifications, adaptations, teaching strategies and techniques. Article 12 states that “ disabilities do not constitute intrinsically an obstacle hindering from applying to enrol, join or enter any educational institution whether governmental or private” (MSA 2006, p. 7) which implies a social understanding of disability. The law also states that measures will be provided, as needed, to qualify the educational institution environment for providing effective access to people with disabilities. This means that the law recognises the social barriers resulting from environmental factors and is aiming to commit the necessary resources to modify and adapt the environment to allow for the full participation and contribution of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, the law can also be criticised for the lack of adequate implementation measures and enforcement mechanisms, so that the various adaptations and modifications can be implemented to remove barriers to learning and participation.

This social perspective of disability, where the disability is viewed as arising from the barriers in the environment rather than being medically intrinsic to the individual is, generally, not shared by the UAE community. Cultural beliefs still indicate that a child with disability is

more likely to be stereotyped and stigmatised (Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Arif & Gaad 2008; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad 2004; Gaad 2011; Gaad & Khan 2007). An example of this confused understanding of disability is documented by Arif and Gaad (2008) during their study of the special needs education in the UAE, where insensitive language, such as ‘retarded’ or ‘Mongols’, was noted to be quite commonly used amongst staff observed in government schools and was also documented in reports sent to parents and kept on a child’s record for life. The medical view of disability is also apparent in the use of language in the media, where negative words such as ‘suffering’, ‘disadvantaged’, ‘problem’, ‘retarded’ etc. were equally very common, even in official statements (Gulf News 2008, Bladd 2010). Therefore, issues of disabilities from the society perspective are still recognised as being charity-based rather than rights-based (Alshamsi 2010, Gaad 2011).

In the UAE there is also confusion in terminology when referring to disabled people. When the Federal Law was enacted in 2006, the term ‘individuals with special needs’ was utilised, however, this was later rectified by Law 14/2009 stating in Article 1 that the phrase ‘persons with special needs’ wherever it occurs shall be removed from the text of law No. 29 and shall be replaced with the ‘disabled’, ‘disabled individuals’ and ‘disability’. This change was called for by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) to conform to International standards as the UAE was preparing to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Gaad 2011, p. 74). Disabled activists also demanded this change, they realised the inaccuracy and vagueness in the term ‘special needs’, as it included the larger population of all people with medical conditions that may require special care such as the aged and the terminally ill, rather than being specific to people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities. The move to use more specific terminology in the law was aimed at protecting the rights of the disabled to

allow more access to limited resources thereby removing barriers to their inclusion in society (Gaad 2011).

Although the terminology has been changed in the law, inconsistencies still exist within the media, and even some official statements still use the term 'special needs' rather than 'disability'. This is perhaps caused by the fact that culturally the term 'disabled' is considered to be demeaning, discriminating and linked to negative connotations, while 'special needs' is considered less discriminatory. This was also expressed by some advocates and parents during the heated debate over the proposed change between members of the Federal National Council (FNC) prior to enacting the new law (14/2009) that adopted the new terminology (Hamid 2008).

This confusion in terminology was inevitably reflected in the 'School for All' general guidelines issue (MOE 2010) that was published to set rules and regulations to support the MOE inclusive initiative. In the guidelines, the three terms 'disabled', 'individual with disability' and 'individual with special need' are used interchangeably throughout the book, except in the introduction (MOE 2010, p.13) where special needs is defined to include two categories: the students with disabilities and the students who are gifted and talented. This confusion in terminology resulted from uncertainty about the conceptualisation of disability in the UAE, which oscillates between the medical view and the social view. For example, a medical view is obvious in the guidelines (MOE 2010, p. 21), where an exclusionary clause is clearly stated with respect to types of disabilities that will be provided with inclusive services. The exclusionary clause states that inclusive services in the schools will not include disabilities resulting from (1) environmental factors, (2) cultural factors, (3) economic disadvantage, or (4) repeated academic failure. However, a social view of disability based on the removal of barriers to facilitate learning and participation could be perceived in the

guidelines as it asserts adherence to an inclusive philosophy of educating all children in the least restrictive environment (MOE 2010, p. 14).

The guidelines also contradict the terminology in the Federal Law 14/2009 which called for the use of the term 'disabled' by arguing in the consideration section (MOE 2010, p. 68) that respectful behaviour to disabled people entails placing the person before the disability. This means that one should say 'a person with disability' rather than 'disabled'. Not only does this contradict the terminology of the law, it also reflects the confusion with respect to underpinning the guidelines. According to the British social model of disability, using the phrase 'a person with disability' reflects a medical underpinning as it conceptualises the disability as an intrinsic trait to that person. Alternatively, the phrase 'disabled person' has a social underpinning because it indicates that the person is disabled by the environment, however, the UN Convention guidance advocates the use of 'persons with disabilities'.

The issue here is not which term to use, as much as problems that arise from the lack of consistency in using the terms which reflect confusion or lack of theoretical understanding of the concept of disability and inclusive education. It is important to have a clear understanding and definition of disability because it affects many issues: (1) the interaction between disabled and non-disabled individuals, (2) it reveals social attitude which determines future laws and resulting actions and measurements.

The UAE is striving towards achieving academic and social inclusion of disabled students. Accordingly the UAE Federal Law No. 29/2006 on the Rights of Disabled People and the resulting 'School for All' initiative supports the gradual transition towards the inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. It does not call for the immediate closure of rehabilitation centres, special classes or special education practices such as the pull out system into resource rooms; on the contrary it calls for equal chances in all educational

institutions or any specialised educational unit (MSA 2006, article 15). This is also reflected in the understanding of inclusion stated in the guidelines and regulations of the ‘School for All’ initiative:

The Ministry of Education of the United Arab Emirates supports the national and international educational philosophy of inclusion, which means that being educated in regular education classrooms with peers in their age range, in their neighbourhood schools with necessary supports is the optimal environment to meet the educational, social, emotional and vocational needs of individuals with special needs. (MOE 2010, p. 7)

The guidelines and regulations define six different settings for the education of children with disabilities and special needs along a continuum; from the least to most restrictive learning environment depending on the child’s needs (see Figure 4.1) following an assessment carried out by a school support team:

1. Inclusion in Regular Education Classroom with Community-Based Support.
2. Inclusion in Regular Education Classroom with Classroom-Based Support.
3. Inclusion in Regular Education Classroom with School-Based Support.
4. Inclusion in Regular Education Classroom with Resource Room Support.
5. Basic Special Education Classroom
6. Community-Based Education Programs (Rehabilitation centres/ Special Schools)

Although such a continuum is holding up progress and is giving many practitioners a way out to keep the status quo of segregated settings, it may also be a wise move on the part of the UAE Government considering the lack of experienced human resources (teachers and therapists), as well as the negative cultural understanding of disability, which still requires

large scale and intensive awareness campaigns to change (Anati, 2012; Gaad & Khan 2007; Gaad & Thabet 2009).

The movement towards inclusive education in the UAE is evolving within a social model of disability framework, where the provisions introduced within the ‘School for All’ initiative are based mainly on the removal of barriers to participation and learning of students with disabilities. However, the general guidelines that support the initiative do not provide a special curriculum concerning disabled students; instead the guidelines only contain general considerations regarding academic and behavioural issues with respect to various types of disabilities. But these considerations do not specify who can modify the curriculum, and to what extent (MOE 2010, p.71). Arif and Gaad (2008, p.166) maintain that schools in the UAE are using what is referred to as a ‘para-curriculum’ which is based on deleting challenging lessons and studying fewer chapters. They also found that “there was a misalignment in the education system” with respect to curriculum development, curriculum delivery and curriculum assessment; concluding that there is a need for developing new curriculum to support the effective inclusion of disabled students in mainstream schools.

In conclusion, the current system is still fairly new and is in the ‘work in progress’ stage. The challenges that arise in the UAE are what this study explores; these fall mainly in the gap between policy and guidelines on the one hand and attitudes, understanding and practice of stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students and parents) on the other.



## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

A range of research approaches are currently available on disability research due to the historical progress of special educational research; from medical traditions to a variety of disciplines such as educational psychology, sociology and anthropology (Odom et al. 2005, p. 140) see also Brown (2001, p. 154). Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have contributed to the body of knowledge in special education and inclusive education. This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to investigate inclusive education in Emirati government primary schools. A constructivist interpretive paradigm (Creswell 2009, p. 8; Mertens 1998, p. 11) provides the basis for the study, where the aim is to construct the reality (or realities) about the implementation of the educational provisions for students with disabilities, through interpretations provided by the main stakeholders: teachers, students, parents and administrators.

A qualitative approach has been designed to provide a rich, contextualised picture of the phenomenon under study (Mertens & McLaughlin 2004), which makes it the most suitable approach for studying the recent implementation of the inclusive initiative in Emirati primary schools. This is in sharp contrast to a quantitative, experimental and survey research approach which would provide information through reliance on statistical analysis, but it would not provide the invaluable and required tools, such as interviews and observations, to explore the realities of the implementation process from the stakeholders' perspectives. This view is well explained by Creswell (2009, p. 182) where he maintains that "...qualitative research occurs in a natural environment which allows the researcher to 'get a feel' for the educational setting". Similarly, Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) argue that a qualitative approach allows for direct interaction through field work with teachers, children, parents and administrators; thus

obtaining detailed, in depth information needed to investigate the reality of the inclusive system.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, using a multiple case study methodology that seeks to interpret how the various participants (administrators, teachers, parents and students with disabilities) of three Emirati primary schools understand and practice the implementation of the new inclusive provisions of the 'School for All' initiative, each from their own perspective. The researcher identified with the ontological belief that the reality of the inclusive practices is complex, varied and constantly changing, relative to the school context and the involved social actors, students, teachers, administrators and parents (Glesne 2006, p. 6). This position is far from 'objectivism', where the existence of a social phenomenon is independent of the social actors Bryman (2001, p. 16). Therefore, the aim must be to construct the realities of the inclusive education practices through observing and documenting the process of teaching and learning as well as tracing the interaction between students and teachers from one side, and students with disabilities and their peers from the other. In addition, to document the views of other stakeholders such as administrators, principals and parents each from their own perspective and understanding, while the new 'School for All' standards were being implemented.

To come to know these realities, an interpretive approach rather than a positivist approach was utilised, stemming from the fact that the study aimed to explore, and consequently provide, a naturalistic description of the various aspects of the educational provisions provided by the new initiative (Stake 1995). Therefore, the study pursued a subjectivist exploration of the administrators' vision and goals, as well as the teachers' practices, teaching styles, materials used, class settings and all curricular and evaluative procedures concerning students with disabilities. Methods utilised were semi-structured interviews, participatory and

non-participatory observations as well as analysis of documents and artefacts related to the context of the three schools. Both Creswell (2009, p. 8) and Glesne (2006, p.4) support this rationale where they assert that, to make their interpretations, qualitative researchers need to gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants and subjective meanings of their experiences.

Finally, the objective of this study was not to generalise to a population of UAE schools, but to explore the phenomenon of the inclusive initiative in the context of three Emirati schools, which can then allow policy makers and practitioners to judge the relevance of the resulting evidence to their own individual context and make their decisions accordingly. This makes the choice of an interpretive approach most suitable for this study (Creswell 2008, p. 213).

### **3.1 Research Design**

The project used multiple instrumental case study strategy, since a case study approach allows for the investigation of real-life events in the school's daily program, with respect to classroom activities, teaching styles, placements and evaluation. A case study approach enabled the researcher to gain some insight into the implementation process through studying the particular cases (Stake 1995, p. 3). Ghesquie`re et al. (2004, p. 172) reinforces this, and explains that qualitative case studies "had enormous success in educational research because it allows researchers to unravel the complex school and classroom realities". Merriam (1988) also contends that a qualitative case study approach provides the opportunity to gain a deeper and richer appreciation for the phenomenon under study. In this research study, utilising the qualitative case study approach offered the ability to interact with the participants in the field, while carrying out their daily practices inside and outside the classrooms, resulting in not only

a greater understanding of the implementation of the inclusive initiative under study, but invaluable exposure to the realities of inclusive education.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Silverman (2005) identify different types of case studies, depending on the number of cases and the purpose of the study. They go on to explain that an instrumental case study approach is used when “... a case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue” (Silverman 2005, p. 127), where the particular case is studied in detail, but the real emphasis is to facilitate the understanding of a certain issue or phenomenon. In this study the phenomenon is the implementation of the inclusive practices resulting from the ‘School for All’ initiative. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 445) also explain that a multiple case study, which is sometimes called a collective case study, is used when “... a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition”. In this study, three Emirati primary schools that have been implementing the inclusive practices for two to three years were studied as three separate cases. They do not, in any way, provide a representation of the UAE; rather the aim is to provide balance, variety and an opportunity to learn (Stake 1995, p. 6). For example, the selection of the cases has considered carefully the range and variety in terms of gender and location (more details in site selection).

The rationale for using the case study approach for this project is established using Yin’s definition as clarified in the table below. According to Yin (2009, p. 18), a case study is “an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis”. The relevance of Yin’s three dimensions to the research methodology applied is explained in the following table:

<b>Case study approach</b>	<b>Yin (2009, p.18) definition</b>	<b>Application to the study</b>
<b>Logic of design</b>	“investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context”	Phenomenon under study is contemporary, being the recent implementation of educational provisions in the real-life context of three government primary schools in the UAE
<b>Data collection techniques</b>	“relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion”	Data was collected from participants on three different levels, policy (Ministry), implementation (principals, teachers) and the receiving end (students, parents). The study also relayed upon multiple methods of data collection including semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and participant-observations. The multiplicity of participants and methods allowed for triangulation of collected data.
<b>Data analysis</b>	“benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis”	Design of data collection instruments and data analysis was guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study. Data was analysed using content thematic analysis.

**Table 3.1 Rationale for case study approach using Yin (2009)**

Multiple participants, as identified in the above table, were selected to allow a holistic understanding of the system. Observations yielded useful data as they were carried out in non-artificial, ‘real-life’ settings (classrooms, playtime, individualised support sessions and training workshops). It helped confirm whether stakeholders actually implemented the educational provisions in question as they maintained in the interviews; in other words,

triangulating resulting accounts of interviews and observations. Resulting data was later collectively analysed using content thematic analysis, through identifying dominant emerging themes (Stake 2006). Each school was investigated as a “context-situated case study and then a cross-case analysis [is] carried out to look for patterns across cases” (Glesne 2006, p. 13).

### **3.2 Sites Selection**

Selection of the sites and access to schools and participants were facilitated by the head of the Special Education Department in MOE (see Appendix 3). The relationship with the Special Education Department has been established based on previous research projects carried out with the department, mainly related to education of students with disabilities in various settings in the UAE. The department also has a vested interest in evaluating the current initiative; accordingly, an executive report based on this research study will be made available to the head of Special Education Department in MOE, particularly as the ultimate goal of the study is to provide recommendations that can inform future practice and policy.

The process for selecting schools was carried out after a one hour interview with the head of the Special Education Department, where the aims and objectives of the research were clarified and a clear understanding of the development of the initiative in the UAE was established. The sites selected were government primary schools that had been implementing the inclusive initiative for two to three years. It should be noted that the implementation process of the initiative was gradual; the Special Education Department piloted the new standards and services in 10 primary and kindergarten schools at the beginning of the 2008/2009 school year, followed by 18 schools in 2009/2010. These 28 schools constituted the available pool for the research study. Following the formal announcement of the general rules for the ‘School for All’ initiative in 2010, the number of schools adopting the initiative

increased rapidly to reach 114 schools at the beginning of 2012 in all cycles (Primary, middle and secondary). The schools are distributed across the whole of the Emirates except the capital (Abu Dhabi) as education in Abu Dhabi is not governed by the Ministry of Education (MOE); instead it is governed by a special office called Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), which has separate programmes and provisions for special education and is out of the scope of this study.

The schools were selected using purposive sampling, allowing the researcher to choose the sites that best illustrate the educational provisions under study, following Silverman (2005, p. 129) who contends that purposive sampling facilitates addressing the problem of ‘representativeness’ of the case. This was realised by selecting the schools that constitute information-rich cases, where the phenomenon of inclusive practices was significant, and the choice was not mainly based on convenience and accessibility (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). The Head of Special Education provided demographic information about the 28 schools, especially with respect to number of students with disabilities, types of disabilities and the provisions provided in each school (see Appendix 10 for sites and information about participants). Taking into account the study purpose and research questions, the following criteria were employed:

- Schools with the larger number of students with disabilities, and wider variety of categories of disabilities were chosen to aid in providing a holistic description of the implementation of the educational provisions for students with different types of disabilities.
- Schools with a minimum of five students with disabilities in at least two grade levels, not including grade one were selected. Grade one students would not have spent enough time in an inclusive environment to reflect an information-rich setting.

- The schools chosen were to have accepted students with learning difficulties prior to the initiative, using either special classrooms, resource rooms or preferably both. This criterion was employed to allow for the assessment of the transition from integration to inclusion in mainstream classrooms.
- Schools were also chosen based on teachers' experience (Berliner 1986) and the fact that they have attended the training provided by the 'School for All' initiative. Subject teachers had a minimum of two years in teaching students with disabilities (since the initiative commencement), while special education teachers were more experienced (5 to 14 years). All the teachers have been in the schools since the adoption of the new standards for inclusive education and they have all attended the 20 hour training portfolio provided by the Department of Special Education. This training is one of the main services provided by the 'School for All' initiative, therefore this criterion was followed, as the study is investigating the outcomes of the particular initiative that includes teachers' training.
- The final choice of schools (including the pilot school) reflected variety in the types of disabilities, ages of selected children, gender (two females and two males) and location (two urban and two rural) in the UAE.

### **3.3 Participants**

Participants were selected on three different levels: policy level (Ministry), implementation level (principals, teachers) and the end user or recipient level (students, parents). On the policy level, contact was already initiated with the Head of Special Education Department who facilitated contact with the four education zone officers following the site selection.



On the implementation level, the school principal, special education teachers and two subject teachers who were teaching students with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms were selected. The main criteria were that teachers should have attended the 20-hour portfolio training provided by the initiative under study (details about training provided in section 4.1), and their total years of experience. A wide range of experience was achieved (5 – 14 years); aiming at variety, in view of the significance of teachers' experience effect on attitudes towards inclusion.

As for the end users, two students were selected in each school for observation based on type of disabilities, where the need for more support was preferable. The choice also depended on the grade level as well as the parents' acceptance to participate in the study. Grade one students were not considered, as they would not have spent enough time in an inclusive setting at the time of data collection.

Selection of participants in each school was determined in the first school visit following the acceptance of a consent letter that detailed project objectives, research requirements (interviews, observations, documents), confidentiality issues and the interview protocol (see Appendix 1). The selection of both students and teachers were based on the recommendations of the principal and the special education teacher in each school. However, in some cases, the special education teacher shared all the available cases in the school and asked for my preference. Schools in general were very welcoming and accommodating regarding my requests; they were reassured by my impartiality especially after I explained that I was an independent researcher and not a Ministry inspector. However, many teachers and principals considered me as a messenger that would hopefully convey their concerns and requests to the Ministry of Education (see Appendix 10 for sites and participants information). Possible bias in selection is later discussed in methodological challenges (Section 3.9).

### **3.4 Ethical considerations**

An ethical approach was adopted throughout the study and was guided by the British University in Dubai (BUID) ethical code of conduct (see Appendix 2). Following the acceptance of the study proposal, an application was submitted to BUID Review Board to gain ethical approval to conduct the study as it involves human subjects. Free and informed consent from all schools in the study was obtained prior to school visits; a request letter outlining the purpose of the study, the data required and the procedures to be followed as well as the rights of the participants (see Appendix 1) was sent. Appointments were then scheduled according to staff convenience. It was also clarified that it would be the responsibility of the school to inform the parents about the purpose and the conduct of the research, to obtain their consent to observing their children in school settings, as well as their cooperation in providing an interview.

Throughout the data collection period, and before carrying out any interview or class observation, a formal introduction of the researcher and the objective of the study were made. Participants were also reassured that participation would not incur any harm, especially to their job security or position at school. Moreover, they were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, the fact that they could refuse or withdraw at any time without any repercussions. Anonymity was also ensured where pseudonyms of schools and participants were used, although full anonymity was considered something of a challenge due to the limited number of schools under study.

### **3.5 Data collection methods and study conduct**

Fieldwork was conducted through a series of visits to the schools over the course of one academic year, where the researcher served as the interviewer, observer and collator of

documentation (details about the role of the researcher will be provided later in this chapter, Section 3.7).

The design of the instrument guides was based on the research questions and the study framework (see Figure 1.1) and was also informed by a number of international guides and educational tool kits (Booth & Ainscow 2011; Ferguson et al. 2000; TDA 2010), as well as previous research-based studies in the UAE concerning the education of students with disabilities (Anati, 2012; Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Arif & Gaad 2008; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad 2011; Gaad & Thabet 2009).

The instrument guides were designed to address the educational provisions provided by the inclusive initiative and mapped to one or more of the school dimensions of culture, policy, or practice using the indicators in the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow 2011) as a guiding base. This mapping was necessary to ensure correspondence between data collected and the research questions.

Once the acceptance of the research study proposal was received, careful planning and piloting of the developed instruments' guides were necessary to increase their trustworthiness. Consequently, I identified one school that satisfied the aforementioned criteria of site selection to allow for piloting instrument guides and to provide a first-hand experience of the implementation of the inclusive guidelines under study. The experience gained through the pilot study (see Appendix 4) was invaluable, as the school offered the opportunity to attend teachers' training workshops at the school, as well as carrying out all the necessary interviews and observations. As a result, the instrument guides were adjusted according to the experiences and information obtained from the participants (details in Section 3.6).

Following the pilot study, the process of data collection started with obtaining consent letters from the management for each of the three schools, as well as the respective three zone supervisors for each school district. The school management agreed to obtain the consent of the participants whilst I, as researcher, ensured that each participant was aware of the study objectives prior to the interview or observation session.

The study was conducted over a full calendar year, where four to five full day visits were carried out at each school, resulting in a total of 23 interviews and 20 observation sessions, as well as a large collection of school documentation including student Individual Education Plans (IEP), worksheets, assessments, teachers' schedules, lesson plans, leaflets and circulars on school events and activities, as well as a school's achievement statistics. Some of the schools provided additional materials in the form of pictures and presentations which aided in reinforcing their commitment and the participation of the students with disabilities in school events and activities.

In a multiple case study, the process and steps of data collection should be closely repeated on each site; therefore, a data collection plan was developed and monitored (captured on an Excel spreadsheet to ensure the systematic collection of data in each case school, see Appendix 7). A database was also created to facilitate an organised storage of all the accounts and the scanned school documentation as well as pictures and presentations in name-coded files classified by case. This structure maintained an organised, chronological, easily accessible means for retrieving all data concerning each case separately. Back-up copies were created periodically to safe guard against any technological issues or failures which could lead to the loss of valuable data, and were stored safely with all paper-based originals in a locked cupboard at home. Details of the three data collection methods employed are discussed further in the following sub-sections.

### **3.5.1 Participant observations**

The primary observation style was participant observation; this involved actual participation in the daily activities of the students. The aim of this type of participation was to understand, and learn from them as well as to continuously question my own assumptions and pre-conceptions, as established by Glesne (2006, p. 51). Participant observations have been widely used in disability research studies, especially in qualitative case studies such as the comparative case study by Freire and Cesar (2003) that examined the beliefs and practices of teachers from five mainstream schools. Other examples include a multiple case study carried out in Flemish primary schools by Ghesquie`re et al. (2002) and another by Peters (2002) in the USA to assess the impact of inclusive practices on students and teachers in two schools. Glesne (2006, p.49) also argues that participant observation “ranges across a continuum from mostly observation to mostly participation” depending on the research questions, study context and theoretical perspective. In this study, observations were varied along a continuum. For example, during lesson delivery unobtrusive observations, from the back of the classroom, were conducted (Kellehear 1993) so as not to affect the natural flow of the lesson. Whilst during activity and support classes, the role of a participant-observer was more appropriate (and informative), resulting in an insight into the interaction and behaviour through the eyes of the children.

The observation guides were divided into two sections: (1) general notes that allowed me to note down impressions and events taking place within a particular observation period, and (2) a set of items that reflected the implementation of the inclusive practices according to the five categories defined by ‘School for All’ initiative, as well as the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and practices as per the indicators in the ‘Index for Inclusion’ by Booth and

Ainscow (2011). In this way the observations are aligned to the research framework and the research questions. The observations provided an understanding of:

- The interaction between teachers and students with disabilities.
- The interaction between students in various contexts (including class time and play time)
- How the students with disabilities were coping with the educational and recreational aspects of their school days.
- The learning environment for students, as well as the working conditions for teachers and administrators.

The first observational period was classroom lesson delivery. The observation guide included elements such as class environment, positioning of the students, accommodation and modifications (if applicable), as well as interaction amongst students and with their teachers (see Appendix 5). Notes as well as photographs, when permitted, were taken with the aim of producing a comprehensive description which would reinforce the trustworthiness, and credibility of the study. Data recorded from observations was used to revise and update subsequent interview guides.

Other types of observations which were conducted outside classrooms, such as school activities, predominantly aimed at revealing the extent of students' (with disabilities) participation in the recreational side of school life. The rewriting and saving of all the resulting observational accounts was carried out immediately after the school visit, to minimise data loss and distortion (Foster 1996, p. 43).

### 3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

The study investigated the views and perspectives of government officials within the education sector; school principals, teachers, in addition to the parents of students with disabilities, with respect to:

- Current educational provisions
- Barriers to successful inclusion

The choice of semi-structured interviews was made, to allow an element of flexibility to reflect in the answers given, as well as the possibility to ask more in depth follow-up questions to draw out further information or revisit previous responses, rather than being restricted by a rigid model of questions (Glesne, 2006; Creswell, 2008). Open-ended questions were not chosen since the main objective of the study was to investigate the behaviour of teachers and students and the interaction between them rather than their lived experiences and emotions which require more open-ended narratives. This is reflected in many disability research studies (Freire & Cesar 2003; Ghesquie`re et al. 2002; Howell & Gengel 2005; Peters 2002).

The interview guides were designed to address the educational provisions provided by the inclusive initiative, namely: (1) training and development, (2) students' placement and school structures, (3) assistive technology, (4) support services and (5) awareness programmes (see Appendix 6). Interview questions were also mapped to the framework of the study (see figure 1.1), where each question was tied up to one or more of the school dimensions of policy, practice or culture, using the indicators in the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow 2011) as a guiding base. This mapping was necessary to ensure correspondence between data collected and the research questions.

Interviews took place at a time and place which was most convenient for interviewees, mostly in classrooms during free time, or in the principal's office, where interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. Interviewees were always reminded of the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of the results.

### **3.5.3 Document collection and analysis**

Four types of documents were collected and analysed: UAE governmental documents (including ministerial websites), international documents, local newspapers and school related documentation.

This study is predominantly informed by the 'School for All – General Rules for the Provision of Special Education Programs and Services' (see MOE 2010) which defines the framework for inclusive education of disabled students in both public and private UAE schools. Other relevant government documentation of policies and legislation regarding people with disabilities' education in the UAE was collated and examined; including UAE Federal Law 29/2006 (MSA 2006) and the UAE constitution (UAE Cabinet 2010) articles concerning education of people with disabilities, to achieve the following goals:

- Examine whether the current educational provisions implemented through the initiative match the articles concerning education of students with disabilities.
- Assess whether articles of the law and the constitution adequately provide for the needs of students with disabilities to achieve effective access to education.

Additionally, sources of information included the websites of both the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) which were examined to identify current changes to legislation and the available methods for interaction between parents and government officials.



The relevance of international documentation to the UAE context regarding the education of people with disabilities was also analyzed. Documents included the UNESCO policy guidelines on inclusion in education (UNESCO 2009), which provides information and awareness for policy makers and educators regarding the transition from integration to inclusion. In addition, related scholarly articles and legislation of western countries (European and North American) with respect to education of children with disabilities were also reviewed.

As for the UAE context, articles in local newspapers were considered to aid in establishing the current understanding of the move towards inclusion in the UAE. Four main newspapers were reviewed: Khaleej Times, Albayan, The National and Gulf News; covering the period from 2006 (since the issue of the Federal Law) until the present time.

On the school level, school documentation was analysed in order to assess the implementation of special educational provisions for students with disabilities with respect to the following aspects:

- Special education policy of the school regarding enrolment and initial assessment, as well as entrance reports or portfolios required for student acceptance.
- Individual educational plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities, including modifications and adaptations, goals and objectives as well as assessment criteria.
- Students' progress reports, to aid in assessing their learning outcomes.
- Pictures of school events to assess the participation of students with disabilities
- Communication with parents and any evidence of parental involvement.

All school documents were scanned and stored in the relevant file structure in the research database with respect to each school case.

### **3.6 Pilot study**

An initial pilot study of one inclusive government primary school was conducted with the intention of refining the data collection instruments with respect to “both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed” (Yin 2009, p. 92). The school was identified with the assistance of the Special Education Department in the MOE. The choice was made following the aforementioned site selection criteria as well as convenience and access (Yin 2009, p. 93). The pilot study included the following (see Appendix 4):

- Interview with zone coordinator
- Interview with the school principal
- Interview with subject teacher
- Interview with special education teacher
- Observations of a student with vision impairment in a mainstream classroom
- Observations of a student with Cerebral Palsy and intellectual disability in a support classroom
- Participant observation of teachers in training sessions

During the pilot study, observations and interview sessions were recorded (with permission from participants), and were supplemented with notes to increase trustworthiness. Data was transcribed (in Arabic) from the recordings and later compared with field notes to fill in any gaps before translation into English. A translation exercise was conducted during the pilot study, where all translated interviews and observational accounts (a total of six), were translated back into Arabic by a certified translator in order to check accuracy. The accounts were then examined by the translator and a peer educational researcher, where it was agreed that there were no significant differences between each of the two accounts with respect to

meaning and context, although different vocabulary appeared occasionally. Data transcribing from the tape recordings proved to be a very lengthy and difficult process, mainly because the interviews and observations mostly took place in classrooms that were not acoustically prepared for recording use and there were numerous interruptions during interviews. Also, the large number of accounts ( 23 interviews, 20 observations) that were required to complete the data collection in the three case schools, made it a very challenging task within the given time and resources. There was also apprehension among some teachers regarding the use of a tape recorder, where on two occasions teachers made their views and objections to the recording clear. As a result, it was decided to abandon the use of the tape-recording for the rest of the research to keep the consistency in data collection, and instead, focus more attention to producing detailed field notes. The fact that each school was visited four to five times allowed for member checking and provided the opportunity to review any missing data whenever necessary.

At the end of each interview during the pilot study, participants were requested to give their opinions about the clarity and the relevance of the questions, and whether additional information could be provided to describe their daily experiences. All comments were noted and the required adjustments were carried out to achieve clarity and relevance of interview questions. For example, two questions regarding student assessments and enrolment were omitted, following comments about their relevance to the school's role, as the assessment and placement process is carried out at Ministry level and the schools enrol the students as a result of a conclusive assessment and recommendation report by the Ministry. Moreover, questions regarding the education qualifications of teachers were also omitted as all teachers, by law, have to be university graduates, while special education teachers are graduates of the special education stream. Other questions were rewritten to clarify the meaning. For example, the

question “*What is the set up in the mainstream classes, where students with disabilities are included?*” was replaced with a question that was more precise and conclusive “*What are the modifications and adaptations provided in the classrooms and the school as a whole to facilitate the inclusion of these students?*” Finally, a few questions were added to aid clarity about the role of special teachers, for example, the following question was added “*As the special teacher in the school, what are your main responsibilities?*”

During the pilot study, I was also given the opportunity to attend five teachers’ training sessions as a participant observer. The workshops involved preparing individual education plans, differentiation as a teaching strategy, modification and adaptation of class environment, specific learning difficulties and finally, successful inclusive case studies. The outcome of these observations involved initially, gaining an insight into the training strategies and styles provided to teachers as part of the ‘School for All’ initiative; followed by gaining access to genuine teacher attitudes regarding the initiative. The interaction with the teachers provided an understanding of their concerns and the challenges they faced in implementing the skills provided by the training workshops. Finally, it was noted that the training workshops were too theoretical in nature, which was the main concern of the teachers who felt ill-equipped, and lacking the ability to put the demonstrated skills into practice.

This school was a perfect starting point as it proved to be a highly committed school to inclusion, where the inclusion language was prevalent amongst the staff, especially the principal and the special education teacher (who was a qualified special educator from Egypt with 16 years of experience). She had also received a ministry award for supporting students with disabilities in that particular school. The commitment in this school was evident on many levels; not least through their involvement in teacher training prior to the ‘School for All’ initiative. The principal showed progressive and forward thinking when they enrolled two

mainstream teachers in a 'Braille' coding course during the summer prior to accepting a blind student in grade three, who previously attended a centre for special needs. This was also done on the school budget without the assistance of the Special Education Department, reflecting the school's commitment to fully support the student in accessing the curriculum. The principal, together with the special education teacher, carried out an awareness campaign in the school prior to the inclusion of the student with vision impairment. It included a morning assembly, short presentation about vision impairment in all classes and a specialised workshop for her class peers about mobility and interaction with people with vision impairment.

In conclusion, the pilot study proved to be an extremely valuable exercise, not only to increase the clarity, relevance and efficiency of the data collection instruments, but also to provide a solid firsthand understanding of the educational system in government schools with respect to the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative.

### **3.7 Role of the researcher**

The researcher in qualitative studies is the instrument and the lens through which the data is being viewed (Glesne, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, Creswell (2009, p. 177) maintains that the researcher is "typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants". Therefore, self-disclosing the role of the researcher was vital to clarify the lens through which the researcher is looking through, as well as the lens through which the stakeholders understand the role of the researcher, while being observed and responding to the research questions.

My main role, as I entered the field was the researcher as a *learner* ready to seize every opportunity to understand the implementation of the new standards with respect to the special

education system, in keeping with Glesne (2006, p. 46) who views the researcher as “a curious student who comes to learn from and with research participants”. I made sure that participants understood my role as a learner and not as an expert or figure of authority. I explained clearly the objective of the research and the fact that I was a university student who was there to learn about the implementation of the new standards and to record their concerns and challenges as well as their successes and recommendations. Principals and teachers were initially cautious and careful in disclosing information; where responses to my questions initially seemed rehearsed. However, multiple school visits, as well as email and phone conversations over a period of time, enabled for a rapport to build up, as well as establish trust, where participants began to treat me as a *colleague* whom they could share their difficulties and frustrations with adapting the teaching strategies, the curriculum, and the assessment of mixed abilities classrooms. On other occasions, I was treated as the *expert consultant* and was addressed as ‘Doctor’; in these circumstances I had to remind myself that I was not there to give advice, fix things or alter procedures. Instead, I was there to record the participants’ perspectives of their daily practice, and understanding of the implementation of the inclusive guidelines and standards.

This level of comfort, trust, and reassurance in the relationship aided the quality and amount of information collated; however, it made me somewhat anxious not only about the sensitivity and confidentiality of the data, but also regarding the amount of data and how it would all fit together (Glesne 2006). On other occasions, I was, almost inevitably, burdened with certain disclosures, especially when it was not related to the research questions and objectives; I was then expected to play the role of *counsellor*. Finally, during the last visits teachers, principals and parents regarded me as their *messenger*, where I was requested to relay their requirements, demands, difficulties and struggles to the head of the Special Education

Department in the MOE. The last two roles were the most challenging; I consulted my supervisor who advised me to maintain the role of a good listener. Glesne (2006, p. 92) asserts the necessity of listening with the “research purpose and eventual write-up fully in mind”, and the need to be able to redirect the flow of the conversation.

### **3.8 Trustworthiness**

Provisions for trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller 2000, pp. 126-129; Foster 1996, pp. 89-92; Glesne 2006, p. 36; Stake 1995, pp. 112-116) were incorporated within the study through triangulation, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement on site and member checking. Merriam (1998, p. 204) contends that “Triangulation is the use of multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings”. Accordingly, data was collated from multiple participants such as teachers, parents, students and administrative staff to achieve data triangulation. In addition, methodological triangulation was also achieved through utilising multiple data collection methods of participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

Trustworthiness was also established through exercising the researcher’s reflexivity by self-disclosing assumptions, beliefs and pre-conceived opinions regarding various aspects such as, teacher abilities and training, success of inclusion as an educational strategy and parent involvement in their children’s development. Additionally, I was constantly contemplating possible sources of error in the collected data, and constantly striving to achieve the most naturalistic accounts. Peer debriefing was also used, through setting up a support group with two other educational research peers for reviewing and challenging assumptions, methods and interpretations as well as doubts and difficulties. This exercise was particularly useful to disclose personal bias and brainstorm new ideas.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that researcher's prolonged engagement on site is recommended to achieve rapport, provide sufficient data to allow for themes to emerge. As a result, data collection in this study extended over a whole calendar year, where one or two whole day visits to each school took place in each school term resulting in four to five visits per school as well as emails and phone calls to request clarifications or to fill gaps in information obtained. During the school visits, I was granted free access to school grounds between scheduled interviews and observations allowing greater opportunities for recording authentic school life and interactions between stakeholders.

Finally, member checking was obtained, wherever possible, allowing participants to review observation and interview accounts, following Lincoln and Guba (1985) who consider it to be the best way to establish credibility within the study. Additionally, Creswell (1998) describes member checking as a means of confirming the accuracy of data collected. The only drawback is that participants might disagree with the interpretations, especially when they present negative connotations. During the research participants were offered to read raw transcripts, but on all occasions they were satisfied with a brief description about the findings thus far, which I ensured to present at the end of each interview and observation, as well as at follow up interviews.

It should also be noted that data collection was conducted in Arabic (researcher's primary language). Consequently, all instruments have been developed in Arabic. Forward and backward translations have been employed using the services of an independent bilingual English teacher to increase trustworthiness. A similar process was utilised during data collection and was altered according to need as previously explained in the pilot study. There were no cultural barriers with participants, as the researcher is of Arab origin (married to a UAE citizen and has lived in the UAE for nearly 20 years).



### 3.9 Methodological challenges

A number of challenges and limitations were encountered with respect to methodology.

Firstly, satisfying the selection criteria for schools and participants (teachers, students, parents) that aimed at selecting information-rich cases, presented a challenge as the pool of schools available for the study was limited (only 28 schools).

Secondly, the fact that access to the sites was granted through the Head of Special Education Department's recommendation caused initial apprehension on the part of some school administrators and teachers, which in turn affected the initial data collection process. It was felt that data collected through first and second visits in two of the schools was mostly rehearsed; teachers were reserved in disclosing their personal opinion and extra careful in providing information about student progress, in comparison to a third visit, where one of the teachers said '*so .. we can tell everything*'. Repeated visits to the schools established familiarity and trust with most participants, where my role transformed from being the researcher, to that of consultant, friend and in many cases the messenger who would carry their concerns, problems and requirements back to the Ministry. This in turn presented another challenge with respect to bias towards the participants' emotional experiences and difficulties with their students. I had to go through challenging discussions with both my supervisor and my colleagues during data collection in order to recognise and eliminate any bias towards participants.

Thirdly, the researcher's background could potentially constitute some limitation as it consists of limited involvement in the education of children with special needs. However, having extensive teaching experience in the UAE (13 years teaching in a private university in Dubai) gave me experience in an educational setting. I have also been trained as a qualitative

researcher during the last three years, and produced a number of studies, I have also been involved in academic activities including conference attendance and participation as well as publishing. The fact that my involvement in special education was limited provided strength, as I entered the field of special education with a fresh pair of eyes, a fervent passion to understand and discover, without any preconceptions resulting from past experiences or conflict of interest due to career influence.

Another challenge was to provide total anonymity to participants. All possible efforts were made to use pseudonyms for participants and schools, masking the school names as well as teachers, student names and pictures from all documents provided by schools. However, trying to produce comprehensive descriptions by documenting detailed and vivid accounts of settings, interactions and experiences to aid trustworthiness, made it difficult in some cases, to provide absolute anonymity.

The amount of data collected also posed a difficulty during transcription and more so during data analysis. Decisions needed to be made on the editing floor regarding the relevance of data collected to the research questions and objectives of the study. I was aware of personal bias arising from my deep belief in inclusive education and my strong desire for this initiative to be a success. However, I challenged myself at every opportunity, as well as employed the exercises of brainstorming and peer debriefing with my educational research colleagues, in order to minimise any effect of personal bias. These exercises were carried out (at least) monthly throughout the data collection and analysis period.

Finally, throughout the interview process, guarding against sharing personal thoughts and feelings that could influence the responses of participants was a great challenge. Probing for more details was needed throughout the interviews, where agreeing or disagreeing with the

responses of participants through verbal or non-verbal gestures was a challenge in many cases, knowing that it could have an effect on their desire to share their true experiences.

### **3.10 Analysing the data**

Analysing the data is an on-going process; Stake (1995, p. 71) for example, maintains that, “There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations”. In this study, data collection and analysis were intertwined into two stages, where the first stage was required to inform the second.

#### *Stage 1: Exploring ‘School for All’*

In the first stage, I needed to collect and analyse all available data to understand the provisions and services provided by the ‘School for All’ initiative which represents the first practical measure by the MOE to implement the Federal Law 29/2006 concerning the rights of students with disabilities to equal access to education. Data collected during the first stage included: (1) ‘School for All’ general rules for the provisions of special education programs and services (MOE 2010), (2) the articles concerning the education of students with disabilities in the Federal Law 29/2006 of the Rights of People with Disabilities, (3) newspaper articles concerning the inclusive education provisions in government primary schools, (4) an interview with the Head of Special Education Department in the MOE, (5) discussions with teachers and principals of schools that have been implementing the initiative as part of the early pilot study carried out by the MOE.

The documents were read thoroughly several times, where data relevant to any practical provisions or services rendered to the schools regarding inclusive education was highlighted and annotated with a view to arriving at a categorical definition of the ‘School for All’

provisions. A summary from the three types of documents was subsequently developed to prepare for discussion, and to inform the interview with the Head of the Special Education Department which was conducted to shed more light on the information available. The interview was transcribed and typed from recordings, read thoroughly and was analysed alongside the documentary evidence. Discussions with teachers and principals of the schools that have been adopting the initiative for at least two years were also summarised, read thoroughly and annotated alongside the above documents. The data from the interviews and the discussions validated the understanding obtained from the documents and shed light on the day to day practicalities of the implementation process together with all the challenges faced.

Accordingly, the following categories of school aspects were identified to represent the current implementation of the 'School for All' initiative:

1. Staff training and development.
2. School structures with respect to student placement, accommodations and modifications to the learning environment, materials, teaching methods and assessment.
3. Support services such as speech therapy and physiotherapy.
4. Assistive technology.
5. Community awareness.

This first stage in data analysis produced a working definition for the initiative which was used to define the framework of the study (see Figure 1.1) and informed the second stage of data collection and analysis concerning the three case schools.

*Stage 2: Exploring the implementation of ‘School for All’ in three primary schools*

Once a clear understanding of the available provisions and services provided by the initiative was established, it was possible to start the second stage which involved exploring the transition process of government primary schools into inclusive education, through the implementation of the provisions and services provided by the ‘School for All’ initiative. This was carried out through multiple case studies of three primary government schools. Data collated from the three case schools included (1) interviews with all stakeholders of school principals, teachers, parents as well as zone coordinators and the inclusion team from the MOE; (2) observations of inclusive classrooms, individual support lessons and playtime; (3) school documentation relating to the inclusion of disabled students.

The data was collected systematically following a data collection plan (see Appendix 7). A database was built accordingly, consisting of a separate file folder for each school (coded as C1, C2, and C3). Within each folder, a number of sub-folders were created according to the type of data instrument used: Interviews (I), Observations (O), and Documents (D). Within this structure the interview and observation accounts, as well as, scanned school documents were stored in files. The names of the files were coded to resemble each item. Examples of the file codes given to facilitate easy access are presented in the following table:

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
C1-I-P	Case1 school – Interview with Principal
C1-O-MC1	Case1 school – Observation of Mainstream class 1
C1-D-IEP1	Case1 school – Document (Individual Education Plan for student 1)
C2-I-T1	Case2 school – Interview with subject teacher 1

**Table 3.2 Sample codes for collected data filing**

The data was systematically transcribed from notes taken during the sessions on the same day of data collection to ensure the minimum loss of data. Within the same week written transcripts were read thoroughly, organised, typed and saved in the database files. During the weeks that followed, resulting accounts were read again and annotated with any additional comments or data from follow up visits. Data was also highlighted according to its relevance to the identified 'School for All' categories as defined above. By the end of the school year, when data collection was completed and all data transcribed and typed, all accounts were read thoroughly, case by case searching for gaps or inconsistencies. Schools were contacted at the beginning of the new academic year (by phone and email) to review and rectify any missing data.

At this point I found I was confronted with a massive volume of information (at least ten files for each case). As a result, I conformed to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10), where they define data analysis as "consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/ verification". Data reduction involves "selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions". In order to carry out data reduction I needed to define the criteria for selecting, focusing and transforming the data. The obvious criteria were the research questions of the study, since the main objective of the research study is to find answers for these questions. Therefore, a systematic careful reading of the various accounts was carried out for each school separately following two criteria:

1. Highlight and annotate all phrases, expressions or illustrations in the data accounts that represent or relate to one of the five categories of the provisions and services of the 'School for All' initiative, therefore providing data necessary to address the first research question. (*What educational provisions have been implemented for the*

*disabled students in three Emirati government primary schools as a result of the 'School for All' initiative?)*

2. Highlight and annotate all phrases, expressions or illustrations in the data accounts that represent or relate to the school dimensions of inclusive cultures, policies and practices as defined by the 'Index for Inclusion' by Booth and Ainscow (2011), therefore providing data necessary for informing the second research question. (*What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative?)*)

Despite the fact that data was highlighted and annotated, it was still in separate files, which made reading through it, in order to find recurring themes or to generate interpretations; a laborious task. The useful solution was to create a 'data display'. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 11) maintain that 'data display' provides the opportunity to "assemble organised information into immediately accessible, compact form", such as matrices, graphs, charts and networks. Matrices seemed to be the most suitable structure to represent the available data. One matrix was designed to contain all the data generated from interviews, observations and document analysis of one school that match the first criteria which informs the first research question. Similarly, a second matrix was designed to contain all the data generated from interviews, observations and document analysis of one school that match the second criteria which informs the second research question. The exercise was repeated systematically for each case, resulting in the data being reduced to two large files for each school, each one representing all the data relevant to each research question. The following matrices (Table 3.3, Table 3.4) represent the mapping between each research question (RQ) and the interview questions (Q), the observation indicators (Ind) and the school documents.

RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government primary schools as a result of the 'School for All' initiative?							
		Staff Training and Development	School Structures (Placement, Enrolment, Assessment)	School Structures (Modifications, Adaptations)	Support Services (Physiotherapy, Speech Therapy)	Assistive Technology	Awareness Programmes
Interviews	I Zone director	Q13	Q5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17	Q12, 14, 15, 18	Q12	Q12	Q1, 2, 3, 4
	I Principal	Q1	Q5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16	Q10, 13, 14, 15, 16	Q10	Q10	Q1, 2, 3, 4
	I Special Educator	Q1, 13, 14	Q3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 19, 20, 21, 22	Q7, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20	Q6, 11, 12, 14	Q6, 7	Q1, 2, 15
	I Subject Teacher	Q1, 5	Q6, 7, 18, 19, 20, 21	Q3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17	Q10	Q7	Q2, 11
	I Parent		Q5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14	Q 6, 7	Q8		Q2, 3, 4
Observations	O Class room		Ind 1-5, 10	Ind 12-22 & Ind 27-37		Ind 6-9, 11	Ind 23-26
	O Resource Classroom		Ind 1-5, 10	Ind 12-22 & Ind 27-37		Ind 6-9, 11	Ind 23-26
	O Playtime		Ind 1, 13				Ind 2
Documents	School Documents	Timetables	IEP, Student profile	Differentiated Worksheets, Assessment sheets, Photographs		Photographs	Leaflets, Reports, Photographs

**Table 3.3 Mapping of research question 1(RQ1) to data collected from interviews, observations and school documents**

**I = Interview, O = Observation, Q = Question, Ind = Indicator**



<b>RQ2. What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative?</b>				
		<b>Inclusive Cultures</b>	<b>Inclusive Policies</b>	<b>Inclusive Practices</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>I</b> Zone Coordinator	Q1-4, 11,18	Q5-10,18	Q12-18
	<b>I</b> Principal	Q1-4, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16	Q5-9, 16	Q10, 12-16
	<b>I</b> Special Educator	Q1, 2, 15, 16	Q3-5, 16, 21	Q6-22
	<b>I</b> Subject Teacher	Q1, 2, 9, 10, 11	Q9, 15, 19	Q3-19
	<b>I</b> Parent	Q2, 3	Q1	Q4-14
<b>Observations</b>	<b>O</b> Classroom	Ind 1-11, I23-33	Ind 11-14, 34-37	Ind 1-11, 12-22, 34-37
	<b>O</b> Resource Classroom	Ind 1-11, I23-33	Ind 11-14, 34-37	Ind 1-11, 12-22, 34-37
	<b>O</b> Playtime	Ind 1, I2	Ind 3	Ind 1, I3
<b>Documents</b>	School Documents	1. Leaflets 2. Reports 3. Photographs	1. IEP 2. Student profile	1. IEP 2. Differentiated worksheets 3. Assessment sheets 4. Photographs

**Table 3.4 mapping of research question 2 (RQ2) to data collected from Interviews, observations and school documents**

**I = Interview, O = Observation, Q = Question, Ind = Indicator**

Using the above structures, all the highlighted phrases, expressions and illustrations from the data accounts were summarised into the matrices for each school separately, resulting into two large files for each school (see Appendix 11). It should be noted that moving data into the display (matrix) entailed another stage of data reduction that involved summarising and paraphrasing, as maintained by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 242); the process of data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions and verifications is concurrent and flowing.

In the following chapters the resulting matrices are used to analyse the data both on case level and cross-case level to allow for the collective understanding of the implementation of inclusive education, in accordance with Glesne (2006, p. 13), who maintains that in a multiple case study “each is written up into a context-situated case study and then a cross-case analysis is carried out to look for patterns across cases”. In the next chapter, the findings provide a case-level analysis while addressing the research questions for each case separately, followed by the discussion in Chapter five which depicts the results of cross-case analysis of the three data sets.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Findings**

This study sets out to investigate the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative in three Emirati government schools in order to show how this implementation has helped the schools to create inclusive cultures, produce inclusive policies and implement inclusive practices.

Specifically, it aims to reveal the details of the implementation through the voices of the stakeholders on the school level (principals, teachers and parents) and the Ministry level (Director of Special Education and zone coordinators).

This chapter is organised into four sections; the first describes the dynamics of the ‘School for All’ initiative in terms of the various services and provisions offered to the three schools by the Ministry of Education (MOE). In the next three sections, the data from each school is presented in a separate section, and the findings are organised to address the two research questions:

RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government primary schools as a result of the ‘School for All’ initiative?

The provisions and services provided by the initiative are presented in five categories according to the study framework: (see Figure 4.2)

1. Staff training and development
2. School structures
3. Support services

4. Assistive technology

5. Community awareness

RQ2: What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative?

The analysis of data with respect to the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and practices will be based on identifying ‘the barriers to learning and participation’ and ‘the available resources for learning and participation’ in each school dimension. The concepts of ‘barriers’ and ‘resources’ were introduced by Booth and Ainscow (2011) to assist in reviewing school performance with respect to inclusive education and to provide the knowledge to inform decisions in planning school reform and development.

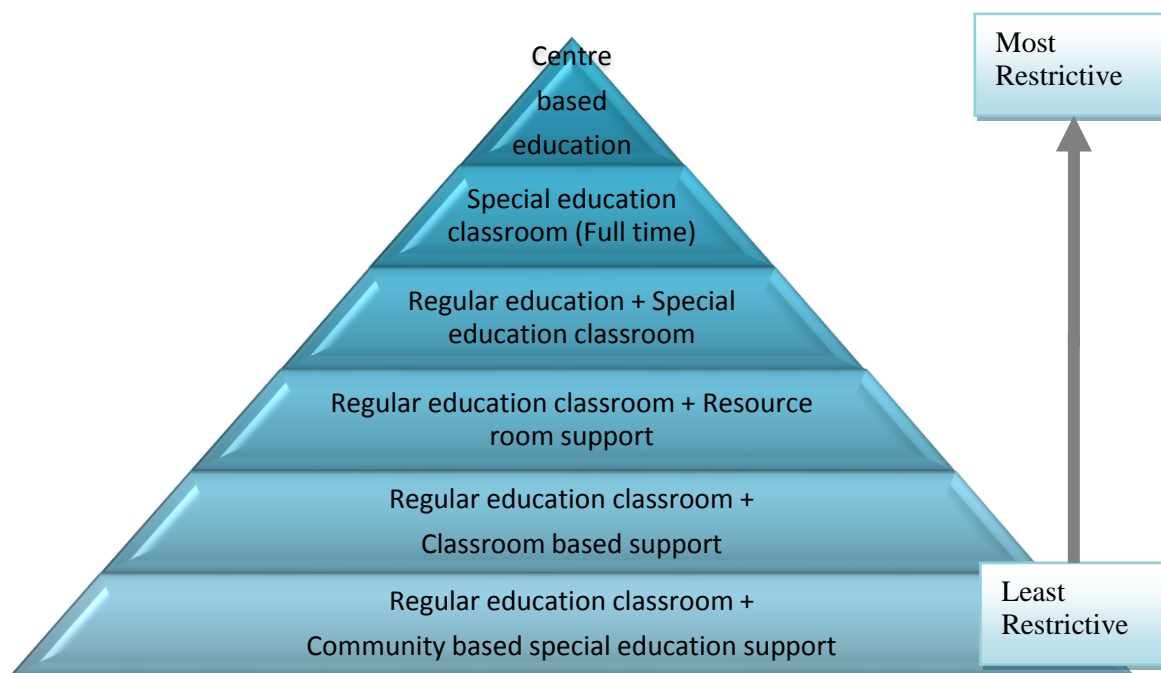
#### **4.1 ‘School for All’ - a descriptive account**

The ‘School for All’ initiative was formally announced in 2010 with a Ministerial Decree (166/2010) accompanied by a guidebook that specifies the general rules for special education programs and services (MOE 2010). According to the Director of Special Education Department, this guidebook provides a road map to be followed by Ministry staff and schools to facilitate the transition into inclusive education.

The MOE views inclusion as “the education of students with special needs in a regular classroom with their same-age peers who do not have disabilities” (MOE 2010, p. 62), where the “regular classroom is the best educational option for all students, including students eligible to receive special education services” (MOE 2010, p. 21). However, educational settings are provided on a continuum from the least restrictive to the most restrictive, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, depending on the type and severity of the disability. This definition

aligns with the Federal Law (29/2006) Article 12 “The state shall guarantee for the person with disabilities equal opportunities for obtaining education in all educational institutions, educational and vocational training, adult education and continuing education as part of regular classes or in special classes, if needed” (MSA 2006).

The guidebook explains this continuum with an example: “a student with disability may be enrolled in all regular education classes and receive special education support services only from a community service provider, or may receive classroom-based or school-based special education programs and support services. Some students have disabilities that are so severe that they are unable to benefit from participating in a regular education school setting and participate in community or centre-based educational programs.” (MOE 2010, p. 22)



**Figure 4.1 Hierarchy for inclusive education learning environment (MOE 2010, p. 25)**

The Director of the Special Education Department maintained that the Ministry identified that the two primary challenges that needed immediate attention were staff professional

development and attitudes towards inclusive education. As a result, the first implemented measure was a professional development program, preceded by awareness meetings and workshops to introduce the concept of inclusion. A pilot study was initiated; ten schools (eight primary schools, two kindergartens) were selected on voluntary basis, to be the first set of inclusive schools. For the first time, these schools enrolled students with sensory disabilities, intellectual disabilities (resulting from Down syndrome and Autism), as well as physical disabilities, with appropriate provisions and services. These schools became pivotal to supporting the expansion of the initiative in accordance with the following plan:

<b>Year</b>	<b>2009/2010</b>	<b>2010/2011</b>	<b>2011/2012</b>	<b>2012/2013</b>	<b>2015 (expected)</b>
Number of schools	10	28	50	114	420

**Table 4.1 Timeline of ‘School for All’ progress**

The Director of Special Education Department summarised the progress from 2009 until the new academic year of 2012:

- *In 2011, all Kindergarten (KG) schools in the six Emirates became inclusive schools. Training has been carried out to cover 45% of the teachers in all KG schools. While the remaining teachers will continue to attend the portfolio training or preferably, the schools will run their own in-house training undertaken by their special education teachers.*
- *The total numbers of students with disabilities that have been accepted in the mainstream classrooms in inclusive schools have increased from 185 students in 2011 to 235 in 2012, which reflects the increase in the number of schools joining the initiative.*
- *The future aim is that by the year 2015 all government schools, in all cycles, will become inclusive schools.*

This rapid expansion of inclusive education in government schools was continuously backed up by the professional training programmes. The Director of Special Education Department gave details of the three main programmes:

- **Portfolio training.** *This consists of ten workshops on inclusive education which represent the core training that should be completed by all teachers involved with students with disabilities. So far 2,965 teachers (from a total of 13,065 teachers in all schools) in the six Emirates have completed the portfolio training (see Appendix 8 for MOE Statistics). This training portfolio has gone through three revisions following the feedback from both trainers and trainees.*
- **National Cadre programmes.** *These programmes include 70 teachers yearly. It started in 2010 with 11 workshops for each area of expertise, such as: speech therapy, support for visual and hearing impairment, as well as support for the gifted and talented. In 2011, the Down syndrome support programme was added as well as autism support with 11 workshops run by the Dubai Centre for Autism. The training included Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) technique.*
- **Ministry training courses:** *The Ministry provides workshops on certain subjects such as behavioural management, class management and teaching strategies depending on both the need and availability of trainers, which includes 200 teachers yearly. Some of these courses were delivered as a six-hour diploma in Zayed University in Dubai.*
- **Parents' awareness workshops:** *A new provision was added in 2012 for parents to cover subjects such as, awareness about disabilities and how to support a disabled child.*

The Ministry also facilitates for teachers and administrators to keep them up-to-date with the latest research through attendance at conferences related to disabilities, in order to develop and raise their awareness on disabilities, as well as to network and build communication channels with other educational and rehabilitation organisations.

I was given the opportunity to observe five sessions of the portfolio training workshops that are provided systematically in the 19 training centres around the six Emirates. The training sessions include topics such as guidelines of special education programmes, evaluation and observation of students with special needs, IEP preparation, accommodations and modifications, types learning difficulties, behaviour modification strategies, class management strategies and finally inclusive case studies.

I observed that the most solid outcome of these workshops was the removal of the psychological barrier, which most of the general teachers had towards inclusive education. However, the training lacked practical examples and hands-on skills for the teachers to apply in their classrooms, leaving them with no tangible sense of accomplishment. The training, increased the teachers' awareness, but fell short of building skills. In the following, the various provisions provided by the Ministry to facilitate inclusive education, as part of the 'School for All' initiative, will be presented.

#### *Modifications to the physical environment*

The Ministry realised the need to implement structural modifications to school buildings to facilitate access for students with disabilities, especially the ones with physical disabilities. For example, all schools were fitted with ramps and special toilets as well as elevators where possible, in accordance with school structures and budgets. Special school buses (with elevator systems), operated by trained drivers, were made available to schools that require these services.



### *Admission and enrolment*

The admission and enrolment system was centralised with respect to each zone; in February of each year, the Ministry would advertise in all local newspapers as well as on TV and radio, for parents of children with disabilities to submit the enrolment requests to their respective zone. At the same time requests were accepted for further investigation from schools, in the form of a detailed school assessment report, concerning current students may be considered in need of special services to determine their eligibility to join the initiative services. In March and April, The Multi-discipline Evaluation Team (MET) initiated evaluation appointments, using international standards testing. The resulting reports would be comprehensive, including details about the physical, psychological and mental abilities, as well as speech abilities and special education aspects. A copy of the report would be referred to the zone coordinator who would in turn schedule meetings with the MET members to discuss the report. These meetings, which are usually very lengthy and often extended over more than one meeting, were to make sure that the principal and the special education teacher of the chosen school were able to support the child.

The next step would be preparing the IEP, it should include the objectives to be achieved and any accommodations and modifications required to allow the student to access the curriculum, as well as the support services needed, such as speech therapy or educational psychologist sessions. Parents should be involved in all these steps in order to guarantee their acceptance and cooperation.

### *Individual Education Plan (IEP)*

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) together with the assessment report are not intended to stigmatise the students in any way, rather they constitute the documents that guarantee their

right to services and provisions to ensure equal access to education in the least restrictive environment. The IEP is reviewed at the end of every term where short and long term objectives can be adjusted accordingly, depending on the student's progress.

The IEP should include all the modifications and accommodations necessary for the student to facilitate access to an educational experience that enables them to reach their potential goals, as specified in the IEP. Modifications include changes in the content of the curriculum based on the abilities of the student, while accommodations are changes that do not alter the content; instead they incorporate alterations to the learning environment, curriculum format or equipment that facilitate access to the task assigned. For example, a sign language interpreter for deaf students, text to speech computers or large print books and work sheets for the visually impaired, special keyboards for fine motor limitations are all considered accommodations.

Through observations in the schools and a meeting with the Assistive Technology Advisor in the MOE, the following devices are currently available:

- Portable smart boards and projectors (Mimio).
- Speech support equipment, mainly to aid speech therapists.
- Equipment for visual impairment (magnifiers, speech recognition and text to speech devices, Ibsar software to aid Arabic reading, Braille type writers and printers).
- Special grip pens and tilted pens for fine motor skills limitations.
- Computers for students with CP and special designed keyboards and mice.

- Special tables for students with physical disabilities.
- Equipment for visual and hearing impairment assessment.

Such equipment is distributed to schools according to need, however training, so far, has been limited to a few workshops and has not been regular enough to ensure the effective use of the equipment according to the Assistive Technology Advisor. He added that in the current year, plans had been put in place for more regular workshops for teachers and specialists.

### *Testing and certification*

Students with disabilities will be tested during the academic year according to their ability in-line with the goals and objectives of the IEP. The testing conditions should be modified to include the necessary accommodations according to disability. Students should be allowed extra time, or have questions read and explained, or even the exam administered orally instead of written, depending on disability.

When a student completes a grade level, a certificate is issued to indicate the completion of that grade level including details about the category of disability and any assistive technology needed. This information is not there to create a stigma; instead it is to facilitate transition into any other setting, whether in the UAE or abroad, to guarantee the student's right to accommodations and modifications as stated in article 12 of the Federal Law No. 29/2006 (MSA 2006). The Special Education Director mentioned that the transition from primary school to middle school has, so far, been effective and in many schools cooperation between teachers has been established. However, this becomes more challenging in secondary schools, due to the lack of provisions especially training.

### *Challenges and accomplishments*

Finally, the Director of Special Education Department identified that the main challenges continue to be:

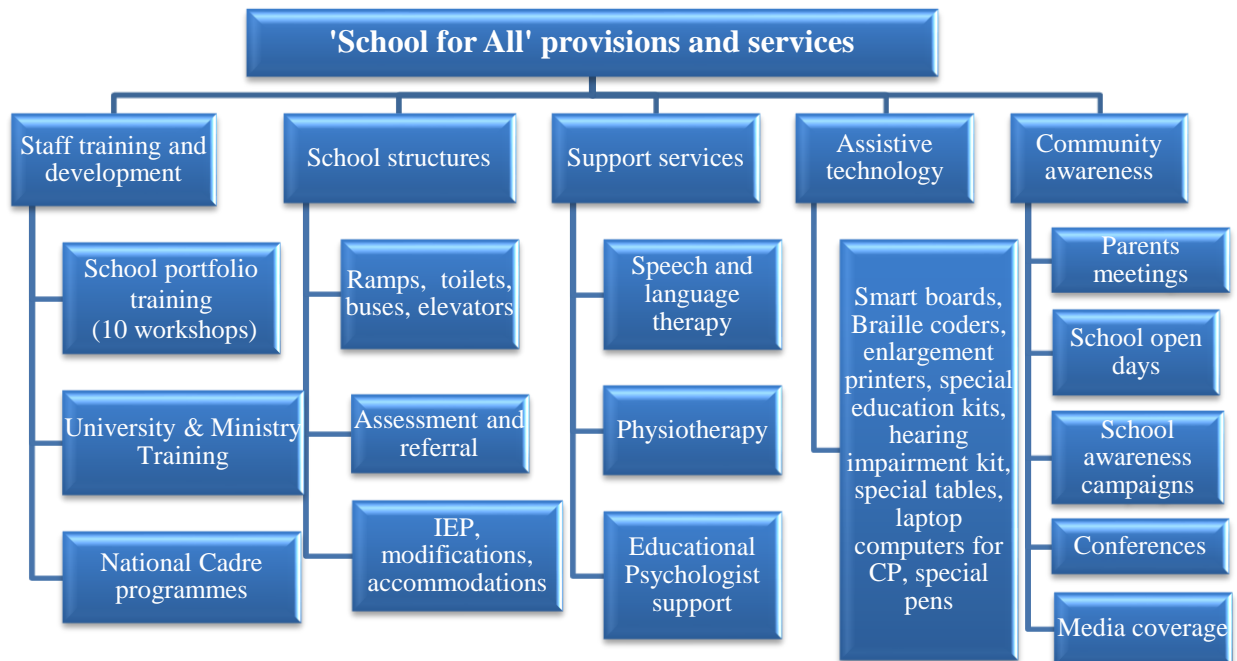
- 1. The limited budget provided for special education.*
- 2. Shortage of specialists for all types of therapy including occupational therapy, speech therapy and physiotherapy, as well as support for all sorts of sensory disabilities.*
- 3. The limited experience of special education teachers in leading the inclusion team, especially with respect to class management, behaviour management and teachers' collaboration.*
- 4. Parents limited involvement in the progress of their children and their fear of social stigma.*

However, she stressed that 2012 marked a major breakthrough, where effective connections had been established between the educational strategies of special and general education, in terms of school accountability to special education provisions:

- 1. The School Endorsement Bureau and School Inspection and Conduct Bureau in the Ministry are finally including indicators of special education provisions in their inspection programmes. Consequently, if a school fails to comply with necessary provisions for special needs, it will get a lower grading. The School Endorsement Bureau, as a result, will prepare a working plan containing a set of objectives that the school has to achieve in order to attain the endorsement.*
- 2. The Special Education Department is supporting the inspection process through providing the list of provisions required to support students with disabilities in order to aid inspectors during their visits. It includes the following categories: (1) Academic achievement, (2) School leadership, (3) Learning and teaching quality and (4) Social and personal development, where each category includes indicators to specifically assess the progress of the school.*

The diagram (Figure 4.2) summarises the services and provisions provided by the Ministry based on the 'School for All' initiative. This categorisation provides the framework for

investigating the special education provisions implemented in each school in the following sections in order to address the first research question.



**Figure 4.2 'School for All' provisions and services**

#### **4.2 Case A - Inclusion!!! Only because we have to!**

This is a primary school for girls in an urban area mainly populated by Emirati families. The school has 445 students and caters for the first cycle of education which includes grades one until five. The premises are a medium sized two storey modern building with an enclosed courtyard which provides a shaded play area for the students. The school is clean and tidy with a welcoming foyer that displays numerous posters depicting various school activities and visits by government officials. The administration building overlooks the inner courtyard and the classrooms. The school has no recreational grounds except for the enclosed tiled courtyard, where all school activities including the physical education classes take place. The walls around the courtyard are painted with colourful cartoon characters, while the corridors

display posters depicting examples of students' work in different subjects, as well as environmental awareness messages, Quran verses reinforcing morals, and Arabic motivational poetry about success and hard work. However, there were no posters about the 'School for All' initiative or awareness messages about disability and inclusive education.

With regard to special education, the school had previously been catering for students with moderate learning difficulties, either in the mixed-age special classroom if they could not cope with the demands of mainstream, or on a pull-out basis in the resource room according to appropriate remedial plans. The services had only been provided until grade three for core subjects (Arabic and Maths).

#### 4.2.1 Transforming into 'School for All' (Research question one)

The system had been transformed when the school joined the 'School for All' initiative in 2009. The special classroom was closed, and all the students with learning difficulties were assigned to age-appropriate mainstream classrooms with supporting remedial plans, as they were not considered cases that required services and provisions provide by the 'School for All' initiative. However, three students with various disabilities joined the school in that year in different grades (see Table 4.2). Previously, students with such disabilities were not accepted in the school, let alone into the mainstream classrooms.

Student	Type of Disability	DOB	Enrolment Year / Grade	Current Grade	Previous Education
Amal	Down Syndrome	2000	2009/ in G1	G3	Rehabilitation centre (2007)
Hind	Learning disability (Delayed Growth)	2003	2010/ in G1	G2	Early intervention (2007) KG2 inclusion (2009)
Maha	Down Syndrome	2003	2011/ in G1	G1	Early intervention (2005) KG1 & 2-inclusion (2008, 2009) Rehabilitation centre(2010)

**Table 4.2 Students serviced by 'School for All' initiative in Case A school**

Amal and Hind were selected as they both had spent the most time in inclusive settings; and were expected to be information-rich cases more than Maha, who had only recently joined the school in grade one. Other research participants included the zone co-ordinator, school principal, subject teachers (Amal's Arabic teacher and Hind's English teacher), the special education teacher and both Amal and Hind's mothers. The findings are organised according to the five categories of 'School for All' provisions (see Figure 4.2).

*1. Teachers development and training:*

All subject teachers, who had been involved in teaching Hind and Amal, had attended the inclusion portfolio training prior to enrolment of Hind and Amal. Additionally, the special education teacher attended a six hour diploma in Zayed University during the summer holidays about inclusive education. She is currently enrolled in the National Cadre programme to support the future enrolment of students with visual impairment, which includes using Braille coding and mobility training.

When teachers were asked about the training programmes, the general view was that it was too theoretical and lacked hands-on experience of how to support the students with the available resources in the classroom. For example the Arabic teacher explained that what they actually needed was more context-related training:

*We need training that is related to the situation in our schools and real strategies according to our abilities and resources and not just theoretical information, pictures and videos of ideal classes that has many resources*

This view was also shared by the English teacher who elaborated that the portfolio training did not provide the necessary skills for class management especially when student abilities are

varied and diverse: “I do not feel that I am capable of dealing with difficult cases, especially when the classroom also has other students with learning difficulties”.

However they did acknowledged the benefits of the training in introducing the philosophy of inclusion and the different types and categories of disabilities. Teachers had also grasped the idea of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and differentiated worksheets, which was a relief as they were worried about the variance in academic levels in the classroom, as explained by the English teacher

*I found the workshop about the types of disabilities very useful but I was worried about the achievement of those students when included in the classroom. How could they cope with the demands of the curriculum? However, the next workshop was useful, when it introduced the concept of the IEP and the differentiated worksheets and exams; I can see now that it is possible, although sometimes difficult without help. You see, it would not be fair to evaluate the disabled students like their peers which will also affect the evaluation of my performance.*

The special education teacher confirmed that the training was of great benefit with respect to preparing the IEPs and the differentiated worksheets, and that this supported her when she assisted the teachers in preparing and monitoring these documents. However, the Arabic teacher was not quite as enthusiastic about the whole process:

*I am not very fluent yet in creating the IEP and the differentiated worksheets, as the training was very limited, but I can get help and guidance from the special education teacher.*

The school principal, and the special education teacher identified another challenge regarding the training schedule; they explained that the timing was inconvenient as it entailed teachers losing a whole working day every Tuesday for a full school term. This in turn added to the workload of the other teachers, and was perceived to be a burden on them to cover their



colleagues' absence. The principal suggests that all training should take place at the end of the year in June, as the primary schools do not carry out end of year exams, and there would be less teaching and administrative pressures.

## 2. *School structures*

There are two aspects to the school structures; the first concerns the placement of the students with respect to enrolment, progress monitoring and end of year assessment, and the second one involves all the modifications and accommodations in school architecture, class environment, curriculum, teaching strategies and testing needed to support students with disabilities.

*Students' placement:* The principal, zone coordinator and special teacher all confirmed that enrolment of new students with disabilities is carried out through the referral system in the zone office (see Admission and enrolment in Section 4.1). The special education teacher explained that they were currently in the process of enrolling two students in grade four:

*We are currently trying to enrol them in the inclusion programme so that they can receive services of the special education department, such as differentiated assessment which will allow them to continue their education in middle and secondary school. The process usually takes time, may be up to a full academic year and the student will have to go through many tests, but the real challenge is mainly getting the parents to agree, because they fear cultural stigma. They prefer to label their child as lazy rather than disabled. But the problem is that the child then will not be able to progress beyond middle school or even primary.*

IEPs are kept in the student file under the supervision of the special teacher who consults with the subject teachers and the zone coordinator in stating the long term and the short term objectives. It seems that parents have a limited role to play in this school with respect to

monitoring IEPs. Although their signature is required, none of the IEPs observed had the parents' signature. Upon enquiry, both the zone coordinator and the special teacher explained that they get verbal consent from parents and are in constant communication; however, she went on to explain that:

*Parents differ in their involvement, some are very involved with weekly phone calls and meetings often to discuss and report progress and concerns. However other parents consider all is our responsibility and they do not even come to normal parents meetings.*

As for end of year assessments, the special education teacher confirmed that both Hind and Amal have been sitting their examinations in the resource room, to allow for extra time and question reading, if required. They have both been able to achieve many of their IEP objectives in Arabic and Maths and accordingly new and revised objectives are planned for the new academic year in the next grade.

*Accommodations and modifications:* The school has been equipped with ramps and toilets and special buses, although in the case of Amal and Hind none were applicable. As for the class environment, there had been no modifications or accommodations aside from the fact that both students have been observed to be seated in the front row on a mixed ability table to facilitate peer tutoring during group activities. There is no special curriculum; instead the students use the same books, except that they follow their objectives, as stated in their IEPs. This was explained by the zone coordinator:

*The curriculum is not modified per se, what the teachers have to do is to delete the difficult concepts. So it is sort of modified but only by deletion of difficult concepts and keeping it basic. The modification is carried out as a cooperation exercise between the special education teacher and the subject teacher, based on their knowledge and*

*experience of the child's ability as well as the recommendation provided in the assessment report.*

The problem, to date, for teachers is that they are not experienced enough in identifying the particular needs and capabilities of students with different disabilities, so the choice of what to delete and what to keep is hit and miss. This was reinforced by the Arabic teacher, who suggested the need for teaching guides to accompany each subject book which is directly related to children with disabilities, with practical examples and suggested worksheets.

During the Arabic lesson, Amal got a differentiated worksheet which was prepared in collaboration with the special education teacher. Amal was required to identify the letter by circling it, while the rest of the students were required to write the whole words. However in the English lesson, Hind was given the same worksheet as her peers, but was not expected to answer all the questions. Moreover, the accompanying page in the book was too advanced, so Hind was left puzzled, while her peers on the table were solving the book exercise. Once they finished, they guided her to circle the correct answers, and she did it mechanically. Such situation need not take place, if they could anticipate, and provide suitably differentiated exercise books in advance, thus maintaining consistency.

The Arabic teacher in Amal's case stated clearly that it was a burden to have Amal in the classroom, especially when explaining a new concept. Amal was not disruptive by nature, but she was observed to be drifting away, and clearly losing interest most of the time, while the teacher was explaining a concept using a multimedia presentation. She was not given any activity to occupy her, such as a worksheet or any learning aid; it could be as simple as a box of coloured pens to arrange which would help in developing her fine motor skills. The Arabic teacher pointed out that this kind of creative thinking was something of a luxury, particularly as one of the challenges of an inclusive classroom was time management:

*I have quite a heavy curriculum that I have to cover for the whole classroom, which gives me very little time to be able to support the students with disabilities. It is not just the IEPs that I have to worry about; each classroom also has students with learning difficulties for whom I also have to carry out remedial plans. So it is all very time consuming and I do not get to spend enough time to support everyone, which is very frustrating.*

The special education teacher reached a solution that was happily followed by the Arabic and Maths teachers, where they collaborated in teaching, but each in her own classroom. In this system, each student attended four classes a week for each core subject (Arabic and Maths) in the resource room (60% of lesson time), where all the main skills are covered, and they could then attend lessons in the mainstream classroom twice a week for each subject, only for extra exercises and revision. The special education teacher argued strongly her belief in this arrangement:

*I believe in individual learning, and I found that supporting the students in the classroom is a waste of effort and it causes disruption to the class, while when students come to the resource room, as you will see, they will get the concentrated attention that they need in order to gain the skill. Most of the students with disability have a very short concentration span and they tend to forget very easily so they need a lot of concentrated repetition which is not possible in a class of 20 students. The class teacher cannot give that time and when I try to support them in the classroom I only cause disruption.*

### *3. Support services*

Support services, currently, only include speech therapy and educational psychologist counselling. The zone is currently understaffed with regards to support services as stressed by the zone-coordinator.

*We are, as I said short of staff. In our zone there are 75 cases of inclusion, while we only have 2 speech therapists and 3 psychologists. This is a great challenge because the students cannot make the progress without the support services. We are also missing occupational therapists and physiotherapists.*

The special education teacher and the principal complained that both Hind and Amal did not get more than one session per month of speech therapy and counselling. Both parents requested that the school should find a solution as both their daughters were making minimum progress with respect to speech, and Amal's mother was very concerned:

*My daughter has Down syndrome, so unless she gets more help with her speech, she would not be able to progress into middle school, which might mean that she will need to go back to the rehabilitation centre. I think that would be devastating for her as she is currently enjoying the school a lot.*

During class observations, it was noticed that both Hind and Amal were in need of speech therapy, as their pronunciation was not clear and they were both very shy and thus spoke very softly. School documents such as the school enrolment report and the resulting IEP for both students required regular speech therapy sessions as well as counselling to aid social interaction.

#### *4. Assistive technology*

All the classrooms are equipped with a computer and a data show projector to display multimedia presentations which are employed by all the school teachers in delivering lessons. However, the special education teacher explained that the school was not provided with any aids to specifically support Hind and Amal. Consequently, she has provided simple aids (at her own expense), such as an FM device, consisting of a microphone attached to a speaker to help project their voices. Both Amal and Hind were observed to make full use of it, during the

support class in the resource room, and in the regular classroom. The girls were visibly excited to use it and it promoted their participation in class activities. She also provided Amal and Hind with special grip pens to be used only during the support classes; however she demanded more support resources to develop their fine motor skills to aid their hand writing, which should be provided for by the school. The English teacher suggested that they should be given touch computers or I Pads which would aid their handwriting, as it was very difficult for them to follow any writing exercises during class time.

#### *5. Awareness programmes*

The findings with respect to awareness programmes addressed two questions:

1. What current school programmes are in place to promote awareness among teachers, students and parents about disabilities as well as the rights of individuals with disabilities?
2. Does the school run any community awareness programmes?

The school ran a number of activities to promote awareness about disabilities and inclusive education. The school principal and the special education teacher were happy to provide information about the various activities and strategies followed (documented with pictures and leaflets) to ensure that parents and children are aware of the new system:

1. The school carries out an open day in the first week of each year to ensure that all parents are aware of the new initiative. This day includes presentations about types of disabilities and how the students will be supported in the school.

2. New students with disabilities start school in the second week, to allow teachers to prepare their peers in the classrooms and the school in general.
3. On their first day, a special morning assembly is carried out by their colleagues to welcome them into school.
4. The school has an open door policy for parent's visits and concerns, in addition to the scheduled one to one parents meetings every term.
5. The school makes a point of celebrating special occasions such as Disability Week, White Cane Day, Down Syndrome Day and Deaf Week with special programmes in cooperation with neighbouring rehabilitation centres in the zone. Parents are also invited to all these events to promote awareness.

#### **4.2.2 Exploring inclusive education (Research question two)**

In this section, I examine the emerging evidence from Case A that supports the concepts of inclusive cultures, policies and practices based on the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow 2011) (see Appendix 9, for the main indicators) in order to address the second research question.

##### *1. Inclusive cultures*

The general attitude around the school from the principal, to the teachers, and the parents is one of apprehension, based on the fact that the provisions provided have not been enough to make the inclusion of the students academically viable, although they all agreed that it has been socially successful. For example the zone director said:

*Teachers were very apprehensive about the initiative; they were worried about the extra load of work. They also felt inadequate to support disabled students so there was a lot of fear involved. They were worried about failure to do the job properly.*

Through the interviews, all the participants were questioned about their belief in inclusive education. The predominant feedback was that inclusive education could be successful, but needed many conditions to be agreed and implemented. These conditions can be summarised into the need for more provisions such as practical training, regular support of specialists (according to specific disabilities), less workload in terms of the number of classes and the number of students within classrooms and finally, incentives for teachers which were both moral boosting and financially rewarding.

The principal and some teachers are enthusiastic about future prospects and do not see inclusion attaching a stigma to the school, despite the fact that the first year they received numerous complaints from parents of high achieving students, which resulted in the transfer of two students to a non-inclusive school following their parent demands.

On the other hand, the special education teacher made it clear that she only believed in social inclusion, preferring the previous setting of having a special classroom:

*I believe that social inclusion is very important and all the students should be in the same school together, but for the academic side I don't see that including all the students in the same classroom in all the lessons is of benefit academically. I still prefer to support the students with difficulty separately because I can get much better results and I can give them better attention. Also, the students with disabilities are happier to be in the special classroom and they feel safer especially at the beginning. They need time and then they can slowly start to accept being with all the students.*

This belief was also shared by the Arabic teacher; she also stressed the need for assistant teachers and highlighted the challenge of keeping the achieving students engaged in such a



diverse ability classroom. She went even further by adding: *“to tell the truth, we are only following this initiative because we have to and because it is the law”*. The English teacher, however, disagreed and maintained that she could see the benefits of having Hind in the classroom, except that it would be more successful if there was a teaching assistant especially at the higher grades, where the gap in academic attainment is much wider.

Both parents were very excited about the new initiative, as it gave their children the chance to be educated alongside their peers, as well as the possibility of progressing into middle and secondary schools. However, they also demanded more support services especially with respect to speech therapy in order to advance their academic achievements and capabilities. They both confirmed that their daughters had adjusted well in the mainstream setting and that they were always happy to go to school; Hind’s mother states:

*The school has explained to us that this system allows Hind to attend the normal classes with all the other students and that she will not have to repeat any years, but I think she needs to be in a special class more so that she can progress faster. But, Hind is very happy so maybe it is good and successful, but she needs more help to learn good writing.*

Students were also observed to support their disabled peers during lesson delivery and playtime. They were observed assisting both Amal and Hind in organising their books and solving the worksheets. Amal and Hind were also active members during group activities in the classroom and play time. Students not only seemed to understand the concept of inclusion and disability but also that they needed to be supported, as they stated when I asked a group of grade four and five students during playtime about their disabled peers:

*We understand that these girls who are having difficulty and disability are now in our classrooms and should not be alone anymore, and we have to take care of them and we should be kind to them.*

Asking them how they were different, they said *“they cannot learn like us and they need our help like sometimes in the classroom or to buy their lunch from the canteen”*. However, one of the girls disagreed and said: *“they are not all nice, there is one girl in our classroom who is always hitting us and she pokes us with her pencils, I don’t like her and I will not help her and I will not play with her”*.

In this school, teachers were observed trying to put the initiative into action (practices will be discussed later), but the drive for their hard work was not based on their belief in inclusive education as a human right, as stemmed more from their Islamic belief of duty towards the weak and the needy. Believing in the human right for students with disability to be in the mainstream classrooms has yet to be developed. The teachers in Case A school were carrying out their duties towards students with disabilities only because they had to, and viewed inclusion through a charitable lens; a righteous deed that will please God, rather than an essential part of their duties as teachers. The Arabic teacher, when she was asked about her daily duties in an inclusive classroom, said the following:

*I do not get to spend enough time to support everyone, which is very frustrating. I am doing my best right now, it is not easy but we will work it out, it is our duty to God to help the weak and the needy.*

Similarly, the special education teacher said *“it is a duty to God to help these children, and we will be rewarded for it. I always consider they could be my children”*

The second aspect of school cultures concerns the relationship among stakeholders. The most recurring features of the relationships on all levels were respect, appreciation and support.

Parents held the teachers in high esteem, showing them a lot of respect and appreciation for their efforts; they had a direct relationship particularly with the special education teacher.

When asked about parents' channels of communicating with the school, the special education teacher said:

*Open channels, open doors. Parents can walk in the school anytime they like. The school also organises parents evening each term to involve the parents in their children's progress. The parents can ask to speak to me by telephone and for the students with disabilities they even have my mobile number.*

This view was reiterated by the English teacher:

*The school has an open door policy, parents can contact the principal or the social worker and then they can talk to me. I don't have any problems in this direction. Also parents attend the parents' meeting every term. However parents are different in terms of their support, some are always calling in and asking and others do not even attend the parents' meetings.*

Amal's mother was happy to stress the great support she received from the school:

*The special education teacher has been so supportive, even if I do not call, she always keeps me informed about Amal's progress and she has helped me a lot in dealing with Amal. I am really very thankful for her great efforts with Amal. The problem is out of her hand, because Amal need more speech therapy and she needs therapy to make her fingers stronger for writing.*

However the special education teacher highlighted a number of challenges concerning the relationship:

*We are very happy when the parents communicate with us; it gives me more incentive to work with the child because of the feedback. I wish all parents can cooperate, but*

*sometimes mothers have many responsibilities of other children and also a job and others might be from different ethnic backgrounds so they do not speak good Arabic.*

Moreover, the school principal elaborated that parents' refusal to accept their child's special needs, continues to be a great challenge. The main reasons being, the fear of social stigma and the fact that the process of assessment and certification for students with disabilities in grade twelve are still not finalised.

As for the relationships among the school staff, respect and support were also the predominant features. It was observed during my visits, as I was walking through the school corridors, that staff in general spoke respectfully to each other and formally addressed each other with (Ostatha = teacher ), whenever they discussed working aspects. Mutual respect and appreciation also emerged during interviews; for example, the Arabic teacher praised the special education teacher for her support:

*It all depends on the cooperation between me and the special education teacher. She has been a great support and she helped me a lot in understanding the different cases and I follow her recommendations on how to deal with the students and how to prepare the special worksheets and the exams according to the ability.*

The relationship between the students was also observed to be based on mutual support and respect. In the classroom, peers were supportive throughout the lesson; in assisting with worksheets, encouraging contribution in group competitions and arranging school books for their disabled peer. During play time, Hind was observed playing with her classmates, while Amal was assisted by her peers to buy her sandwich from the canteen. However, this seems to be the norm mainly in younger grades, while behavioural challenges appear in grades four and five, causing relationships to be less supportive. This was confirmed by the English teacher:

*The main problem is in the higher classes and when the student has a behavioural problem where she is aggressive with her peers so they don't like her and they don't like to help her. I tried to befriend her but I am not a psychologist and I don't understand her disability*

The last aspect of school cultures is the relationship between teachers and students. Respect and support were the main features again, where students were treated fairly during class participation, and encouraged to contribute whenever possible. However, on more than one occasion, at the end of a class observation teachers could be heard commenting on the difficulties of class management and the use of phrases such as “*she does not understand*”, “*she cannot comprehend the lesson*”, and “*she can be here, but I cannot give her much attention in the classroom*”, within earshot, and occasionally, in the presence of the students. This could be quite offensive to students; unfortunately, it is a widespread culture, where adults speak about children (especially the ones with disabilities), in their presence, assuming they do not understand or are taking any notice. This is a valid point that would need to be addressed in future awareness training for teachers, and parents.

As for school welcoming rituals for both parents and students, the principal explained the process emphasising the importance of carrying it out at the beginning of the year to support the students' settling in the new surroundings:

*Last year we welcomed three new students through the 'School for All' initiative, we delayed their enrolment for one week, while we introduced the idea to their colleagues during class time and school morning assembly. On the day they joined we had a special welcoming programme during the morning assembly performed by their colleagues. We also allowed the parents and helpers to be present in the school for the first few days just to assist in their adjustment.*

This was confirmed by Amal's mother who expressed her appreciation for the school's effort in helping Amal to adjust to the school day, as she was concerned about the attitudes of Amal's peers.

## *2. Inclusive policies*

The 'School for All' guidebook (MOE 2010) is in itself the main policy document for inclusive education. However, it was noted that the school had only one copy in the principal's office, and although it is available online, teachers and parents did not know about it. The guidebook contains lists of recommendations that should be enforced in schools with regards to the role of the school principal, the special education teacher and the subject teachers in an inclusive environment. Such a document should be discussed through meetings and workshops in order to enhance the understanding and the practice of inclusive education.

The referral and enrolment of students in the Case A school follows the guidelines as it is carried out by the zone office. The principal explained that the school strives to support the students with learning difficulties and does not refer any case to the zone assessment unless the school assessment team decide that the curriculum is inaccessible to that student. The school has developed a programme to help students with learning difficulties by designing remedial plans with respect to their difficulties. The remedial plans involve small group support for students with learning difficulties during activity periods and free time as well as during the last month of the year to help the students' transition to the next grade level. The school principal explained that, since year retention is not allowed in primary schools (by a Ministry decree), the burden is on teachers to make every effort to help students advance to the next level. However, this policy has caused students, and some parents, to focus less on hard work during the primary school years. As for inclusive education, some parents of

students with learning disabilities refuse to acknowledge their children's needs since they were going to be moved to the next grade anyway. However, they still demanded the support for children but without the label.

The school principal commented about the policy regarding types of disabilities accepted by the school that they did not have any problems as yet, and they had accepted the students referred with no complications. But she went on to explain the policy as follows:

*We usually accept children in a form with one month observation period; if the student can conform to the school day, then he will stay with us otherwise the students will be referred to other schools in the area or to one of the special needs centres depending on the case.*

As for transition to middle school, the principal and the special education teacher explained that the school had created a programme where the subject teachers and the special education teacher made contact with the future middle school for students with disabilities, in order to facilitate their smooth transition. This programme could entail early school visits, as well as continuous support during the course of the first year in the new school setting.

Finally, the behaviour policy in the school is not based on disciplinary exclusion; rather the principal explained that the school support team usually intervened with a behavioural remedial plan in cases where subject teachers complained of behavioural problems in the classroom. The English teacher explained that they recognised that the current behaviour problems in Grades four and five were direct results of lower academic attainment. So a major part of the remedial plan revolved around supporting academic achievement, as well as behavioural modification sessions with the social worker. However, such students sometimes are in need of more professional support, probably rendered by an educational psychologist, which has yet to become established in order to produce positive results.

### *3. Inclusive practices*

Inclusive school practices are analysed within four school aspects: (1) students' access and participation, (2) teaching strategies and teachers' collaboration, (3) curriculum and activities and (4) parents and community involvement.

Students' participation in learning activities in the classroom was observed on many occasions. Classroom teachers encouraged all students to participate in discussions and they were all given positive feedback for their participation. Both Hind and Amal were given the chance to participate, especially writing on the board, which was considered the most exciting during class discussions. The Arabic teacher commented that giving Hind the chance to write on the board, at least once, improved her concentration. Hind was also observed participating in a PE class, and documents showed that Hind and Amal participated in school activities such as morning assembly, sports day and various school trips. However the challenge still lies in accessing the curriculum. The teachers' experience in delivering differentiated lessons is very limited. Although the teachers used a variety of strategies in delivering their lessons such as multimedia presentations, games and group competitions, the resources used and the teaching strategies fell short of promoting critical thinking or individualised learning.

Students with disabilities were seated in the first row among their peers on mixed level group tables, which promoted group interaction and peer tutoring. However, the teachers maintained that concrete learning took place during the support classes rather than in the mainstream classroom. Teachers' collaboration, as a result, is limited to guidance from the special education teacher in creating differentiated worksheets and tests, as well as cooperation when setting up long and short term objectives of the IEP. Tests are usually carried out in the resource room to facilitate a suitable environment, with extra time and assistance in reading



questions. All teachers asserted the need to have assistant teachers so that more collaboration could take place. They all said that there was no time to dedicate to students with disabilities, given the extensive curriculum needed to be covered as well as managing remedial plans for students with learning difficulties.

The principal summed up the results of two years of inclusive practices in the following points:

- There is clear progress with respect to students' behaviour, and their social inclusion in the school is apparent in terms of communication with their peers and contribution in and out of the classroom.
- There is also an apparent awareness about disabilities with respect to other students and their families, where it is becoming normalised and acceptable to have the children with disabilities included in all school activities.
- There is some progress in Maths and Arabic writing and reading, however she explained that the progress is slow due to lack of speech and occupational therapy.

As for the role of parents in supporting the school, the school principal explained that some parents were quite active; they participated in the mothers' council, and the school board

*We have a mothers' council in the school, where the active mothers support the school in all the events and we depend on them especially during activity days and celebration days. We also have parents as board members on the school council. These are the active parents that care a lot about the school. We value their contributions both their opinions and their monetary contributions in many events.*

### **4.2.3 Inclusion...Only because we have to!!**

During the analysis of Case A, it was noticed that the phrase ‘we are carrying out inclusion only because we have to’ appeared repeatedly. Other phrases included: ‘It’s the law, so we have to accept these children in the classrooms’, ‘the children are here, so we will make our best effort to educate them’, ‘It’s the law, and it will be compulsory sooner or later, so it is better to have a head start so we can become a better school’; all of which indicated that this school had adopted the initiative only because they felt compelled to. The school had succeeded in supporting social inclusion, the students and their parents were welcomed and valued on all occasions. However, the school leadership, represented by the principal and the special education teacher, did not truly believe in inclusion, as a result the general inclination was to support students outside the classroom, on a pull-out basis in the resource room. Teaching collaboration was defined as the special education teacher assisting the subject teachers in understanding the IEP, and preparing a minimum number of worksheets, as long as the bulk of support was carried out in the resource room. Teacher collaboration, as a joint effort of complementing each other’s efforts and expertise within the classroom, was not a considered strategy. In summary, Case A had succeeded in creating inclusive cultures to a certain extent but required a lot of support to achieve more inclusive policies and practices.

### **4.3 Case B – Trapped Inclusion**

Case B is one of the oldest primary schools for boys in a rural area. It only caters for grades one to three, unlike most of the primary schools in the UAE, with a total of 422 students. The school is housed in an old single storey building, with a courtyard in the middle, which is used for all activities and playtime, as the school does not have any other recreational areas. There are no shaded areas, which makes it quite harsh during the hot months. The principal

maintained that she was always trying to secure funds, whether from the MOE or donations to maintain a healthy and safe school environment for all children, in terms of air-conditioning, sanitation and electrical wiring, especially with the growing need for computers and other communication equipment.

Although this rural area, with very old buildings is basic, the zone coordinator maintained that it had been one of the first Emirates to cater for special education in mainstream classrooms. In 2007 prior to the initiative; the zone piloted the inclusion of a number of cases into mainstream classrooms. It included three students with vision and hearing impairments in primary schools, as well as the social inclusion of students from rehabilitation centres through a weekly visit to mainstream schools.

Education for children with disabilities in this area has always been supported by the schools, either in special classrooms, or on a pull-out basis in resource rooms for students with mild learning difficulties. The other available alternative is the rehabilitation centre for special needs which accepts national students with varying disabilities. The zone has a total of 568 students in need of special services according to the following tables:

Case	Total	Provisions/ Services
Disabilities (see table below)	287	IEPs and special services (following ‘School for All’)
Academic problems not resulting from disabilities	281	Remedial plans with pull-out support in school’s Resource rooms

**Table 4.3 Special educational needs in zone area of Case B**

Disability	Total	Disability	Total
Speech and language disorders	128	Vision impairment	23
Intellectual disabilities	31	Hearing impairment	16
Learning difficulties	26	Physical disabilities	22
Behavioural emotional disorders	3	Autism	1

**Table 4.4 Types of disabilities included in mainstream classrooms in zone area of Case B**

### 4.3.1 Transforming into ‘School for All’ (Research question one)

The school joined the initiative in 2009; at the time of my study it included four students with disabilities who received the MOE provisions according to the table below (see Table 4.5).

Student	Disability	Enrolment Year / Grade	Current Grade
Hamid	Back injuries, gross and fine motor skills disorder and speech disorder	2011/G1	G1
Ali	CP, partial vision impairment, motor developmental delay	2009/G1	G3
Zayed	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) , language & speech disorders	2010/G1	G2
Abdulrahman	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), language & speech disorder	2010/G1	G2

**Table 4.5 Students serviced by ‘School for All’ initiative in Case B school**

Zayed and Abdulrahman were selected as participants for the study, although Ali would have been more suitable as he is older; however, he was out of the country on medical leave. Other participants included the zone co-ordinator, school principal, subject teachers (Zayed’s Arabic and Maths teachers, Abdulrahman’s English teacher), special education teachers and Abdulrahman’s mother. The findings will be organised according to the five categories of ‘School for All’ provisions (see Figure 4.2).

#### *1. Teachers development and training*

In 2009, all subject teachers who taught students with disabilities together with the school principal, the special education teachers and the social worker attended the ten portfolio workshops. The teachers criticised the training for being too theoretical and lacking in hands-on skills that could be transferred into the classroom; however, they all agreed that it familiarised them with types of disabilities and the possibility and necessity of inclusion. In

2010, the two special education teachers in school B became trainers of the portfolio workshops, where they confirmed the issue of the material being too academic and theoretical; however, they said that they had been improving it based on their own experience, and the feedback from the teachers had been quite positive:

*The workshops as they are given to us on the CD and the supporting guide is very theoretical and is full of details that are very academic and out of context, so we have improved it based on our experience where we now use practical examples based on our curriculum and experience in the UAE school culture. Many of the teachers that attended our workshops still keep in contact, and they call us back with questions especially with respect to class environment adaptation, teaching strategies of certain lessons in Arabic and Maths and interaction with students of certain disabilities.*

One of the special education teachers expressed her excitement as she had been selected to attend workshops on supporting students with autism “*I am happy because it will help me in supporting Zayed and Abdulrahman, and any other students with communication disorders*”. However, she expressed the urgent need for more specialised training to support other disabilities such as sensory impairments, behavioural and emotional disorders and Down syndrome.

## *2. School structures*

Findings concerning school structures refer to the students’ placement with regard to enrolment, progress monitoring and end of year assessment on the one hand, and modifications and accommodations in school architecture, class environment, teaching strategies, testing and curriculum on the other.

*Students’ placement:* The school follows the recommendations of the MOE with respect to students’ placement. The school does not have a special classroom anymore, and all students

are included in the mainstream classrooms with appropriate IEPs. They are all supported by the special education teachers, on an individual basis, in the resource room. According to the school timetable, the students attend all subjects in the mainstream classrooms, except the core subjects of Arabic and Maths, where 50% of lesson time is carried out in the resource room either in small groups or on an individual basis.

Student progress is monitored at the end of each term, where the special education teacher along with the subject teachers, produce the end of term report. The zone coordinator and the principal then monitor the report, and supervise any required changes to the IEP. The Arabic teacher describes the process:

*We provide term reports about each child. We also have to show all worksheets that have been done by the students to allow monitoring their progress every term because the IEP will be updated accordingly. All these reports are monitored by the school principal and the zone director*

Abdulrahman's mother confirmed that parents are also involved, whenever there are changes, whether positive or negative. The teachers maintained that the relationship with parents is usually through the special education teacher, who usually explains the need for change.

As for the end of year assessment, the Arabic and Maths teachers maintained that Zayed sat his exams in the resource room, so that he could have extra time and the assistance needed, while the English teacher tests Abdulrahman in the classroom with his peers. His exams were mostly based on oral participation and differentiated papers. She added that his level in English was better than his peers, as he had attended an English pre-school. At the end of year, students got their reports with attached IEPs that specified their achieved objectives and the planned objectives for the next year. All students, including those with disabilities, are moved to the next grade and there is no class retention.

*Accommodations and modifications:* The school has been equipped with the standard structural modifications of ramps, special toilets and special buses, where bus drivers are trained to assist students with disabilities. The school principal explained that the age of the school building continues to be a challenge in terms of required modifications needed for inclusion. The school tiling, for example, was found to be unsuitable for wheelchair access; as a result the school had to fix new tiling in some classrooms and corridors to provide easy access for students with physical disabilities, such as Ali.

Teachers were observed to accommodate both Zayed and Abdulrahman by following a number of teaching strategies. Both boys were seated on the front table with a mixed-ability group to facilitate peer tutoring during class activities and competitions. Also, both boys were given up to five minutes of individual instruction to prepare them for understanding the concept delivered; they were sometimes provided with differentiated sheets. Finally, they were both given the chance to participate during the lesson and were motivated with positive feedback.

In the Maths lesson, the special education teacher was present in the classroom, where she sat beside Zayed during lesson delivery. She only assisted him and two other boys, who follow remedial plans, when a non-differentiated worksheet was distributed. This model of co-teaching, where the special educator only hovers over the students with disabilities or learning difficulties can lead to stigmatising these students in the classroom, but it is the easiest arrangement, since it does not require prior planning between co-teachers. Abdulrahman's mother, who is a teacher in the school, commented about this model of co-teaching:

*The special teacher sometimes attends the class with him, but it is not structured properly for him to make use of her attendance, that's why he is better off attending the special time with her in the resource room.*

Both teachers explained that there was no special curriculum; instead the students used the same books, except that they followed the objectives stated in the IEP. This was considered a major challenge as the Arabic teacher explained with regards to Zayed's progress:

*We should have a special curriculum that is clear just like the one we have for the rest of the students, where it provides you with a special exercise book that has all the worksheets as well as a teachers' guide. So far I do not know how to deal with him. I can give him two to five minutes as individual time to explain a certain concept or to get him going on a certain task, but sometimes it's impossible. I have twenty two other children to manage, and a curriculum to cover.*

The teachers were observed using teaching resources such as flash cards, models, some multi-sensory resources such as letters, numbers and shapes. The walls had assistive posters of numbers, letters, days of the week and many others relating to subject topics, and teachers were regularly utilising the information during lesson delivery. Many of the observed resources had either been acquired from teachers' own expenses, or produced by teachers and students. However, the classes lacked resources needed to aid the students with disabilities, such as special grip pens, special tables for students with physical disabilities such as Ali, or any form of assistive technology such as, touch pads or speech support equipment, which could support both Zayed and Abdulrahman.

In the resource room, during individualised support, the special education teacher used different teaching strategies to support students' needs. As both Zayed and Abdulrahman have fine motor skills disorders, all their worksheets were dotted to help them master their writing skills before they moved on to unaided writing of letters and numbers. It was noticed that they were using pens with special grips that were thicker to support their writing; however these pens were not used in the mainstream classroom. The special education teacher also used resources to strengthen their fine motor skills such as building blocks, coloured discs of



different sizes and yarns of varied thickness to tie. Furthermore, the smart board was used to display interactive exercises, where the boys could easily write with their fingers.

### *3. Support services*

There are five speech therapists in this zone, where the therapists carried out initial visits to the schools at the beginning of the year and organise a schedule to allow at least 45 minute sessions for each student, on a weekly basis; although the ideal situation for students needing speech therapy would be two 45 minute sessions weekly. Other therapists such as educational psychologists would only do school visits if required by social workers or special education teachers. However, the bigger issue was that the MOE still did not have any occupational therapists. There is a genuine and growing need for more therapists so that students can get regular services in order to make a difference. The MOE is currently training university graduates of linguistic studies to become speech therapists this will take time and practice.

In Case B school, both Zayed and Abdulrahman got one session per week of speech therapy, and occasionally two, while there were no provisions for occupational therapy. Parents and teachers perceive the support to be too little. Abdulrahman had been enrolled in a neighbouring hospital, where he received two other sessions weekly with a specialist. His mother argued that it was very costly, but sadly she sees this as the only available alternative to help her son. The special education teacher was very supportive of the mother and she maintained a direct relationship with the specialist to aid Abdulrahman's progress, as she explains below, using a shared diary:

*We keep a diary together so the therapist writes to me about his progress and I work with him accordingly. Every day I record his progress in the diary and she writes back*

*with advice about possible exercises to complement her efforts. This way his speech has improved a little but his understanding and cooperation has improved a lot.*

The special education teacher explained that Abdulrahman's case was more advanced than Zayed's, in terms of speech and language abilities, however the extra therapy sessions had boosted his confidence, as a result of improved communication skills.

#### *4. Assistive technology*

The resource room is equipped with a smart board, which had been useful in preparing multimedia and interactive lessons. It had been of great benefit, especially to students with fine motor skills disorders. The school had also been provided with a mobile interactive board (Mimio), an FM device and a box of general resources that contained special pens, phosphoric rulers, magnifier glasses and a few other resources such as models and blocks, but the manuals were all in English and they did not receive any training on how to use them; this resulted in the limited use of such valuable resources. The 'Mimio' had been utilised in supporting Ali, who has Cerebral Palsy (CP), where he made noticeable progress through using the pad to improve his motor skills. However, it is otherwise not used, and furthermore is kept under lock and key in the resource room. When asked about taking the 'Mimio' to the classrooms to assist lesson delivery in mainstream classrooms, the special education teacher explained that it was her responsibility, she was reluctant to take it out of the resource room, to avoid any possible damage. She also added that there was not enough time to train other teachers to use it.

## 5. Awareness programmes

The principal maintained that awareness is the key to the success of inclusion; therefore, it was important, in her opinion, to tackle it at all levels, teachers, parents, students and possibly the community.

Teachers' awareness was developed through the training portfolio; however, the principal remarked that she also carried out regular meetings with the teachers to discuss their concerns; this was with a view to creating an atmosphere of collaboration, transparency and support amongst the teachers.

Parents are introduced to the initiative through an introductory meeting at the beginning of each year as part of the open day, followed by individual meetings. The principal explained that parents of students with disabilities were initially worried about bullying as well as their children's ability to manage a full school day; however, they soon realised the benefits as their children managed over time to engage in school life and "*they became happy and they felt that the disability of their kids is not something to be ashamed of, on the contrary it is getting their kids a lot of attention and help*", as confirmed by the zone director who added:

*The parents are involved throughout the process of testing and assessment. Some parents are more involved than others as you will expect and most of the time it depends on their educational background.*

On the other hand, parents of non-disabled students complained about the initiative. They were worried about the school becoming less competitive and their children imitating the behaviour of disabled students. This resulted in two parents transferring their children to non-inclusive schools in 2010. However, these were the only two cases, while other parents of students with and without disabilities participated in the schools' programmes to promote

awareness about inclusion, through the parents' council. Some other parents even helped the special education teachers and the school social worker to introduce new parents to the benefits of inclusive education through organizing workshops.

The special teachers also organised other activities to promote awareness among teachers, students and parents such as open days to celebrate various types of disabilities, for example, white cane day, disability week, hearing impairment week. School documents showed an open sports day had taken place in collaboration with the neighbouring rehabilitation centre. In addition, an awards ceremony was held for students with disabilities, and the special education teachers. Moreover, the special education teachers in this school had shown their innovative side, through the creation of a photography exhibition of the successes and accomplishments of individuals with disabilities, thus encouraging all students to celebrate their differences. I had the chance to visit the exhibition, which was open to both students and parents, and it was extremely informative. They also created a computer-based presentation related to inclusion of students with disabilities, to be displayed in classrooms by subject teachers, to help them instil values of participation and cooperation among students.

The zone coordinator confirmed that he also had a direct relationship with the parents based on an 'open door' policy, where parents of all students had the chance to voice their concerns. At the zone level, they also organised parents' awareness meetings supported by leaflets that were accessible and content appropriate to both parents and children. He was thrilled to describe more than one case where parents' attitude changed from extreme resistance of the new initiative to total support both morally and financially.

Finally, the principal explained that the attitude of students had also improved following awareness workshops by the subject teachers prior to including any students. Also, the

teachers rewarded students who were supportive and engaged with students with disabilities.

The principal stated:

*Kids used to be unfriendly and ganged up against them at the beginning, but with more awareness campaigns around the school, the attitude is changing and they feel responsible for their disabled peers.*

This was confirmed by subject teachers; although they did note that the odd instances of jealousy and aggression between the boys still took place occasionally, they tried to deal with such emotions through positive reinforcement based on Islamic values of care and empathy.

#### **4.3.2 Exploring inclusive education (Research question two)**

In this section, I examine the emerging evidence from Case B that supports the concepts of inclusive cultures, policies and practices based on the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow 2011) (see Appendix 9, for the main indicators) in order to address the second research question.

##### *1. Inclusive cultures*

The attitudes and beliefs of stakeholders towards inclusive education is one of the main indicators that reflect school cultures. The zone director is a great advocate for inclusive education, with 25 years of special education experience in various Arab countries. He expressed his belief that the MOE was on the right track to achieving more inclusive settings. He also summarised the requisites for effective inclusion to be:

*We need to change people's mentalities and people's attitudes. It also needs funding and a lot of training so that it will work. Problems in bureaucracy will always delay change, but the concept is the right concept and it follows all the international standards of human rights and the Quran. Our religion dictates to us that we have to*

*look after people with needs and to provide the best service for them without racism or prejudice.*

The principal reinforced this in her pride at being the head of an inclusive school: *“I am not worried about the stigma, we are proud to be a pioneering school especially that the government is helping us to become a better school”*. The special education teachers in this school were also firm believers of inclusion; however, they explained that many subject teachers did not share their enthusiasm mainly due to fear:

*At the beginning we faced a lot of rejection from most of the teachers, because they were afraid of the experience and of the extra work and responsibilities. They all felt incompetent and not sure if they could handle it.*

This rejection had slowly decreased over time due to continuous support from the special education teachers as well as their accumulating experience. In addition, and not to be underestimated, the positive leadership of the school principal was a major factor in the success of the initiative, as maintained by special education teachers:

*The principal cares a lot about our opinions when arranging the timetable. She understands that a child with disabilities requires patience, passion, understanding and a positive attitude. So she co-operates with us every year when placing the children with disabilities to make sure that they are getting the best possible service.*

The English and the Maths teachers were enthusiastic about the initiative; these two teachers were notably younger and they were recent graduates from the Emirates University, where they completed two courses on inclusion as well as work placements. They also mentioned an initial field visit, in 2009, to the neighbouring rehabilitation centre, which further increased their awareness and belief in the abilities of disabled students to learn, and the possible benefits of inclusion with their non-disabled peers.

The Arabic teacher, however, was still apprehensive about the initiative, as she felt inadequate and ill-equipped for the job due to lack of practical training and resources:

*I do not believe in inclusion. So far I do not see that we are equipped to teach such children. They need specialists and we are not. I don't have a solid thing to teach them. We should have a special curriculum that is clear just like the one we have for the rest of the students.*

As for the parents of children with disabilities, the principal explained that a major change of attitude had taken place over the last three years; this was also confirmed by the zone coordinator:

*They now feel that their children are the stars and they want them to be photographed and even in the papers because they finally feel that their education is necessary. For example, before they did not even come to the school because they felt their children were side lined in the special classrooms. But now they are so proud of visiting the school and attending all the activities.*

Abdulrahman's mother agreed with the principal in terms of the social benefits of inclusion; however, she believed only in partial inclusion, where a child would attend the core subjects in a special classroom (with a small group); this would facilitate individualised learning, while the rest of the subjects should be conducted in the mainstream classroom to gain the full benefits of social inclusion. She strongly acknowledged such benefits; however she viewed the current setting to be lacking in terms of academic progress.

Another important indicator of school cultures is the relationships between the various stakeholders. The school principal and all the teachers confirmed that the school had an open door policy with parents. The principal said:

*They know they are always welcome in the school, and we try our best to cater to all their questions and concerns. We are also developing a school website which we would like to be a basis for communication, where parents can give their ideas and also have the information they need ready all the time. We are working on creating a database about each child so that we can trace the progress of the children.*

She also emphasised the special relationship with the parents of students with disabilities, where some parents had become active advocates in spreading the awareness through the parents' council. Parents could contact the special education teachers directly to discuss their concerns or through the social worker. She added "*We have a very close network here and I follow the progress closely with the special education teachers*"

The zone coordinator maintained that he also keeps an effective working relationship with the principal, teachers and parents. He adheres to a schedule of two visits per month for each inclusive school in the zone, where he personally monitors the development of the IEPs and the portfolios of each student. He also observes classrooms and makes himself available to assist teachers especially with respect to preparing the IEPs and lesson differentiation. However, he also expressed his concern about being able to keep up such a momentum of close monitoring, as the number of the schools and students with disabilities has been increasing rapidly every year.

As for the relationships among school staff, respect and support seems to be the main feature. However, frustration resulting from the lack of resources and specialist support compounded with a heavy load of administrative responsibilities, emerged as a constant issue during interviews. The principal was very supportive of her staff and commended their efforts, but was frustrated for them as, in her opinion; the school outcomes did not reflect the extent of their hard work.



## 2. *Inclusive policies*

In this school, the ‘School for All’ guidebook (MOE 2010) which is the main policy document for inclusive education in the UAE, is utilised constantly by the principal and the special education teacher during their meetings, planning sessions and preparation, updating and monitoring the IEPs. During the interviews with all educators, they mentioned the recommendations in the guidebook which reflects understanding and effort in implementing the initiative.

The zone director expressed his concern about a number of challenges with respect to policies; the process for referral sometimes took a long time due to the lack of specialists needed for the multi-disciplinary team to perform the assessments. Another key challenge is the reactive approach to dealing with issues; the impulsiveness in taking decisions without considering the practical consequences which often resulted in abandoning certain plans too quickly; sometimes before their fruits can be reaped. He added: *“Education takes time to show results and at the same time once a decision is well-researched it should not be too complicated to put into practice”*. He, again, highlighted the absence of national cadres with respect to special education and special services such as educational psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, as well as sensory impairment specialists was holding back the success of inclusion.

The special education teachers also revealed another discrepancy in following the MOE policies with respect to student placements and teachers’ workloads:

*So far our school has not been able to follow the recommended standards because we neither have enough classrooms nor enough teachers. So far each teacher is in charge of 40 students with a teaching load of 22-24 hours per week. This goes against the*

*rules for the provision of special education programs as set by the MOE. The problem is that our school is in an old building with a limited budget, therefore we cannot add more classrooms and we cannot have more teachers.*

The solution, in their opinion, is two-tiered; firstly for the MOE to provide two more subject teachers to ease the workload on teachers of inclusive classrooms, secondly, to activate a policy of employing assistant teachers to provide the opportunity for collaborative teaching. When they were asked about the possibility of special educators providing that collaboration, they argued that their timetables were full as they had to support a large number of students with learning difficulties, who had remedial plans, on an individual or small group basis.

Another challenge with respect to students' placement was convincing parents to acknowledge a child's disability, as they saw it unnecessary, given that all children automatically move to the next grade level; this is in accordance with the MOE policies that there is no grade retention in primary schools. This suggests that parents would prefer their children to be labelled as low achievers rather than disabled. However, these students would probably have major difficulties in their transition to middle school without an IEP, and the associated services. The principal and zone coordinator identified the need for more awareness campaigns on this to change the mind set of these parents.

### *3. Inclusive practices*

The principal recognised a 25% - 30% academic improvement in students with disabilities in an inclusive setting compared to the special classrooms, while the social improvements had even more noticeable, as students felt proud to assist their peers with disabilities. These percentages were not supported by statistical data; however, worksheets for both Abdulrahman and Zayed were supplied, which displayed the development of their knowledge

in Maths and Arabic as well as handwriting skills. Students with disabilities also participated in all school activities such as open days, sports days and morning assemblies as depicted in many school pictures, and confirmed by teachers and Abdulrahman's parent.

The special education teachers explained both Zayed and Abdulrahman had communication disorders, so the first year was predominantly devoted to addressing behaviour modification. The main objective was instilling social skills and classroom behaviour such as, sitting in the classroom, accepting instructions, taking turns, sharing equipment, and participating in group work. She maintained that these objectives were achieved to a reasonable extent, so this year was focussed more on achieving academic objectives. Progress in classroom behaviour and social skills was observed during the Maths lesson, where Zayed participated in answering questions, took his turn to write the answer on the board and was cheered by his peers. He also participated in a group activity of identifying shapes. During play time he was observed playing with his classmates, and running around the playground. He later came back to the resource room with his lunch, (consisting of a sandwich and a juice), and he did not get any sweets following the advice of the special education teacher; he was very proud to tell her so.

The special education teacher explained that, such good results would not have been possible without the co-operation of all stakeholders, especially the parents in this case, where she maintained that Zayed's father was very attentive, following his son's progress very closely, supporting all the school activities and insisting that Zayed work hard and be treated just like his siblings. She concluded that it had been very rewarding to see the transformation in behaviour, especially when the parents confirmed that the boys loved coming to school and they got upset when they had to miss school days, for whatever reason, such as sickness or

doctor's appointment. However, she recognised that the process was not easy and the journey is very long before they could claim to have effective inclusion.

The special education teacher explained that effective collaboration in the classrooms was not possible at that time due to the heavy work load; instead she provided support to the subject teachers as follows:

*I start by explaining the IEP objectives and the goals expected to be achieved, then I walk them through the lessons with examples of possible work sheets so they can create similar ones. The students will attend classes in the resource room three times a week for each core subject, accordingly we cooperate to reinforce and support the goals of the IEP.*

Both the principal and teachers emphasised the need for assistant teachers to help in providing more individualised attention to serve the needs of students with disabilities in the inclusive class settings.

As for curriculum modification, it was reiterated by the zone educator as well as the special education teachers that the students with disabilities followed their IEPs, which defines a set of long term and short term objectives. These objectives are derived from the curriculum with appropriate modifications according to the disability. The modifications are carried out mainly by the zone coordinator, together with the special teachers. Practically, the students use the same text books in the classroom, except that they are not expected to use them most of the time, depending on their level. For example in the Maths lesson, as the class are learning to add double digit numbers, Zayed would be learning to add single digits; when the students were identifying and writing the names and the properties of shapes, Zayed's objective was to match the names with the pictures. However in both cases, Zayed

participated during class discussions and group competitions of sorting out models of the shapes.

Finally, the special education teacher maintained that there had been a noticeable change in the attitudes of parents in that year compared to previous ones. The new students who had younger mothers; they were educated, more aware and they followed the media, where there had been a lot of coverage, in the past two years, of the government's efforts to support inclusive education and the rights of individuals with disabilities

### **4.3.3 Trapped inclusion**

In this school, there was a genuine belief in inclusive education which was right based by most of the stakeholders; in addition to genuine efforts to support the students, including extraordinarily supportive parents who are aware and willing to co-operate at all levels.

Despite this, progress is held back; mainly by the lack of professional support with respect to technical training, specialist therapy and inclusive training especially with respect to collaborative teaching. The teachers have been innovative; they have developed their own teaching material, but they could not utilise the highly valuable assistive technology due to the language barrier (the manuals were in English), although the reality is that this should not be a barrier in the presence of English teachers at the school. The lack of structural resources, because the school building is very old, seemed to have a negative impact on the school environment. During my visit in the hot weather, both the teachers and the students seemed very tired and drained, as the air-conditioning was not fully effective, and the school had no shading. These genuine efforts for effective inclusion were hampered by the school physical environment, and lack of support.

#### 4.4 Case C – We are the champions

Case C is a primary school for boys in a rural area; it was established in 1998 and, at the time of the study, had 483 students. It caters for the first cycle of education which includes grades one through to five. In 2003 the school moved to a modern two-storey building with an enclosed courtyard, providing a shaded playing area, which is the standard architecture of modern primary schools in the UAE. The school is clean and tidy with a welcoming foyer, leading to the administration corridor which overlooks the inner courtyard and the classrooms. On approaching the school, a large sign on top of the building read “*My school welcomes special needs ... In my school I am not alone*”, alongside a ‘School for All’ logo. A smaller sign near the outside gate read “*Inclusion Training Centre*”. Once I walked through the gate, two large ‘School for All’ banners were displayed on the reception entrance, and posters of school activities including students with disabilities were displayed in the school foyer. I also noticed that throughout the school, there were many posters displaying positive messages about inclusion and disabilities.

The school has previously catered for students with learning difficulties and mild disabilities in two settings. Students with learning difficulties were supported on a pull out basis in small groups in the resource room following remedial plans; whereas students with mild disabilities attended the mixed-age special classroom on a full day basis, except during activity classes such as PE, music and art where they joined mainstream classes, however, this was not regular.

In 2010, a national non-profit making organisation that aims to support government schools in rural areas to deliver quality education to children of all abilities established a learning centre equipped with educational resources and technology teaching aids in the school. The resource

room was renovated to become the Resource Development Centre (RDC) equipped with a set of technological and multi-sensory learning tools with the aim of supporting the teaching and learning outcomes for all students, including the ones with disabilities. RDC can accommodate up to 25 students, the walls displayed numerous posters to aid learning such as letters, numbers, multiplication tables, animal pictures and names as well as days of the week and months of the year. The organisation continuously monitored the practices in the RDC, and appointed one of the special education teachers to become the RDC coordinator.

#### 4.4.1 Transforming into ‘School for All’ (Research question one)

The school joined the government initiative for inclusive education ‘School for All’ in 2009. Six students were identified as students with disabilities and were included in mainstream classrooms with special services from the Ministry of Education (MOE) (see Table 4.6). The school caters for seventeen other students with learning difficulties in various grades through remedial plans. Both the students with disabilities and those with learning difficulties were supported in Arabic and Maths on a pull-out basis, either during the teaching class hour or during activity classes such as music, physical education or extra-curricular, depending on their respective need.

Student	Disability	Enrolment year / Grade	Current Grade
Mohammad	ADD (mild)	2011/G1	G1
Rashid	Physical disability	2011/G1	G1
Ali	ADD, Language & Speech disorder	2009/G1	G2
Zayed	Intellectual disability, motor developmental delay and partial vision impairment	2010/G1	G2
Faisal	CP, partial vision impairment, motor developmental delay	2009/G1	G3
Khalid	Intellectual disability	2008/G1	G4

**Table 4.6 Students serviced by ‘School for All’ initiative in Case C school**

Zayed and Faisal were selected to be the research participants for the study, as they constitute information rich cases according to the selection criteria. Although Khalid would have been more suitable, he was out of the country on a medical leave. Other participants included the zone co-ordinator, school principal, two special education teachers, Faisal's English teacher and Zayed's Maths teacher. The parents of all the boys declined to participate in the study, although they did not object to the participation of their children within the school day, as long as their names and pictures were protected. The school principal explained that some mothers had very large families with a lot of responsibilities, while others came from ethnic backgrounds and did not speak Arabic.

I will present the findings resulting from the interviews, observations and school documentation with respect to the five categories of the 'School for All' services and provisions.

### *1. Teachers development and training*

The standard ten week portfolio training as well as the introductory seminars about inclusive education provided by the MOE had been attended by most of the subject teachers as well as the principal, social worker and the special education teachers. In addition, the special education teachers were enrolled in the National Cadres Programme for speech therapy, while four other teachers had completed a six hour diploma during the summer holiday in Zayed University involving differentiated teaching and preparing IEPs; this sums up the training programmes provided by MOE.

However, Case C had also benefited from 48 hours of training in the Resource Development Centre (RDC) provided by the non-profit organisation, which mainly involved using technology and multi-sensory learning tools in enhancing teaching strategies to develop



education for all. This has initiated an on-going programme of in-house training, developed by the special education teachers and required by the organisation, consisting of workshops in the resource room for subject teachers and students. There were a total of eleven workshops, in one year, to introduce the various technological resources (E-blocks, Ibsar, Smart board, 3-dimensional program for science). Additional topics were offered such as strategies for learning differentiation for students with disabilities as well as the general rules to support inclusion, through presenting model lessons in Arabic, Maths and Science.

The principal expressed her concern regarding staff retention, as the MOE had a policy of staff transfers within education zones. The school principal pointed out the problem:

*Teachers who are fully trained to use the facilities available in the resource centre and who have attended the inclusion training programmes are moved to other schools, meaning that we have to start again with training, which delays our progress.*

The school is obviously very committed to providing an effective inclusive environment through providing in-house training and also conducting action research as expressed by the school principal:

*We are very committed to the inclusion programme and we have prepared our own research study about it to understand it even more. I will give you a copy, it is in Arabic, and it was used to participate in one of the MOE competitions.*

Action research project was carried out by three teachers, which included qualitative and quantitative data about the school's experience in the last two years. The principal supplied the data gathered which was mainly statistical about the achievements of students over three years, as well as events, and activities to support inclusive education.

As a result of this commitment, the school was appointed as a training centre for the area, where three of the school's teachers delivered training workshops as part of the ten weeks training portfolio offered by the MOE. Subject teachers pointed out that the training succeeded in delivering information about how to identify the different types of disabilities, as well as providing awareness on the possibility of and necessity for inclusion. However, they went on to say that it was too theoretical, especially with respect to class management, and differentiated teaching plans. Teachers expressed their eagerness to gain more hands-on experience that reflected the dynamics of the Emirati classrooms. This is where the English teacher had an opinion about the importance of personal effort, where she stated:

*It is the different experiences that I go through which drives me to become more innovative. I constantly use the Internet and look at examples of other schools. There is so much to learn.*

## *2. School structures*

School structures refer to: (1) the students' placement with regard to enrolment, progress monitoring and end of year assessment and (2) modifications and accommodations in school architecture, class environment, and curriculum as well as teaching strategies and testing.

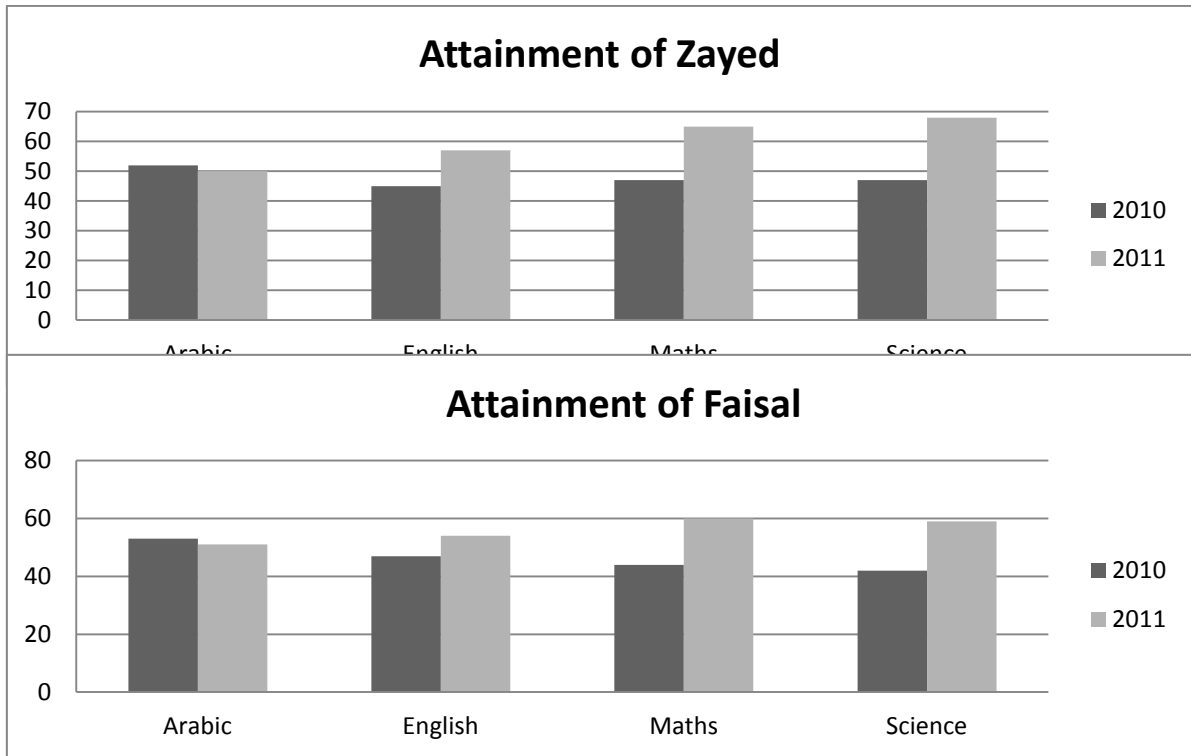
*Students' placement:* Students with disabilities were enrolled in the school based on referrals from the zone office. The special classroom had been closed since 2009, and the students with disabilities were all included in age-appropriate mainstream classrooms, following the recommended IEPs. They were supported on a pull out basis in the core subjects (Arabic and Maths), where each student attended two lessons per week for each core subject individually (30% of lesson time). The English teacher in this school also supported her disabled students

in the Resource Development Centre (RDC) during activity classes as an additional effort, according to their needs.

The principal explained that the process of re-assessment was very lengthy, when the school was faced with a challenging situation, similar to recent experience with one of the students:

*We have a student in grade two, who has been diagnosed as ADHD with speech and language disorder. However, he has not been getting enough services. He is in dire need of continuous psychological support. The psychologist does not come regularly to the school and his case is getting worse as he is not engaging in any of the school activities and is becoming very aggressive with his peers and the teachers. We have been asking from the beginning of the year to look again at his diagnosis, because we feel he needs special services that we cannot provide in the school. He requires a revised diagnosis.*

Students' progress had been closely monitored by the principal and the special education teacher and supervised by the zone-coordinator. The principal asserted that the extra resources and training provided in the Resource Development Centre (RDC) had played a major role in helping the students to progress in the inclusive environment. She commended the teachers for their dedication in supporting the students and was proud to share the statistics about the achievements of Zayed and Faisal (see Figure 4.3); their progress was clear and was attained by both children in most subjects.



**Figure 4.3: Comparison of the attainment over 2 years for 2 students with disabilities**

The principal also confirmed that three of the students with disabilities including Zayed and Faisal had achieved their objectives as per the IEPs for that year (2010), and they started 2011 with new objectives. The other three students moved to the next grade with revised objectives depending on their progress. Again the principal and all the teachers highlighted the struggle with ‘Ali’, the student with the behavioural disorder, as expressed by the English teacher:

*It has been hard to keep his attention in class and he is quite disruptive. He lacks the basic skills of even gripping the pen. I think he needs psychological support and therapy to gain some basic skills before he can be included in the classroom, because lately he has become very aggressive towards his peers and even the teachers.*

*Accommodations and modifications:* The school was equipped with ramps and special toilets, as well as an elevator by the MOE. Staircase handles were added, from the school budget, to ensure the safe and independent movement of students with Cerebral Palsy (CP), who have

balancing difficulties especially when using the stairs. Teachers trained the students on using the handles and they were observed to use them independently and confidently.

All the classrooms in the school had a data show and a computer to assist the teacher in lesson delivery. However, there were no special resources to aid teaching students with disabilities.

The special education teachers said: *“teachers have been trying to make their classes more interesting after attending the training courses, by creating more visual aids, posters and tactile teaching aids, which should help all students, especially the ones with disabilities”*.

She also added: *“Our school has been fortunate to have the Resource Development Centre (RDC), which is full of various technological equipment as well as visual and multi-sensory teaching aids”*. Teachers were observed employing a variety of teaching strategies in delivering their lessons encouraged by the available resources and tools. For example, multi-sensory learning, where children learn by seeing, hearing and touching. Various tools and resources were also observed being used, such as flash cards, magnets, board games, word blocks, puzzles, clock models and many other resources around the room that supported learning colours, shapes and numbers. In all the observational accounts, students appeared articulate in using the technological resources. The teachers confirmed that the available resources together with the individual attention provided, had helped in supporting their education and inclusion within the school.

Students with disabilities followed the IEPs prepared by the special education teacher and were applied with the assistance of the subject teachers. Both teachers explained that they used differentiated worksheets and exams based on the objectives in the IEPs, as well as extra time and assistance as required. During three classroom observations, it was noticed that both Zayed and Faisal were seated close to the board, on mixed ability tables to facilitate peer

tutoring. The worksheets were differentiated; for example, while students were writing the names of the shapes, they had to identify the shapes by either circling or matching them. However, the font on their worksheets was not enlarged to aid ease of reading; they were not given special pens, although they would have benefitted from them, as they both have fine motor skills difficulties and partial vision impairment.

The teachers were enthusiastic about learning more and doing more, but they did keep stressing that their hands were tied due to the lack of budget, as stated by the English teacher:

*I have so many ideas that I wish I could implement in the school, such as having a special activity room full of resources where students can explore their art and design talents and can bring out their energy. I wish I had the funding or the extra time. For example the student with behavioural problems probably will do better if we can explore his talents may be in art, handicrafts, carpentry, sports or may be computer skills.*

She also mentioned that she bought an I-Pad to be used by students with disabilities during class time, so that they could play word games to improve their spelling without the difficulty of writing.

### *3. Support services*

So far, the zone has been challenged by a severe shortage of expertise with respect to support services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and educational psychologist support, as well as all other forms of expertise to support sensory disabilities. The special education teacher explained that the lack of regular specialist services is of particular concern, as it was affecting the progress of students: *“The services provided by the Ministry need to be improved; our students are not getting the critically needed services of occupational, speech and psychological therapy”*. Students in the Case C school got a

maximum of two visits from the speech therapist monthly, which was not enough to produce results. Both Zayed and Faisal need regular sessions of speech and occupational therapy.

#### *4. Assistive technology*

All the classrooms are equipped with a computer and a data show projector to display multimedia presentations which is employed by all school teachers in delivering lessons. However, the school enjoys the benefits of a fully equipped resource centre which has the following equipment:

- Smart board with an attached personal computer,
- ‘E-blocks’ for interactive English and Maths learning
- ‘Ibsar’ software for supporting the Arabic curriculum, especially for students with vision impairment.
- Multi-sensory educational tools and games

Students with disabilities were observed to benefit from the various multi-sensory games, and technology tools such as e-blocks, Ibsar and the smart board. In all observation accounts Zayed and Faisal seem fluent in using the technology resources. The teachers confirmed that the available resources had helped in supporting their education and inclusion within the school. Many observational accounts reflect this practice; the smart board enabled both Zayed and Faisal, who experience difficulty in writing, to be able to practice writing without the use of a pen, this increased their motivation and self-esteem. Also programs such as e-blocks and Ibsar helped to increase their attention span to grasp the presented material, as the concepts were presented using multimedia. The special education teacher also suggested acquiring I-

Pads and laptops with touch screens to help students with fine motor skills difficulties to support and advance their learning beyond writing capabilities.

However, the teachers still expressed the need for more training, as they could see that such resources could be used more effectively. They still do not prepare interactive lessons using the smart board and the use of E-blocks software and Ibsar was still at a preliminary stage.

#### *5. Awareness programmes*

The school principal asserted her commitment to promoting awareness about disability within the school by collaborating with parents and community centres. The school also organised an open day under the name 'My Friend is Disabled', where they invited parents of children with disabilities from the school and from a neighbouring government rehabilitation centre, as well as parents of peer children. The day included lectures about inclusion, awareness about how to assist them in learning and interaction as well as about health and security issues. There was a full programme of activities for the students, where children with disabilities from the community centre enjoyed competitions and games with the rest of the school students. The Civil Defence Department was also invited to participate with a workshop about safety measures with respect to physical and sensory disabilities, in order to inform both teachers and parents.

The school also opened its doors to neighbouring schools, and rehabilitation centres by running workshops in the Resource Development Centre (RDC). Students with disabilities from neighbouring centres have also made regular visits each term. The principal was proud to say that Rashid, who was in grade one this year (2011), had actually visited the school the year before, when he was still in the rehabilitation centre. These visits had proven to be of



benefit to both the students and the teachers, where they made connections with more specialised teachers from the rehabilitation centre to exchange knowledge and experience.

Moreover, the school celebrates yearly occasions, such as the week of special education, the white cane day and the hearing impairment day, where the school is engaged with daily assemblies that revolve around the importance of special education, types of disabilities and the spirit of collaboration and participation. Achieving students with disabilities are recognised and presented with awards in the morning assembly.

#### **4.4.2 Exploring inclusive education (Research question two)**

In this section, I examine the evidence from Case C that supports the concepts of inclusive cultures, policies and practices based on the ‘Index for Inclusion’ (Booth & Ainscow 2011) (see Appendix 9, for the main indicators) in order to address the second research question (RQ2).

##### *1. Inclusive cultures*

The school cultures are presented with respect to: (1) beliefs and attitudes towards inclusive education, (2) relationships between stakeholders and (3) school rituals in welcoming students and parents.

The teachers, school principal and the zone coordinator all view the transition into inclusive education as a step in the right direction. The special education teacher said “*The principal was very excited and we joined in from the start. Now we are a training centre for the area, where teachers from other schools come for workshops every Tuesday*”. Although there is a general belief in inclusive education, which was expressed on many occasions during interviews and observations, they all insisted on the urgent need of regular support therapy,

and more specialised training to ensure positive outcomes, as explained by the special education teacher:

*I believe in inclusion, but we need to be careful depending on types of disabilities. I don't think we are yet equipped to include students with psychological behavioural problems because there is not enough support therapy and we did not have enough training or experience in that respect. We can easily include the students with physical and mild intellectual disabilities as before, except that they are not in the special classrooms now, which has been a challenge to start with, but we are getting better.*

Their main concern was the failure to support the students with behavioural disorder.

However, all the teachers asserted that the real problem was the lack of regular educational psychologist support. The special teacher insisted that in such severe cases, segregation in a special classroom was probably needed until the child gained minimum social and academic skills to enable inclusion in a mainstream classroom.

As for relationships amongst staff in the school, it emerged in interviews that respect and appreciation was the norm; the principal praised the staff's hard work and called for more appreciation from the Ministry for their extra efforts to make inclusion a success. They, in turn, appreciated her commitment and encouragement, as she had consistently and tirelessly been trying to get more support for the school in terms of securing services and funding for new projects. The English teacher mentioned that the principal secured school funding for her and the Maths teacher to attend two conferences about inclusion, as well as a two day workshop on least restrictive environment according to international standards. When the teachers were asked about the fear of social stigma as a school of underachievers, both the teachers and principal expressed pride in their work, especially because their school supported students with disabilities, the school principal said: *"We see ourselves as a school of*

*excellence because we support students with disabilities and we follow the international standards of inclusive education”.*

Equally, the relationship with parents was based on respect, support and understanding. The school appeared to follow an open door policy. On two occasions, when I was interviewing the principal, she received more than one telephone enquiry from parents; she invited them to come in to meet the respective teachers. I also managed to speak to one of the parents, as she was collecting her son at the end of the day and her immediate answer to my question about her interaction with the school was:

*We consider the school as our home, the teachers are second mothers to our kids and the principal is a sister. I always have the chance to ask my questions and they are always ready to help.*

The principal explained that they ran many programmes to improve the relationship with parents, aiming at increasing their awareness about disabilities and improving collaboration with the school. Programmes include regular parents’ meetings, awareness meetings at the beginning of the year for new parents about disabilities and parents were also invited to all celebration days both as helpers and guests.

Cooperation between the special education teacher and the subject teachers was documented and confirmed by teachers, especially with respect to following the IEP objectives and preparing differentiated worksheets and exams. The teachers pointed out that having the various tools in the resource centre had created collaborative avenues for them in preparing lessons using technological teaching aids and multi-sensory materials. However, the special education teacher complained of not having enough time to help teachers prepare more

interesting lessons using the teaching aids, as she had such a busy schedule supporting the seventeen students with learning difficulties.

As for relationship between students, teachers indicated that there had been a positive development over time, where students more naturally supported and cooperated with their disabled peers. The school had been running a support programme by the students called 'The Helping Hands', where each term four students were nominated from years four and five to be the support group for their disabled peers during play time, activities and school trips. Faisal was observed during break time playing with his peers and later they helped him to buy his sandwich from the canteen. In class time, Faisal sat on the front table with his peers, where he was included in table discussions and competitions. He was given the chance to participate on a par with his peers, and was cheered. However, the picture was not so ideal when it came to the student with behavioural disorder, where the students avoided him as he has become aggressive and verbally insulting.

In general, the emergent themes from school cultures are respect, support and appreciation. However, frustration was also apparent on some occasions as teachers felt inadequate and incapable of supporting the students in an inclusive environment as well as being stressed and overworked due to mounting administrative work required in supporting students with disabilities.

## 2. *Inclusive policies*

Inclusive school policies are explored within four school aspects: (1) students' referral, enrolment, placement and transition, (2) teachers' development and collaboration, (3) school interaction with parents and (4) school physical structures and assistive technology.

The principal held a copy of the ‘School for All’ guidebook (MOE 2010) which is the main policy document for inclusive education in the UAE. She also created copies of the pages that depict the roles and responsibilities of the school principal, the special education teacher and the subject teachers and used them in planning school strategies. She said:

*I encouraged all the teachers to read the guidebook, although it defines ideal situations that are not reflected on the ground in our schools. However, it is a reliable source of information that depicts the government future planning with respect to inclusive education.*

The school follows the policies in terms of students’ placement in mainstream classrooms according to the recommended percentage of two students with disabilities in a 20 student classroom (10%). Students are referred from the zone office following the assessment process, while the school has succeeded in referring four students from the special classroom into mainstream following school and zone assessments. The school is still challenged with the reassessment of one student, where the procedure has been delayed for one year to date. The special education teacher explained the compounded difficulty of getting the parents’ consent, as well as finding an alternative setting, as educational psychologist support was not available regularly, and was particularly needed in this case.

As for student participation, the principal and the teachers confirmed that it was a matter of policy that the students with disabilities had to participate in every aspect of school life including sports, music, school trips and all school celebrations. This was apparent in all the documentation provided by the school, and in all the posters that were in the school foyer and along the corridors.

The school set up an inclusion support team, following the guidelines of the ‘School for All’, comprising of the school principal, the special education teachers, the social worker and two subject teachers (Maths teacher and the English teacher, are both participants in this study). This team is in charge of all activities regarding enrolment, assessment and monitoring of progress of all the students with disabilities. Teachers explained that monitoring is carried out on two levels. The principal monitors the teachers’ work through following up interim reports, produced by the subject teachers and special education teacher, about each student with disabilities, which is then appended to the IEP. The second level is carried out by the zone coordinator who visits the school, at least twice a term, to monitor progress and provide advice. There is no grade retention, all students are moved up to the next grade with appropriate IEP objectives based on their performance. Students with learning difficulties follow remedial plans; these are usually more concentrated at the end of the year to prepare students for the next grade level.

The school had taken advantage of every possible opportunity available to develop their teachers’ skills. A large percentage of teachers had attended the portfolio workshops and three of them were certified trainers in that program. The teachers had also benefitted from the extra training provided by the non-profit organisation. As a result, collaboration between teachers became part of the school’s policies, as teachers who attended the training were required to run in-house training workshops for their colleagues; mainly to use all the technological aids and multi-sensory teaching material, as well as creating model lessons employing these materials and aids.

The school has an open door policy with parents, and strives to include all parents in the development of their children as well as build awareness about inclusive education through

on-going awareness programmes. The teachers have direct relationships with parents of students with disabilities, as they need their cooperation and communication channels are open directly with any member of the inclusion support team.

As for the school's physical structures, the Ministry provided the school with the necessary modifications that facilitate access mainly for students with physical disabilities such as ramps, special toilets, an elevator and special school buses. The classrooms were not equipped with teaching materials or equipment that could aid the inclusion of students with disabilities. However, the school had been fortunate enough to have a fully equipped resource centre, which was designed as a full classroom with a 27 student capacity. The Centre had also been utilised for supporting students with disabilities and learning difficulties on an individual basis. In addition, it had been utilised by subject teachers, who had become interested in using the equipment to exercise varied teaching strategies in delivering the lessons, with the aid of the special educators.

### 3. *Inclusive practices*

Evolving inclusive practices entails implementing all school practices that reflect inclusive school cultures and policies. Inclusive school practices are analysed within four school aspects: (1) students' access and participation, (2) teaching strategies and teachers' collaboration, (3) curriculum and activities and (4) parents and community involvement.

As for students' accessing the curriculum, the principal highlighted the teacher's efforts:

*Our teachers have been trying to make their classes more interesting after attending the training courses, by creating more visual materials and posters and creating more tactile teaching aids which are helping all the students and especially the ones with disabilities.*

The teachers were also observed utilising multiple teaching strategies to facilitate learning for all abilities, for example the Maths teacher used discussions and questioning as well as collaborative learning through a group activity. She also utilised various audio and visual materials and related the learnt shapes to life objects, for example, the Kaaba (in Mecca) being shaped like a cube, and the Pyramid being similar to the ones in Egypt. They also identified objects in the room according to shape. The learning atmosphere created was both appealing and interesting for pupils which reflected positively in their engagement. The English lesson was delivered in the Resource Development Centre, where the teacher utilised the teaching aids such as the smart board, block puzzles, 3D-games and the E-blocks to create a competitive and interesting learning environment that allowed both Zayed and Ali to take part in many activities. She later explained that she usually prepared differentiated sheets with more pictures and less words, and tried to provide them with some individualised attention, either during class time or occasionally during free periods.

Collaborative learning was observed during the Maths lesson through a group activity on each table, where all students were encouraged to participate in competitions between tables. Faisal was an active member at his table and was given the chance to answer two questions and identify shapes on the board. Faisal was given a similar sheet to all his peers and used a normal pen, although he could have benefitted from a magnified worksheet and a special grip pen. Despite the fact that the special education teacher was in the classroom, she sat away from Faisal, and allowed him to interact normally with his peers. She made herself available to all students, while Faisal was assisted by his peers along the way and was observed to look happy and confident.



As for teachers' collaboration, it was noticed, from school documentation and interviews, that the inclusion support team in this school was active and had regular meetings; these took place twice a month to discuss and monitor the progress of each student with disabilities. The Maths teacher stated:

*I carry out the lesson planning according to the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for each student, and I keep the special education teacher informed about the progress so that she can scaffold the learning during the support classes (minimum 2 Maths lessons a week or more depending on need). Later we share our difficulties with the team during our meetings.*

The special education teacher was observed in the support classroom with Faisal and Zayed for Arabic and Maths; she explained that she was reinforcing the concepts learned in the classroom in that week, in accordance with subject teacher suggestions. She added that practically the students are supported on a pull out basis for reinforcement of the concepts learned in the classroom.

However, it was noticed that the special education teacher was suffering from initiative overload. The school was adopting too many initiatives which in turn needed administrative work alongside teaching and learning practices. For example, the special education teacher was preparing reports for 'School for All', RDC interim and a final report which included information about students' performance, teachers' development program, audit of use of resources in RDC, and finally the school of excellence reporting

As for relationships with parents, all teachers and the principal asserted the importance of collaboration with parents to achieve better outcomes especially regarding children with disabilities. However, this ideal situation was sometimes a far cry from the reality, as some parents did not take advantage of the numerous opportunities provided by the school. For

example, the school holds an initial parents workshop at the beginning of the year to introduce parents to the school system, the meaning of the IEP and what was expected of children and parents. In addition, the school runs the normal parents meetings in the middle of each term to help parents monitor their children's progress. The school principal also explained that the school had an open door policy with the parents, where they could contact the school at any time to discuss their concerns. The special education teachers explained that the absence of parents sometimes could be due to literacy challenges; where some mothers were from non-Arab origins or simply not educated enough to follow what was happening at school which, in many instances, could delay the progress of the students.

In summary, the principal explained that the special education teachers were both overstretched and overworked as a result of all the support and administration work they now had to carry out, and all the forms that had to be filled in continuously. She maintained that, *“the system from the Ministry is still not clear and they seem to ask for different kinds of documentations which are time consuming”*. However, this documentation is needed to guarantee the students' right to the services, and it has been observed to help the teachers organise their planning. Finally, all participants requested more support in terms of having an assistant teacher and specialised services provided by speech and occupational therapists as well as educational psychologists, as contended by the school principal:

*It will be of great help if the classes with students with disabilities can have assistant teachers, then the load on the subject teacher will be less and she can support these students a lot better.*

#### **4.4.3 We are the champions**

‘School for All’ certainly constitutes the vision of this school. They have managed to show positive outcomes as a result of adopting the initiative, with the majority of staff genuinely enthusiastic about moving on and introducing more inclusive measures. Utilising the facilities available in the RDC to support students with disabilities has played a major role in achieving that success. This demonstrates the advantage of using assistive technology, as well as multi-sensory teaching aids and materials in implementing differentiated teaching strategies.

Moreover, the development and training programme that accompanied the RDC had equipped the teachers with skills, which they transferred to their classrooms; they started creating their own tactile and multi-sensory teaching materials. It also widened their horizons with regard to supporting students with disabilities through the use of the Internet to find additional resources and explore best practices from around the world. However, the various resources in RDC would not have been conducive to success without the leadership of the principal who truly believed in inclusion, and infused her belief by encouraging creativity and innovation. The phrase ‘we are the champions’ reflects the sentiment of a school that is very proud of being inclusive, demonstrating their commitments even through the signage of the school and striving to get better. A final word, the school was recognised in 2012 as a school of excellence and a model of inclusive schooling by the Ministry of Education (MOE).

#### **4.5 Summary**

The analysis of the three case studies reveals a number of differences and similarities in the stakeholders’ perspectives of inclusive education and the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative, which has reflected in the schools’ cultures, policies and practices. The findings suggest that, although the services and provisions provided by the MOE in terms of

teachers' training, students' placement, support services, and assistive technology are almost the same in all the schools, the resulting outcomes were different.

In order to discuss these differences and similarities, a cross-case analysis of the resultant data from the three case schools is presented in the next chapter, in order to identify emerging themes of inclusive school cultures, policies and practices. These themes will be discussed with reference to the indicators provided by the 'Index for Inclusion' by Booth and Ainscow (2011), which are categorised into the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and practices. The chapter will then conclude with recommendations and implications for practitioners, policy makers and future research.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This study sets out to investigate the implementation of provisions and services introduced through the ‘School for All’ initiative in the context of three primary government schools in the UAE. This initiative represents the first practical measure by the MOE to implement the Federal Law 29/2006 concerning the rights of students with disabilities to equal access to education. This study aims to explore the nature of inclusive education as it has evolved in the three schools following the implementation of the initiative, with respect to the three dimensions of cultures, policies and practices based on the ‘Index for Inclusion’ developed by Booth and Ainscow (2011). The Index was chosen as it provides a flexible and adaptable framework for developing and evaluating inclusive schools.

The study adopted a qualitative research approach, using a multiple case study methodology, with the aim of providing a rich, contextualised picture of the phenomenon under study. Data was collected using qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews, participatory and non-participatory observations as well as analysis of documentation and artefacts related to the context of the three schools. Purposive sampling was employed to select the schools and participants (Ministry officials, zone officers, principals, teachers, students with disabilities and parents), allowing the choice of information-rich cases, where the educational provisions and services under study predominantly prevail. An ethical approach was adhered to, throughout the study and was guided by BUID’s (British University in Dubai) ethical code of conduct.

The guiding question for this research study is:

How are three Emirati government primary schools moving towards inclusive education, following the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative?

In order to answer the above question, the following research questions were addressed:

- RQ1. What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government primary schools, as a result of the 'School for All' initiative?
- RQ2. What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative?

The instrument guides were designed to address the educational provisions provided by the inclusive initiative, and were also mapped to one or more of the school dimensions of culture, policy, or practice using the indicators in the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow 2011) as a guiding base. This mapping was necessary to ensure that the data collated corresponded to the research questions.

A pilot study was conducted, prior to data collection, which aided in increasing the clarity, relevance and efficiency of the data collection instruments. It also provided an initial firsthand exposure and understanding of the educational system in government schools with respect to the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative. Provisions for trustworthiness were incorporated within the study through triangulation resulting from employing multiple data collection methods and examining the perspectives of multiple participants. Other provisions included member checking, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement on site.

Data collection and analysis phases in this study were intertwined, where data was collected, recorded and analysed systematically from the three case schools; these were aligned to a data

collection plan. The data set for each school was analysed as a context-situated case study to investigate how each particular school was moving towards inclusive education with respect to the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and practices. The data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 242) into creating data displays (matrices) through the process of data reduction.

In this chapter the results of the cross-case analysis using the context-situated case studies are presented in such a way as to provide answers to the research questions. In the first section (5.2), emerging themes from the three data sets, with regards to the daily implementation of the 'School for All' initiative, address the first research question. The following section addresses the second research question by presenting the emerging themes across the three cases, regarding the evolution of inclusive cultures, policies and practices in the three schools as a result of the implementation of 'School for All' initiative.

This is followed by reflections, resulting from the employment of the 'Index for Inclusion' (Booth & Ainscow 2011) as a tool that provided a comprehensive understanding of the schools development process in general, and that has specifically informed the design of the research questions, the resulting data collection guides and the emergent themes during the data analysis phase, by employing the indicators of each school dimension.

The conclusion together with the recommendations for policy makers and practitioners will follow, to address barriers to participation and learning for students with disabilities that need to be considered in future development plans at both school and Ministry levels. It also depicts the available resources that need to be mobilised and the positive system characteristics that should be implemented in order to increase the effectiveness of the inclusive initiative. The study is then concluded with researcher's personal gains, recommendations for further studies and final thoughts.

## **5.2 Issues related to the implementation of the provisions provided by ‘School for All’ initiative**

Results from this study provide an insight into the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative; this is currently guiding the schools in the UAE on their journey towards more inclusive education. The services and provisions rendered through this initiative have been categorised into five areas. The perspectives of stakeholders in the three schools are collectively presented in the following five subsections, reflecting the five categories of provisions and services, in order to address the first research question regarding the details of the implementation.

### **5.2.1 Teacher training and development**

Since the outset of the ‘School for All’ initiative, the MOE recognised the central role of the teachers in implementing the changes required to achieve more inclusive education. As a result of this, teacher training and development has been the main provision provided by the MOE. This is in line with current literature, which identifies the pivotal role of teachers in removing the barriers and promoting participation to develop successful inclusive schools (Ainscow 1994; Ainscow 2002; Engelbrecht et al. 2006; Howell & Gengel 2005; Forlin 2004; Forlin & Chambers 2011; Mitchell 2008; Thorpe & Azam 2010).

School staff in the three schools confirmed that training programmes included all teachers, principals and social workers that were involved with students with disabilities. Findings too reveal that the MOE’s professional development programme included four types of training courses: (1) portfolio training; this includes ten workshops, and has been attended by 2,965 teachers, (2) the National Cadres programme for specialised skills training; targeting specifically the special education teachers to develop their skills in speech therapy, sensory impairment support, autism and Down syndrome support, and includes 70 teachers yearly, (3)



Ministry training courses and Zayed University's six hour diploma in inclusive education; this includes 200 teachers yearly, and (4) the newly introduced parent workshops which aim to raise awareness, build and support skills for their children. The findings suggest that the numbers of trained teachers and the rendered hours were accumulating; however, the quality of the training provided was still in question. This concern was articulated by all the teachers who agreed that the training provided was too theoretical in nature and lacked hands-on skills that could be transferred to the classroom. Recent studies in the UAE also indicate the dissatisfaction amongst teachers regarding the level of training available and their concern at being unable to support students with disabilities especially the ones with behavioural disorder (Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Anati 2012; Gaad 2011; Gaad & Khan 2007). Teachers expressed the urgent need for more contextualised training programmes, especially with respect to class management, differentiated teaching and strategies for supporting specific disabilities such as sensory impairments, behavioural and emotional disorders, Down syndrome and autism.

Teachers, in all three schools, also suggested that the training should include best practice case studies that reflect the UAE classroom setting, especially with respect to the available support staff and resources, as maintained by the Arabic teachers in Case A school "*The classrooms in the videos have many resources and a teaching assistant. It is not the same here, we need training that considers our situation and the available resources*". This is reinforced by many reviewed studies, which reveal that teachers' training strategies that incorporate practical hands-on aspects that are contextually related are the most effective in instilling the required knowledge and skills for effective inclusion (Booth & Ainscow 2011; Forlin 2001, Forlin & Chambers 2011; Howell & Gengel 2005; Moran 2007; Norwich & Nash

2011). This is also confirmed by Mitchell (2008, p. 2) who maintains that “the most effective programmes are those that incorporate a variety of best practice”.

All principals voiced their concern about the timing of the training programmes, as it took place every Tuesday during each term, which entailed teachers losing a whole working day, on a weekly basis, throughout the term. This in turn added to the workload of other teachers, which was perceived to be a burden on them. Alternatively, they suggest carrying out all intensive training courses during the last four weeks of the school year, as primary schools have no formal end of year assessment, and the timing was more conducive with teaching schedules.

The study did reveal that the training programmes had a number of positive aspects; most of the school staff reported that the training had altered their views about inclusive education and they could now see the possibility of teaching students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. However, they all voiced their concerns regarding the inclusion of certain types of disabilities such as behavioural emotional disorders and advanced intellectual disabilities, which is similar to views expressed in the literature (Beacham & Rouse 2012; Forlin 2001; Meijer 2003; Rouse 2008).

In addition, the teachers reported that the training resulted in knowledge gained with respect to types of disabilities, IEP concept and design as well as the notion of differentiated worksheets and assessment. However, many subject teachers argued that on a practical level they still felt ill equipped to create IEPs, differentiated worksheets and exams, leading them to be dependent on the assistance of the special education teachers. Beacham and Rouse (2012) suggest that for teacher training to be effective, and to result in successful inclusive practices it needs to address teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes, in other words knowing, doing and believing. Failing to consider any of the three aspects leads to ineffective practices. For

example they suggest that “positive attitudes are more likely to be sustained when teachers have the knowledge and the skills to persist with inclusive pedagogies” (Beacham & Rouse 2012, p. 9), and the opposite is also valid, where knowledge and skills might not be delivered if they are not backed up by a belief in the possibility and necessity of inclusion.

One school managed to portray the benefits of hands-on skill-based training. Case C school was fortunate enough to receive an extra 48 hours of skills-based training from a non-profit making organisation. This resulted in more satisfied teachers, improved teaching strategies, improved students’ outcomes and a series of in-house training workshops to support teachers from the school and the neighbouring schools within the zone. It also encouraged three teachers to carry out an action research study about the experience of inclusive education in the school, which is viewed by Rouse (2008, p. 13) as “turning knowledge into action”.

It seems that the training programmes have so far succeeded in alleviating some of the psychological barriers, where teachers are more accepting of the concept of inclusive education. They have also provided them with the theoretical knowledge about types of disabilities and available options for class management, teaching strategies and assessment; however, the training has fallen short of infusing the related skills to transfer to their classrooms. There is a clear readiness on the part of teachers for practical workshops that take place in their classrooms, rather than in a lecture room.

### **5.2.2 School structures**

There are two aspects to the school structures; the first one concerns the placement of the students with respect to enrolment, progress monitoring and end of year assessment; the second involves all the modifications and accommodations in the school architecture, class environment, curriculum, teaching strategies and testing necessary to provide the least restrictive environment for students who are identified to be eligible for inclusive provisions and services.

*Students' placement:* The evidence from the schools displays three different settings which vary on a continuum from least restrictive to more restrictive learning environment; this is in line with the recommendations of the 'School for All' initiative (MOE 2010, p. 15) and the Federal Law 29/2006, Article 12 (MSA 2006), as explained in the findings. In all three schools, the students were enrolled in age-appropriate grades, followed a suitable IEP and were supported by the special education teachers on pull-out basis in the resource room. In Case A, the two students observed spent 60% of the instruction time in the resource room on an individual basis, while in school B the observed students spent 50% of instruction time in the resource room, whereas individual support in School C is only 30% of instruction time. None of the schools have special classrooms anymore; however the special classrooms have not been totally abandoned in all government schools. The pilot school still has a special classroom for profound disabilities, where three students attend the core subjects of Arabic and Maths on a full time basis, and are included in the mainstream classroom for other subjects according to their abilities. The special education teacher explained that, although the MOE encourages schools to move all students to mainstream classrooms, and to minimise exclusion to supporting them on a pull out basis in resource rooms, when needed, this was not always possible as some students (especially the ones with multiple disabilities), would not cope with this setting. It was noticed that the various settings depended mostly on the type and severity of disabilities, and even more so on the background and attitude of the teachers, in particular the special education teacher. This view is supported by Meijer (2003), who adds that a lack of interest from subject teachers in teaching students with disabilities, leads to the shifting of responsibility for these students to the special education teacher; this results in segregation within an inclusive system. It was noticed that although the students in school A had less advanced disabilities than schools B and C respectively, students in school A spent

more time in the resource room. The special education teacher and the core subject teachers in school A argued that supporting the students in the mainstream classroom was a waste of time, so the students attended individual lessons in the resource room four times per week for each core subject to acquire all the main skills, while they only attended revision and activity lessons (twice a week) in a mainstream classroom.

In school C, on the other hand, the special education teacher was satisfied with the setting; students with disabilities (cerebral palsy, intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities of mild degree) were in the resource room on an individual or small group basis for 30% of instruction time, mainly to establish and reinforce concepts. Additionally, the special education teacher supports the students in the classroom, whenever required by the subject teachers.

Finally, numerous teachers expressed their belief that temporary exclusion could lead to inclusion, and advocated this. They suggest that, sometimes there is a need for periodical exclusion that could in turn lead to more gradual inclusion, especially in the cases where lack of social skills or basic academic skills builds barriers to participation and learning. The general consensus was that periodical exclusion in a special classroom could aid in acquiring the basic skills through concentrated individual tutoring. The pilot school carried out such a setting, where three students with multiple disabilities made considerable advancements in attaining academic and social skills as a result of focused individualised tutoring. Another example, a blind student who joined the school in the inclusive setting from a centre, and managed to succeed academically, as well as achieve social integration, but only because she could use the Braille type writer and she also had mobility skills that were achieved previously in the centre. In conclusion, all the teachers in the three schools were in favour of reinstating the option of a special classroom to cater for more advanced disabilities, where the

ultimate aim was to help the students individually for the duration of a school term, or even a full year, until the basic social and educational skills were established to prepare for transition into the next stage of a less restrictive learning environment.

Zigmond (2003, p. 193) tackles the question of “where should students with disabilities receive special education services?”, and argues that it is the wrong question to ask, as research evidence to date is not clear about the effectiveness of one placement decision over another. She posits that the decision about placement options should be dependent on the available instructional practices required for the achievement of the IEP goals of the particular student. Similarly Kauffman et al. (2005, p. 2) argue that “teaching all children well requires that they be grouped homogeneously for instruction. Instruction must not be secondary to placement in special education”. School C, in particular, emphasised the need for this setting to continue supporting one of their students who had behavioural disorders and had become disruptive and aggressive towards peers and teachers. The challenge, clearly, appears to be that teachers’ experience in supporting students with behavioural and emotional disorders is limited. Studies have shown that such students can be supported in inclusive environments, when the adequate strategies are employed such as collaborative problem-solving, cooperative learning and heterogeneous grouping, to name but a few, as suggested by Meijer (2003), where all strategies aim at behaviour modification. However, the same study also points out, following a literature review of classroom practices in the US and Europe, that behaviour, social and /or emotional problems are the most challenging types of special needs for teachers to support in mainstream classrooms.

Furthermore, evidence from all the schools revealed two more challenges to students’ placement; the first is obtaining the consent of parents, the second is delayed referrals due to the lack of specialists to carry out the assessment process. In school C, for example, teachers

were demanding the re-assessment of a student with behavioural issues, but the process had been delayed for a whole academic year. As for parents' consent, teachers claimed that the problem was mainly due to parents' fear of stigmatising their children. This, according to the zone coordinator, drove parents in some cases to enrol a child with disability in a school further away from home to avoid any neighbourhood stigma (Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad 2004). Teachers, principals and Ministry staff realise that the need to intensify community awareness programmes is greater than ever. However, this should go in hand with school awareness programmes too that address the practitioner's deep beliefs, as these naturally and inevitably reflect on the parents' attitudes.

As for the parents' role in monitoring children's progress, this seemed to vary between schools. Although the IEP document required the signature of the parents, not all collected IEPs were signed and teachers seemed to depend more on verbal approvals, and less on a formal signature. However, all teachers suggested that the variation in parents' involvement usually depended on their background, age and family size. Teachers suggested that mothers who were not of Arabic origin were less involved, due to language barriers, while younger parents tended to be more educated and therefore more involved in some cases; finally family size, where mothers with large families (more than six children) had little time for school interaction. The literature depicts such variations of parents' involvement (Bankar 2012; Hornby & Witte 2010; Khamis 2007).

Students' assessment are carried out as a joint effort between the special education teachers and the subject teachers, and monitored closely by the zone coordinator and the school principals in all the observed schools. The goals and objectives in the IEPs are adapted to the students' achievements. There were a wide range of cases; some students managed to exceed their goals, while in other cases the goals were not achieved and had to be revised according

to capabilities. In all cases there was no grade retention and students advanced to the next year group with appropriate IEP goals. It should be noted that introducing an IEP with goals and objectives specific to students' abilities had been the main achievement and reflected the progress in policy and practice that facilitated the inclusion of students with disabilities in age-appropriate classrooms in the UAE.

*Accommodations and modifications:* All schools have been equipped with structural modifications to make them accessible mainly for students with physical disabilities, such as ramps, special toilets, special buses and elevators in some cases. Schools B and C added some structural changes, paid for from school budget, including hand rails for stairs and new tiling to increase accessibility, mobility and independence for students with physical and sensory disabilities, which demonstrated their support and commitment to inclusive education.

Provisions provided did not include any modifications to the class environment. However, teachers in all classrooms implemented accommodations to promote students' engagement such as seating in the front row on mixed ability tables to facilitate peer tutoring and collaborative learning among students as well as two to five minutes of individual instruction time, while other students were engaged in a set activity. Students with disabilities were also encouraged to participate in class discussions and were cheered and motivated by their peers and teachers.

In all observed lessons, teachers employed a combination of teaching strategies including questions and answers, multimedia presentations, group activities and competitions as well as worksheets. The variety in teaching strategies kept the students alert and reinforced the concepts being delivered; this is consistent with many studies that promote the employment of teaching strategies that provide a combination of oral and visual stimuli to satisfy the learning patterns of all students (Carrington & Robinson 2004; Corbett 2001; Meijer 2003). Although



the variation in teaching strategies especially using visual and tactile aids could be very useful for students with disabilities to better comprehend and retain the concepts, the difficulty lay in the material being delivered, as it was not differentiated to suit the varying levels of students with disabilities.

Teachers in school C appeared to be more efficient in employing a variety of teaching strategies and class management techniques, especially with respect to students with disabilities; this was promoted by the extra training acquired based on the Resource Development Centre (RDC) in the school, and the available multi-sensory resources and technological tools.

‘School for All’ has not provided a special curriculum for students with disabilities; instead students use the same books, except that they follow a set of objectives derived from the curriculum according to their abilities. The curriculum modification is based on deletion of difficult concepts. Accordingly, a tailored IEP is designed for each student to incorporate the objectives (long term objectives defined by a set of shorter term objectives), support services such as speech therapy, educational psychologist support and any assistive technology devices. Parents are encouraged to be involved in all the steps in order to gain their acceptance and long-term cooperation; however their signatures appeared only on four out of the six examined IEPs. Many teachers voiced their concerns about their involvement in curriculum modification, as they felt inadequately positioned to carry out these deletions and it had been hit and miss (Arif & Gaad 2008; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad 2011). Teachers also suggested the need for a teaching guide to accompany each subject book which was directly related to children with disabilities, with practical examples and suggested worksheets.

Finally, although the use of differentiated worksheets was recommended by the special education teacher and the zone director, it was only used regularly in the resource room

during individualised instruction time. In the classrooms, students were told to solve fewer exercises on the same paper, which was considered a misunderstanding of the concept of differentiation. It should not be about doing fewer exercises; rather it is about modifying the questions to match the student's specific learning style and skills level in accordance with the IEP (Gibson 2013; Stanford & Reeves 2009).

### **5.2.3 Support services**

Constraints on funding and specialist staffing have been a barrier for successful inclusion in many situations in all three schools. For example, the lack of occupational therapists and the limited hours provided by speech therapists have affected the progress of many students. In addition, the lack of educational psychologists has also created a great challenge for students with behavioural and emotional disorders to make any progress, resulting in such students attending schools only physically without being engaged in school activities. Furthermore, specialists to support those students with sensory disabilities, Down syndrome and autism are currently non-existent. The MOE has been executing plans for training special education teachers in each zone through the National Cadre Programme to gain such specialities; however, special education teachers from schools A and C (who were enrolled in the programme) complained that the training is too theoretical and is not skills-based. Consequently, the shortage will continue to perpetuate unless new measures are implemented such as improving the quality of the national training and employing non-national specialists, for the time being, to cover this acute shortage.

The schools varied in the number of acquired support hours depending on the number of personnel available in the zone and the number of cases requiring the service. For example, in school B students were provided with one to two sessions per week of speech therapy. While in school C, the speech therapist managed to visit the school only twice a month and even this

decreased to once a month in school A. In schools A and C, according to the teachers, the service rendered was no longer about therapy, it was merely for reporting and consultancy, where the specialist gave advice to the teachers about how to incorporate certain activities that could help the students' speech and language abilities. All six students in the three schools needed regular speech therapy and occupational therapy sessions; others with cerebral palsy could also benefit from physiotherapy, but were not receiving either. The significant shortage in the support services has been a great concern for all the stakeholders. Hewitt (1999) posits that support services are not only imperative for the progress of students with disabilities, they are also essential for developing inclusive practices.

#### **5.2.4 Assistive technology**

Assistive technology refers to all devices whether high tech (computers, tablets, smart boards, power wheel chairs, voice activated devices) or low tech (special grip pens, scissors, picture boards, switches, Braille type writer, white cane) which could be used to aid children's development and learning (Edyburn 2006; Judge et al. 2008). They can be categorised according to function into devices used for communication, movement and learning, or according to Abbott (2007), into devices used for training and rehearsal such as drill and practice software, devices used to assist learning by compensating for a physical disability, and finally devices to enable learning, where it was not possible before.

According to the assistive technology advisor at the MOE, a field survey is carried out yearly to determine the required assistive technology resources in all government schools. Resources are then acquired within the available limited budget, and distributed to schools, according to the types of disabilities. However, a gap has been recognised with respect to utilising the resources, as the training to use such resources is either very limited or non-existent. The advisor maintained that this problem had been recognised and they had started workshops for

using computer-related devices, such as the portable smart boards (Mimio) and the Braille typewriters. However, the training only included the technical aspects, while it should actually also incorporate pedagogical practices to integrate the assistive technology resources in the curriculum. The latter aspect has been the challenge so far; according to the teachers; the devices available have been introduced technically, but without applying to the curriculum or lesson planning. For example, in school B, the special education teacher had a tool kit provided to support students with fine motor skills, however functional training was not provided and this in turn meant that teachers were either improvising or, in many instances, not using the items at all.

Assistive technology was underutilised also as a result of fear of use and lack of time. For example in school B, the portable smart board was locked in the resource room because the special education teacher in charge did not have the time to train other teachers how to use it, and no one else was allowed to use it because it was her responsibility and she would be held accountable in the event of any damage. She maintained that it had assisted one student with CP to improve his writing abilities, while she was supporting him in the resource room, but she would not use the device outside the resource room for fear of damage.

In summary, the challenges to utilising assistive technology, as observed in the different schools, revolve around the following issues:

- The lack of resources in general.
- The lack of training to incorporate the available assistive technology in the curriculum.
- Teachers' attitude towards the acquired devices. There is a general feeling of fear of damage, which results from being accountable for the safety of the device, and uncertainty about maintenance contracts.

- Teachers are not given enough time to plan and create lessons that incorporate the resources.

The above challenges have been reported in many studies, for instance, Edyburn (2006) and Judge et al. (2008) argue that devices are still underutilised in supporting students' participation as they are poorly integrated in the objectives and goals of the IEPs, despite the benefits of using assistive technology being extensively reported.

It should be mentioned that school C, which had more high and low tech resources together with training courses and monitoring by the administration, was the most successful amongst the schools in utilising the available resources in removing barriers to participation. However, time management and teacher collaboration to plan the utilisation of the resources within the IEPs was still at a very preliminary stage.

### **5.2.5 Awareness programmes**

The Ministry has recognised the importance of awareness about disability and inclusion to promote acceptance and ownership of the initiative by the schools. The initial awareness programmes concentrated on social justice and understanding the rights of the students with disabilities as per the local legislations. Parents and educators were made aware of the Federal Law and the necessity of compliance. A similar methodology was followed in teachers' training programmes, where the initial step in introducing the initiative comprised of a set of awareness workshops run by experts in inclusive education that targeted the educators' beliefs and understanding that education for children with disabilities is a right governed by the Law, rather than an act of charity. Booth and Ainscow (2011) confirmed the need for awareness programmes, where they maintain that they are an integral aspect of any successful school development plan.

The training programmes provided have managed, to a certain extent, to break the fear barrier and to recruit a number of firm followers; however, there are still a large percentage of teachers who are apprehensive and, in some instances, totally dismissive of the change, either because of fear of inadequacy (resulting from the lack of hands-on training), or concern over their workload and the added responsibilities without compensation or incentive. These fears and concerns have been documented by many studies around the world (Alahbabi 2009; Beacham & Rouse 2012; Forlin & Chambers 2011; Rouse 2008; Sharma et al. 2007). All the studies suggest that such fears can only be alleviated through training, increased awareness and knowledge as well as experience gained from interaction with students with disabilities. For example, Alzyoudi et al. (2011, p. 2) suggest that “pre-service teachers have more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and inclusion, when they have had additional training and knowledge about people with disabilities”.

The Ministry has recently considered the importance of parent awareness; therefore an open day consisting of a series of workshops has now been organised yearly to introduce the achievements of the implementation through case studies and future plans. The Head of the Special Education Department confirmed that the main objective was to educate the parents about their children’s rights which should lead to infusing these beliefs in the community, resulting in a more inclusive society that supports people with disabilities throughout their lives, and not just in the school phase. During the open day the parents are also introduced to representatives of the community centres that can support the students and their parents as well as the various assistive technology devices available on the market. Experts’ advice for parents is also available throughout the day.

On the other hand, schools have been encouraged to promote awareness about the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. All the schools carried out a variety of

awareness programmes that focused on the school environment with respect to teachers and students, as well as parents and the community in general. For example, all schools carry out an induction programme during the first week of the academic year, which included workshops for parents of new students both with and without disabilities, individual parents' meetings, a welcoming assembly for new students with disabilities and specific workshops for peers of students with disabilities in the classrooms prior to their arrival. All the schools also celebrated occasions related to disabilities such as white cane day, deaf week, Down syndrome day and others. Such open days include all parents and are carried out in cooperation with civil community establishments such as civil defence, police, hospitals, and the media as well as students and parents of neighbouring rehabilitation centres, in order to promote inclusive awareness in the society. Finally, all the schools produce leaflets for both parents and students to explain the concepts behind the implementation of the initiative in the schools. In schools B and C, awareness has also been promoted through regular interaction between students with disability from neighbouring rehabilitation centres and the school students through organising field trips and sports activity days. Students not only acquired familiarity with all types of disabilities, they also got an opportunity to make friends through competitions and games, while teachers gained knowledge and established connections through networking with specialists in rehabilitation.

The above programmes are necessary, as it has been documented by many studies that awareness programmes should aim at increasing knowledge and acceptance of disability, otherwise students' attitudes towards students' with disabilities could become a major detriment to their inclusion and success (Ison et al. 2010; Rillotta & Nettlebeck 2007).

### **5.3 Issues related to inclusive school dimensions**

Following the cross case analysis of the three case schools, a number of themes were drawn from the three data sets which can be categorised according to the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and practices. Many of the emerging themes are consistent with the inclusive indicators detailed in the 'Index for Inclusion' by Booth and Ainscow (2011, p. 14).

#### **5.3.1 Inclusive school cultures**

Developing inclusive school cultures is necessary for the successful implementation of inclusive school policy (Booth & Ainscow 2011; Stoll 1998; Thorpe & Azam 2010). School cultures have varied definitions in the literature, for example Schein(1985, p. 6) defines organisational culture to be "The deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment". Two elements of an organisational culture can be deduced from this definition: (1) members' assumptions and beliefs, and (2) the operation of these beliefs that are taken for granted, which are reflected in the relationships between the members of the organisation. This is in line with the understanding provided by Booth and Ainscow (2011, p. 13) where school cultures are defined to "reflect relationships and deeply held values and beliefs". Accordingly, "changing cultures is essential in order to sustain development".

Following the above understanding of school cultures, the findings from the three schools revolved around stakeholders' beliefs regarding inclusive education, relationships among stakeholders, and the resulting rituals and protocols in the schools which reflect an inclusive cultural climate. Five main themes have emerged as a result of the analysis of the three data sets, namely: (1) conditional belief in inclusion, (2) teachers' fears and apprehensions, (3)



welcoming school climate, (4) respect and support among stakeholders and (5) children valued equally.

*Conditional belief in inclusion.* Stakeholders in all schools varied in their belief in inclusive education. The majority agreed that inclusion could be successful, however with conditions that arise from difficulties in their daily experiences.

Zone directors and special education teachers were more positive, due to their professional experience, although they identified the present challenges arising from the lack of adequate support services, as well as the limited teaching materials and expertise. It should be noted that not all special education teachers were the same, for example, the special education teacher in school A totally disagreed with supporting the students with disabilities in the classroom, resulting in the highest percentage of individual teaching time (60%) amongst the three schools.

All the teachers agreed that success of inclusion depended on types of disabilities; in particular, there was apprehension in all schools about inclusion of students with behavioural disorders. The teachers stressed that they were not equipped to deal with such conditions, especially in the absence of appropriate educational psychologist support. The effect of type and severity of disability on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education has been documented by many studies (Alahbabi 2009; Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Thorp & Azam 2010). For example Gaad (2004) maintained that "teachers (both male and female) were less accepting of students with severe or specific exceptional learning needs such as autism or profound multiple learning disabilities", as a result of a study concerning the inclusion of children with mild to moderate learning difficulties in Emirati government primary schools.

Other factors that appear to affect the belief of the teachers are their age and experience.

Younger teachers in this study had more positive perception about the initiative (Sharma et al.

2007), possibly due to their more recent exposure to inclusive theories during university and pre-service training. However, teachers' years of experience also positively influenced teachers' beliefs; for example the zone coordinator of school B expressed that his belief in inclusion stemmed from 25 years' experience in special education in different Arab countries that were more advanced with respect to special education. The positive influence of experience on accepting inclusion is also supported by Algahzo and Gaad (2004) as a result of a study that investigated general education teachers' acceptance of inclusion in the UAE.

The principals and most of the teachers of the three schools expressed their pride in belonging to an inclusive school. They did not view inclusion as attaching any stigma to the school; on the contrary, for them 'School for All', reflected a chance for development in terms of more training, funding and resources. Additionally in schools B and C, special education teachers and principals were very proud to be designated training centres for the zone, where the special education teachers were developing and delivering a number of workshops.

Principals and zone-directors explained that they had to continuously deal with parents' concerns regarding the success of the initiative and there had been isolated cases in both schools A and B where parents transferred their children to non-inclusive schools during the first year, fearing a negative influence on their children's progress and achievement or the possibility of them imitating the behaviour of students with disabilities. However, school principals maintained that many parents, who rejected the change initially, had come round to supporting the initiative and were proud to have their children in an inclusive school; this was as a result of the positive feedback from their children and the awareness programmes carried out by the schools.

Finally, although stakeholders differed in their beliefs in the success of inclusion, especially with respect to students' academic achievement, they all agreed on the social benefits of

inclusion; students' increased participation in class activities and group projects, enhanced self-esteem and confidence as well as expanded social relationships and social skills.

*Teachers' fears and apprehensions.* Another emerging theme is teachers' fear and apprehension resulting from three factors. Firstly, fear of the unknown, as the training provided, according to the teachers, did not provide them with transferable skills that could guide them to effectively support the students with disabilities during class time. Secondly, fear of inadequacy and failure to educate and support the students with disabilities, which might affect their image in the school. Finally, apprehension resulting from the extra work, teachers in all the schools reported being overworked as a result of other Ministry initiatives; these were generally regarding raising academic standards, which required devising remedial plans and extra individual and group support classes for students who were performing below average. This resulted in what could be called 'initiative overload', therefore teachers had less time and energy to engage in extra preparation for planning and developing differentiated tasks and materials to facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities (Freire & Cesar 2003; Meijer 2003; Thorpe & Azam 2010). For example, Freire & Cesar (2003) contend that any new initiative would be perceived as an extra burden and would breed insecurity and discouragement if they were not accompanied with adequate training that led to new competences, strategies and methods to support the implementation.

*Welcoming school climate.* All the schools had a welcoming ritual for visitors, where one is offered a drink and asked to take a seat in the large foyer, before being ushered directly to the principal's office. This was observed to be the case with all visitors throughout the school visits. All the schools were clean and tidy, with colourful walls and posters depicting students' work in various subjects. The national identity was prominent, with posters of the presidents', maps and slogans reflecting pride and motivation for hard work. There was a

positive feeling about all the schools, except in school B; teachers and students looked tired and drained due to the old air conditioning system in an aging building as well as the lack of shading. However that did not seem to affect their enthusiasm and hospitality.

The schools varied in the way they presented their implementation of the inclusive initiative with respect to what is displayed as you walk in. For example, School C carried a large signboard on top of the building declaring that the school was an inclusive school and that all students were welcome, as well as posters in the corridors with motivational and educational slogans regarding disability and inclusion, while school A did not even have the standard banner for 'School for All' at the entrance. However, all the schools had posters of school celebrations in the foyer, which included the students with disabilities. The atmosphere was relaxed in all the schools, students moved around in an orderly fashion between classrooms; however in boys' schools the level of noise was much louder between classes and during play time.

Another aspect of the school climate is the relationships between stakeholders. Students, educators and parents greeted each other politely and in a friendly manner. It was noted that the school had an open door policy, where the principal was observed attending immediately to parents', teachers' and students' concerns on more than one occasion.

Finally, all the schools carry out a welcoming protocol for new students and parents, including social and educational aspects. Students and parents are prepared, in advance through the attendance of informational evenings and educational workshops, to accept and welcome the new students with disabilities; in addition, school assemblies helped reinforce the initiative's ideas. In general, the environment of all the schools was safe, warm and welcoming to all students and their parents as well, as the researcher.

*Respect and support among stakeholders.* In all three schools respect and support seems to be the main features amongst all the stakeholders. The principals appreciated and valued the teachers' efforts in driving the initiative. Equally the parents respected and appreciated the teachers support for their children, and the relationship is direct between the special education teachers and the parents in all schools. However, the teachers explained that parents varied in their contribution and involvement in the education of their children which, in turn, affects the progress of the children, especially the ones with disabilities. Factors such as the age of parents, background, education level and family size all affected the extent of their participation and support.

In all schools the interaction between teachers and students featured care and kindness; teachers addressed the students with 'my dear', 'my son' and 'my daughter', while the teachers addressed each other with 'my sister' or 'teacher'. Additionally, the disability rhetoric around the schools matched that of the new law and the 'School for All' initiative. Words such as 'Retarded' and 'Mongol', which used to be commonplace in schools, even in school records previously (Arif & Gaad 2008), and are still common in society, have been replaced in the schools with 'disabled', 'with disability' or 'with special needs', and most of the time simply the name of the student. However, on more than one occasion, teachers still spoke about the students' struggle and the difficulty of supporting them in their presence, assuming they could not hear or would not take notice; this could be demeaning and offensive to the student, labelling and stigmatising them, as other students could hear it.

Support amongst teachers also emerged as a common theme. Teachers were supportive and appreciative of each other's efforts; the special education teacher was considered the backbone to the success of the implementation. Subject teachers repeatedly stressed her role in assisting them in lesson differentiation and skills' building for students with disabilities.

There was obvious co-operation; however it fell short of developing into collaboration, due to the lack of planning time and experience in running a collaborative classroom, where the special education teacher could play the role of an active co-teacher. This supportive relationship is documented in the literature, Boyer and Mainzer (2003) identify that the subject teachers' confidence in teaching students with disabilities is dependent upon their relationship with the special education teacher.

Finally, students in all schools were observed to surround their disabled peers with support, care and encouragement. The three schools had even devised programmes where older students would act as mentors for the students with disabilities, especially during break time and school trips. However, unfriendly behaviour inevitably appeared in the schools and this was influenced by type of disability, and age. For example a student on a wheel chair was very popular in the classroom, while the one with autistic behaviour preferred to spend his break time in the resource room with the special education teacher to avoid interaction with his peers. Also teachers voiced their concern regarding feelings of jealousy and intimidation among students in the classrooms, resulting from teachers' extra attention to the students with disabilities. Additionally students with disabilities in older classes, such as fourth and fifth grade, were less friendly and less able to make friends in the classroom. Teachers argued that they were not equipped with the skills and knowledge to support students with behavioural and emotional disorders.

*Children valued equally.* This theme emerged during observation in the classrooms, where students were mainly seated with their peers and were given the chance to participate individually and in group activities; they were cheered, rewarded and encouraged equally. On a number of occasions they were given the opportunity to participate with questions tailored to their level, while peers were observed to respect their turn and their contribution. Although

such activities could have been rehearsed for my presence, the children's reactions towards their disabled peer appeared genuine, and spontaneous. Also, pictures around the schools depicted school celebrations featuring students with disabilities together with their class peers. However, the practice of isolating the students with disabilities on a separate table in the classroom with the special education teacher was still a model of support observed in all schools; such a model attaches a stigma to the student when repeated and causes the student's isolation from peers; it should therefore be avoided, or at least minimised. The special education teachers' role in the classroom should be to help all students or it needs to be more effectively planned so that she plays the role of an active co-teacher who shares in the class responsibilities, and not merely supervises the student with disability.

### **5.3.2 Inclusive school policies**

In the UAE, the Ministry of Education funds and controls the public sector schools, this involves setting up, implementing and monitoring all policies regarding K-12 education (Arif & Gaad 2008; Gaad 2011). The MOE is also in charge of the educational policies regarding students with disabilities who are enrolled in government schools. Accordingly, policy making and monitoring is centralised with respect to students' enrolment, teachers' appointments, training policies, as well as schools' physical modifications to enhance accessibility, support services and all accommodations regarding IEPs, assessment and grade advancement.

Schools are required to implement these policies following the guidelines and the recommendations provided in the 'School for All' guidebook, which represent the main policy document with respect to special education in schools. It was noted that schools differ in utilising these recommendations provided in the guidebook, while schools B and C consider it their main guiding document, where all teachers had copies and referred to it during conversations; the case

was different in school A, where there was only one copy in the principal's office, and although it was launched online, teachers were not required to refer to it; instead they depended mainly on guidance from the special education teacher. The monitoring of the implementation of the above policies is carried out by the zone directors.

As for the enrolment of students with disabilities, the schools are obliged to accept all students referred by the zone office following the assessment procedures. However, it should be noted that the schools were still considered gate keepers for students with certain disabilities. For example, in school C, all the teachers and the principal had been requesting the reassessment for the student with behavioural issues, so that he would be transferred to another school or to a centre as they had been unable to support his needs and his presence has become disruptive to his peers, according to his teachers. While in school A, the principal stated that students with disabilities were accepted on a three month trial period and if the school could not support their needs, they would be transferred to another school or to a centre. Teachers attributed these situations to their unpreparedness and lack of skills regarding supporting disabilities, as well as the lack of adequate support services such as speech and occupational therapy as well as psychological support.

All the inclusive schools are also required to set up an inclusion support team including the school principal, the social worker, the special education teacher and a number of subject teachers according to need. This team is in charge of the implementation of the initiative in each school and reports to the zone director regarding the progress and any encountered challenges or barriers. The team also refers registered students to the zone office for further assessment, whenever a student is identified to be in need of special services, following a school-based assessment. Additionally, the team contributes to the design and the follow up



of the IEPs as well as liaising with parents whenever required. According to school documents, this team meets once a month or according to need.

The teachers in all the schools understand the school policies regarding the placement of students in the mainstream classroom. They also understand the policy regarding providing an IEP and all associated accommodations and modifications in worksheets and assessment. However, their limited knowledge and experience lead them, in most cases, to depend entirely on the special education teachers. This makes the role of the special education teachers pivotal to the success of the initiative; however not all special education teachers are accepting of the initiative and still believe students with disabilities should be supported in more segregated settings.

Following the analysis of the three data sets, five themes emerged regarding inclusive school policies: inclusive induction policy, open door policy, leadership model of school principals, issues regarding students' assessment, behaviour policy and teachers' responsibilities.

*Inclusive induction policy.* All schools carry out a welcoming program for new students with or without disabilities and their parents, in order to acquaint them with the inclusive initiative and to make their integration into the school smoother. Many examples of such programmes were documented by the schools; school assemblies, parents' workshops and individual parents' meetings, as well as students' introductory workshops that were occasionally geared towards the specific disabilities of the included students.

*Open door policy.* The schools follow an open door policy with parents, teachers and students. Generally the school sizes were moderate, not exceeding 490 students; this enabled the school principals to be in touch with their staff and their students, informally. Parents were observed to have friendly relationships with the teachers and this was confirmed during interviews, describing the teachers and the principal as their sisters and mothers to their

children. This is to be expected in such communities, where the teachers and students belong to the same neighbourhood and family relationships are very common, especially in the remote rural areas. Although such a friendly and relaxed climate creates a culture that is conducive to learning, it may potentially cause parents to shy away from voicing their concerns and demanding better services.

*Leadership model of school principals.* The leadership of the school principals plays a major role in motivating the teachers to carry out any additional workload. The leadership role emerged in managing the school budget to provide additional inclusive provisions, encouraging innovation with respect to inclusive teaching strategies and school activities, closely monitoring the progress of students with disabilities and awarding best practice. It was noted that the principals of schools B and C, who attended the training and the awareness workshops as well as the Ministry courses, had more influence in encouraging the teachers and monitoring their performance, as they had more knowledge about inclusion philosophy. They recommended teaching strategies and required inclusive practices, as suggested by Stein and Nelson (2003, p. 424) “principals must be able to know strong instruction when they see it, and to encourage it when they don’t”. While in school A, the special education teacher appeared to assume the position of leadership, and was the driving force for the initiative, due to the fact that the principal was still new, and had not been in an inclusive environment before. However, the special education teacher in school A did not view inclusion as the best practice and would rather revert to the older system of placement in special classrooms for students with disabilities, which resulted in the highest percentage of individual instruction time in the resource room among the three schools under study.

Stein and Nelson (2003) also maintain that effective leaders are focused and determined about improving their schools to become more effective organisations. This was noted in schools B

and C, where both principals were focused on achieving best practice and, accordingly, became the main inspiration in their schools, as confirmed by both teachers and parents. For example, the principal in school B had dedicated part of the school budget to increasing the accessibility of the school for wheelchair users by changing the tiling in some of the classrooms and the corridors. Furthermore, she provided extra teaching materials for the resource room. Additionally, she initiated a school website project to improve communication with parents, as well as a school database project to record students' performance which would aid future planning. In school C, the principal also used the school budget to install special staircase handles to enhance the safe mobility of students with physical disabilities. She also funded opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge through attending conferences and carrying out action research study. There was consensus among all practitioners on the need for a bigger budget to allow for the implementation of extra-curricular activities such as sports, handicrafts, technology and art. These would give the students with less academic abilities the chance to thrive and flourish, as well as gain skills that could be useful later, in the event that they were not able to continue in the academic stream. This is suggested by Stainback and Stainback (1992), where extra-curricular activities that enhance the learning experience of students with disabilities also helps maintain their life function skills.

Teachers were also awarded for best practice, and in both schools teachers maintained that the principals always understood, listened to their concerns and monitored their performance closely. Additionally in school C, an in-house professional development program had been initiated based on the extra training programmes provided in the Resource Development Centre (RDC), which reflected positively on the teachers' skills and the students' performance. However other aspects of effective leadership for inclusive education were still

absent from the schools such as developing the vision that all students could achieve, high expectations from all students, encouraging collaboration and co-teaching in inclusive classrooms (Stein and Nelson 2003)

*Issues regarding students' assessment.* Students were assessed according to the objectives specified in the IEP, using differentiated tests with the required accommodations and modifications according to students' disabilities. In practice, the special education teacher together with the subject teachers designed the tests as well as the time and place to administer them, based on the students' disabilities. Teachers and principals voiced their concern about the no grade retention policy, in generating a culture of deferral. Some parents deferred making decisions about their children's difficulties, and preferred to label their children as 'lazy', rather than accept the fact that they had a certain disability, since they were not going to fail and were being moved to next grade anyway. Additionally, some teachers had become indifferent, and complacent with regard to motivating their students to their full potential, especially those with disabilities, since they were moving to the next grade anyway. This causes the gap to widen exponentially between the students with and without disabilities. The problem arises later, when students move up to middle or high school with limited academic skills, where many are unable able to cope.

*Behaviour policy.* The 'School for All' vision discourages exclusionary behavioural correction. The school support team usually intervenes with a behavioural remedial plan in cases where subject teachers complain of behavioural problems in the classroom. In cases where behaviour becomes intolerable in a certain school, then the policy stipulates a change of environment by transferring the student into another inclusive school, so as to discourage negative behaviour that may be prompted by the environment. However, a serious

shortcoming in the implementation arises as a result of the lack of regular psychological support for students with behavioural issues, as a preventive measure and continuous support.

*Teachers' responsibilities.* The guide has a set of recommendations that provides details of the responsibilities of the special education teachers and the subject teachers; it defines the communication patterns, and the required monitoring to be followed with respect to students with disabilities. As mentioned above, schools differ in how they apply these recommendations, and the guidelines are very general where practitioners find them too vague and in need of more practical details.

### **5.3.3 Inclusive school practices**

School practices are simply “about what is learnt and taught and how it is learnt and taught” (Booth & Ainscow 2011, p. 13); they provide the evidence for the implemented policies and reflect school cultures. Six main themes have emerged as a result of the analysis of the three data sets with respect to inclusive school practices, namely: curriculum modification and adaptation, accommodations in teaching strategies, availability of learning tools and equipment, limited teachers' collaboration, student access and participation and parent and community involvement.

*Curriculum modifications and adaptations:* The curriculum is modified by deleting the difficult concepts according to type of disability. The special education teachers together with the subject teachers carried out the modifications, based on their knowledge and experience of the students' abilities as well as the recommendations provided in the assessment reports. The challenge is that the teachers were not experienced in identifying the particular needs and abilities of students with variant disabilities, so the choice of deletions was not scientifically based. Many teachers suggested having a special curriculum for students with disabilities, or at least to have a teachers'

guide to accompany each subject book which included recommendations and suggested worksheets according to types of disabilities. At the time of this study, the students had the same text books, except that they were not expected to use them most of the time, depending on their level. This situation was also documented by Arif and Gaad(2008, p. 112) in their study of the education system in the UAE:

...there is no special curriculum developed for special needs education. The curriculum being delivered is referred to as 'para curriculum' and is simply the deletion of difficult lessons from the regular curriculum. No special curriculum exists for students with special needs; they study the same books, just less in terms of number of chapters. The choice of deletion of chapters is also not scientific; it is either based on the judgement of the teacher or the willingness of the student.

*Accommodations in teaching strategies.* Data drawn from the interviews and observations in the three schools indicated that the teachers were utilising a variety of teaching strategies such as question answers, group activities as well as peer tutoring and multimedia presentations. However, the main barrier was the lack of differentiated instruction to suit the needs of the students with disabilities or the ones with learning difficulties, except in few cases. Teachers in general believed that students with disabilities could only learn through individualised instructions. Teachers kept saying '*I can only give him two minutes*', the number two emerged continuously; to my amazement, it was the result of dividing the lesson time (40 minutes) over the number of students (20) as explained by one of the special education teachers. This explains the general consensus among teachers about the lack of time to support students with disabilities in the classroom, as they did not believe that students with disabilities could benefit from group instructions, once they were differentiated to suit the variety of abilities. Consequently they depended on the special education teachers to carry out the concrete learning in the resource room.

Although the training sessions included a four-hour workshop concerning lesson differentiation, it did not provide the teachers with the necessary skills. This resulted in teachers, mostly, not providing differentiated work sheets, and students were observed to copy mechanically from their peers.

However there were a few examples of effective lesson differentiation; for instance, the Maths teacher in school B incorporated Zayed's goals of recognising the digits and adding one digit numbers during the lesson delivery, and group activity of adding three digit numbers for the whole classroom. He was also given a differentiated worksheet to reinforce his goals. It was also observed in the pilot school during the Arabic lesson of writing sentences using certain vocabulary, the student with the disability was included in the lesson through identifying letters in words, and writing the letters or individual words on the board, while the rest of the classroom was using these words in creating sentences.

Accommodations regarding seating strategies were observed in all schools, in most classrooms, students with disabilities were seated in the front of the classroom on mixed-ability group tables, which promoted natural peer tutoring. However, the peer tutoring was not planned or directed by the teacher. Peer tutoring can be of great benefit to students with disabilities especially when it is constructed so that students with disabilities are not always on the receiving end. For example, students with disabilities could be the tutors for students in younger grades or for their peers when an activity is planned to show and use their specific talent. This can boost their confidence and improve their relationships with their peers (Byrd 1990; Mitchell 2008).

In summary the teachers reported three main concerns and challenges with respect to class management and teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms:

1. Students got jealous, when extra time was given to students with disabilities, which instigated negative behaviour.
2. Teachers did not feel competent enough to understand the needs of the students, especially students with communication and behavioural difficulties.
3. Time management during class delivery; teachers felt torn between the demands of the curriculum and the needs of students on remedial plans and the students with disabilities. The ones that ended up getting less attention were the students with disabilities, knowing that they were supported by the special educator individually in the resource room.

The need for assistant teachers was continuously highlighted, as they had seen it in training videos; however having assistant teachers was not about having extra people to help weaker students. Although co-teaching had become an established method in supporting students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, it was not without its challenges. It requires planning and commitment as well as skills on behalf of both teachers, so that it does not lead to segregation of students with disabilities within the classroom (Meijer 2003, Mitchell 2008).

The quality of teaching in the UAE government schools has been documented by Gardner (1995, p. 293) as suffering from “the persistence of rote memorization as the basic learning strategy”, he also added that curriculums are outmoded and teachers fail to instil independence in learning tasks. Although the study by Gardner was nearly two decades ago, the learning mode in the classrooms is still dominated by rote learning, students are still tested for their memorization abilities, even if the lessons are now presented using multimedia tools as well as visual and multi-sensory materials. This mode of assessment greatly disadvantaged many students with disabilities, especially the ones with intellectual and communication challenges.



Findings from a study that included 107 special education teachers in the UAE by Alghazo (2005) revealed that teachers in general were ineffective in teaching students with disabilities. This all emphasises the need for a different pedagogy for professional development programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers.

*Availability of learning tools and equipment.* The schools varied considerably with respect to the available learning tools and equipment to support the inclusion of students with disabilities. Teachers were observed utilising a variety of teaching materials, such as flash cards, visual and multi-sensory materials of shapes, letters, numbers and animal models. They varied in quantity and quality, where school C had a wide variety of multi-sensory materials and games as well as specialised resources to help students with fine motor skills difficulties, such as sand tables, building blocks and others. In school B, teacher's efforts in adding hand-made materials were apparent, many made by the students themselves. Some of the materials were specialised for the students with disabilities; for example, Abdulrahman and Zayed, in school B, had number stickers on their desks in the Maths classroom, and letter stickers in the Arabic classroom. Students in the three schools were also using pencil grips to aid their hand writing during their lessons in the resource room; however they were not transferred to other settings such as classroom and home.

Accessibility to high-tech equipment and devices that support the engagement and learning of students with disabilities in the UAE is considered limited. This was maintained by a recent study describing current practices in UAE schools with respect to inclusion of students with disabilities (Anati 2012). Although the lack of such tools and equipment is considered a barrier to inclusion (Alghazo et al. 2003), the real challenge is the lack of training to effectively utilise the available ones. For example in school B, expensive equipment such as the portable smart board was gathering dust in the resource room, as a result of lack of

training and management. While in school C, the available electronic, multi-sensory and tactile equipment were more utilised following the technical training. Teachers in school C reported better student engagement and academic advancement as a result of utilising such equipment. However, even the training in school C is still lacking the pedagogical aspects to enable the teachers to effectively integrate the equipment in the curriculum (Judge et al. 2008).

*Limited teachers' collaboration.* Teachers' collaboration in all the schools was limited to preparation of IEPs, differentiated worksheets and exams, as well as limited classroom cooperation. The special education teachers kept close contact with the subject teachers and constantly guided them in producing differentiated worksheets and updating the IEPs according to progress. However, not all teachers were cooperative and some were totally dependent on the special education teachers, where all the concrete teaching took place in the resource room. It should be noted that special education teachers in the schools only supported core subjects (Arabic and Maths), where students were tutored on an individual basis between 30-60% of subject lesson time in the resource room. Some special education teachers also provided personal assistance to students with disabilities in the classrooms, acting as a shadow teacher to assist the students mainly during activity time. This setting seemed more exclusionary and stigmatising, as it limited the students' interaction with their peers, Giangreco and Doyle (2007, p. 436) highlighted the disadvantage of having an assistant teacher who is not trained to be a facilitator of learning opportunities "Excessive proximity of teacher assistants can interfere with peer interactions, stigmatise students, lead to social isolation, and in some cases provoke behaviour problems". This setting seemed more exclusionary and stigmatising, as it limited the students' interaction with their peers; it was not the preferred method for many teachers, who considered it disruptive and a waste of time.

Therefore, most of the special education teachers only attended selected lessons in the mainstream classrooms, mainly when required by the subject teachers or for guidance and monitoring purposes.

As a result in-class collaboration in the shape of co-teaching is not yet developed in the schools, which is probably due to the lack of training in co-teaching models. Planning, management and commitment from all educators, including the school principal, is required to establish co-teaching in a school. Teachers need to acquire team working skills to be able to share the responsibilities of the classroom and to benefit from the expertise of others (Mitchell 2008). It should be seen as an opportunity for learning and continuous professional development (Boyer & Mainzer 2003; Carrington & Robinson 2004).

*Student access and participation.* The physical environment in all schools has been modified to facilitate access for students with physical disabilities, with provisions such as ramps, elevators, special toilets and buses. Additionally, some schools provided extra provisions such as tiling and staircase handles to increase mobility and autonomy for students with physical disabilities.

Access and participation to learning opportunities was also observed in the classrooms. Students were given opportunities to interact during lesson delivery, by answering questions, writing on the board, taking part in group activities. They were always cheered and encouraged fairly and equally by their teachers and peers. However, there were many occasions when access to the curriculum and the lesson delivered was not possible, and students were observed to be drifting away, as the teaching strategy and material used was not differentiated to allow them access and participation.

In addition, to facilitate access to learning, students need therapeutic services depending on their disabilities, rendered by speech and occupational therapists, as well as physiotherapists and psychotherapists. The need for these services is usually documented in the students' IEP, however, the lack of therapy provisions, has affected the progress of many students and has added extra burden and frustration on the special education teacher and all subject teachers in general.

As for other school activities, students with disabilities participated in sports lessons, school celebrations, school trips and morning assemblies. Students were also observed playing with peers during break time and buying their lunch from the canteen, where in many cases they were assisted by their peers.

In conclusion, it is a real concern that although students are physically present in the mainstream classrooms, academically, they are not necessarily participating and engaging in the classroom dynamics, mainly as a result of inexperienced teachers and lack of support services, rather than discriminatory treatment by teachers or other students.

*Parents and community involvement.* All teachers and principals asserted the importance of collaboration with parents to achieve better outcomes especially regarding children with disabilities. Lipsky and Gartner (1996) and Hornby and Witte (2010, p. 27) identify constructive parent involvement as one of the main factors in ensuring effective and successful programmes for inclusive education. Engelbrecht et al. (2006) also maintain that the expectations of quality education for all students with various abilities require the collaboration of all stakeholders and the necessity of the involvement of parents and community. All the schools have implemented regular opportunities and programmes for parents' involvement including regular parents' meetings, introductory workshops regarding the inclusive initiative, an open door policy where parents are always welcome to sound their

concerns and to participate in school activities. However, parents do not always take advantage of the various opportunities provided by the schools. Bankar (2012) explains that schools need to go the extra mile to facilitate parents' involvement. He explains that teachers need to appreciate that disability is a stressful life event. Parents need to be appreciated for their efforts and they need to feel that the teachers fully accept their children in their classrooms; this will in turn help them to accept the disability themselves. Only then is a collaborative relationship possible.

As for involvement with the community, there is a trend in the world for the special schools and centres to provide expert advice and services to inclusive schools (Thorpe & Azam 2010; Wolger 2003). This kind of collaboration is highly desirable especially in tackling the scarcity of specialist in all therapy services and expert advice about disabilities. The three schools reported preliminary cooperation with rehabilitation centres in their zone. The objectives of the mutual visits and activities have so far been to promote inclusive cultures in both establishments as well as provide communication channels between teachers and specialists in the centres, although it should not be assumed that specialist advice from specialist settings is always helpful when applied to mainstream schools.

#### **5.4 Reflections on the use of the 'Index for Inclusion' as a guiding tool, in the UAE context**

Utilising the Index as a guiding tool in this research study had an immense impact on my professional journey as a researcher. The material of the Index with respect to inclusive values, dimensions and related indicators expanded and enhanced my understanding of inclusive education. It confirmed the need for a comprehensive school development cycle that embodies the notion of inclusion being a process and not a project to be completed. It also broadened my perspective into the new world of inclusive values, teaching practices,

curriculum options, forms of involvements and relationships among stakeholders. This wealth of information helped in setting the framework for this study and informed the formulation of the interview questions, and the observations and indicators at one stage, and consequently guided the data analysis process as well as the setting of future recommendations.

The index is a comprehensive tool that supports planning, executing and reviewing a school's inclusive development process. The material is extensive, and utilising it as a whole requires the commitment of all stakeholders to apply it as a formal school development process.

However, putting the index into action is presented in five phases, where each phase is comprised of a set of tasks; the writers encourage the users to engage in an inclusive process by adapting and creating their own way of using the materials in assisting school transformation, as long as it leads to a dialogue that helps to “put inclusive values into action, reduce barriers, mobilise resources and integrate initiatives” (Booth & Ainscow 2011, p. 52). This encouraged me to use the indicators and the associated questions provided by the Index as a guiding tool in investigating the nature of inclusive education in the three government schools with respect to cultures, policies and practices.

The definition of inclusion adopted by the Index, however, is wider in vision and more comprehensive than the one employed by the UAE initiative. The Index views inclusion as a reform that aims at welcoming all learners who are vulnerable to exclusionary pressures due to reasons such as gender, economic situation, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity and disability. As a result, it introduces the notion of removing barriers and mobilising resources to learning and participation; while in the UAE as well as other developing countries, inclusive education is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Consequently, this had to be factored in, while using the

indicators as a guide when building the data collection instruments, and during the analysis phase.

When I decided to employ the Index as a guiding tool for the design of this study, I envisaged the possibility of drafting guidelines to describe employing the ‘Index’ in planning future inclusive measures, by incorporating the indicators as part of the school review and assessment process that the Special Education Department carries out on a yearly basis. However, I realised that this was problematic, as a result of the differing views on inclusion between the Index and the ‘School for All’ initiative, as well as the other challenges in relation to social and cultural settings and values. I believe the future employment of the Index is possible, as this study has identified a set of barriers as well as resources related to inclusive government schools based on the Index. The study offers an insight into the current inclusive cultures, policies and practices in government schools which can provide a stepping stone in adapting the indicators to the UAE context.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This study set out to explore the journey into inclusive education in three Emirati government schools, following the two year implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative. This initiative represents the first practical measure by the MOE to implement the Federal Law 19/2006 that stipulates the rights of individuals with disabilities to education, health and employment. The provisions and services provided by the initiative have so far concentrated on five school aspects, namely: (1) staff training and development, (2) school structures with respect to students’ placement, accommodations and modifications (3) support services, (4) assistive technology and (5) community awareness.

Firstly, the study provided a detailed account of the implementation of the above provisions and services, in order to address the first research question of: ‘What educational provisions have been implemented for disabled students in three Emirati government primary schools, as a result of the ‘School for All’ initiative?’

This detailed account has resulted in identifying positive system characteristics that should be enforced, such as (1) alleviating some of the psychological barriers, where teachers now are more accepting of the concept of inclusive education, (2) introducing theoretical knowledge about types, features and educational needs of disabilities, as well as inclusive education support strategies such as constructing IEPs and differentiated teaching, (3) spreading appropriate and sensitive disability vocabulary, (4) accepting students into mainstream classrooms and their successful involvement in social school activities, (5) improving physical accessibility of schools, through modifications in school buildings, (6) providing access to mainstream classrooms for students with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities with IEPs that are tailored to their individual needs, (7) modest improvement of teachers’ abilities in providing accommodations to improve the students’ opportunity to access the curriculum and reach their IEP goals, by using a variety of teaching strategies and peer-friendly seating arrangements, and finally (8) modest success of awareness programmes that targeted parents, teachers and students with respect to social justice, understanding the rights of the students with disabilities as per the local legislations and the necessity of compliance with the Federal Law.

On the other hand, the study has identified the areas of concern and gaps in practice that need to be addressed in future development plans at both school and Ministry levels, such as (1) the quality of teachers’ development programmes with respect to content and training strategy; it is so far too theoretical and lacking in hands-on activities that aid in transferring the skills to



the classrooms; (2) the lack of school facilities that add the recreational components of sports, art, music, design and technology where students' talents can flourish and develop so that academic achievement are not the only route to success; (3) exclusionary practices in an inclusive setting due to shifting the responsibilities of teaching students with disabilities to the special educators in the resource rooms, as teachers are unable to deliver lessons using co-teaching models and they lack the knowledge and skills to manage a diverse ability classrooms; (4) negative attitudes of some teachers towards educating children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, especially the ones with behavioural and communication disorders; (5) inflexibility of the current curriculum and the lack of teachers' guide books for curriculum differentiation and (6) constraints on funding and specialist staffing which has negatively affected provisions related to assistive technology, specialists teaching materials as well as adequate and regular support services of speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and psychotherapy.

Subsequently, the accounts from the three case studies were cross-examined in search for emerging themes that reflect resources as well as barriers to participation and learning for students with disabilities with respect to the three school dimensions of cultures, policies and practices, drawing upon the key elements of the 'Index for Inclusion' by Booth and Ainscow (2011). This discussion addressed the second research question of: 'What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative?'

Firstly, the emerging themes with respect to school cultures identified a number of positive inclusive characteristics, such as (1) a friendly school climate as a result of welcoming rituals for students and parents as well as an open door policy conducive to sharing ideas and concerns. The schools also celebrated the participation of students with disabilities, which

was displayed in posters and pictures around the school, (2) a clean, tidy and orderly physical environment with uncongested classrooms, in addition to few physical modifications to increase accessibility (3) respect and support among stakeholders, reflected in their language of communication and supporting each other's needs, (4) mentoring programmes for students with disabilities by older peers, especially during break time and school activities (5) social inclusion of students with disabilities, as a result of facilitating their participation in activities and group projects as they are being equally valued, which provided opportunities to expand their social relationships and social skills.

However, a number of barriers to learning and participation have also emerged with respect to inclusive school cultures, such as (1) the lack of recreational facilities in all schools that can encourage hidden talents and abilities, (2) some outdated school buildings with poor facilities, especially air-conditioning, sanitation and shading (3) teachers apprehensions about including students with behavioural and communication disorders, which reflected negatively on the school experience for both teachers and students, (4) teachers frustration as a result of the additional load of work needed to support students with disabilities without compensation, and their feeling of inadequacy as a result of lack of professional training, support services and teaching materials, (5) discriminating attitudes towards students was displayed by some teachers when addressing their frustration regarding their additional workload, and their feeling of inadequacy towards supporting the students with disabilities inside their classrooms, (6) possible bullying between students based on their jealousy from the extra attention that students with disabilities receive in the school.

Secondly, the study identified a number of measures regarding inclusive school policies, that are conducive to learning and participation, such as (1) an effective induction policy for new students and parents, (2) an open door policy, where grievances and concerns by parents,

teachers and students are attended to and possibly resolved, (3) the effective leadership of some school principals that emerged in managing school budgets, encouraging innovation, closely monitoring progress and awarding best practice, and (4) an assessment policy that is based on the goals in the IEPs while students are placed in age-appropriate classrooms with their peers.

However, barriers to learning and participation were also noted with respect to inclusive school policies, such as (1) schools still acting as gate keepers, especially for students with behavioural disabilities, (2) teachers responsibilities towards students with disabilities are vaguely defined as per the rules and regulations in the handbook. Additionally, barriers are identified regarding policies at Ministry level such as, the lack of more rigorous implementation measures and enforcement mechanisms of the law, and the fact that the Ministry still does not have an office or a committee to resolve grievances and complaints regarding discrimination or injustices against students with disabilities. Parents so far have no mechanisms to appeal against a decision made by the zone office to place their child in one setting rather than the other, for example, in a centre instead of a mainstream school. Another barrier concerns the fact that there is no coherence between the strategies of the special and the general education policies for example one of the pressing questions is, how does the commitment to inclusive education through the initiative of 'School for All' sit alongside the general educational policy of raising the educational standards of schools, especially through the accompanying National Assessment Programmes? Another barrier has been recorded in a previous study in the UAE, which identified a misalignment in the UAE education system with respect to curriculum development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation (Arif & Gaad 2008).

Thirdly, a number of resources as well as barriers to learning and participation have been identified with respect to inclusive school practices; in the following both resources and barriers are identified. (1) Teachers are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to modify the curriculum, especially as the national curriculum was not originally designed to cater for students with disabilities, (2) a variety of teaching strategies and teaching materials, are being used, however teachers are not able to differentiate the lessons to cater for all needs, resulting in shifting the responsibility of teaching students with disabilities to the special education teachers in the resource rooms, (3) most of the schools lack sufficient tools and equipment that can support the learning of students with disabilities, (4) special education teachers play a pivotal role in supporting subject teachers, however, teachers' collaboration is not developed yet, due to lack of experience and time for management and planning, (5) learning opportunities for students with disabilities were facilitated during lesson delivery and school activities, however the lack of support services, teaching materials and teachers' limited skills affected the outcomes, (6) another barrier to inclusion is teachers belief in the need for exclusionary settings to introduce academic and social skills prior to inclusion, especially when students have behavioural issues and (7) collaboration with parents and community establishments such as the neighbouring rehabilitation centres provided a variety of expertise and knowledge, it also promoted inclusive cultures, however it needs to be planned and managed to become more regular and constructive.

In conclusion, this study has provided a detailed account, from stakeholders' perspectives, of the journey of three Emirati government primary schools towards inclusive education, following the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative. The resulting accounts were analysed to provide an understanding of the nature of the inclusive system with respect to cultures, policies and practices. A number of resources as well as barriers to inclusive

education were identified. One barrier that seems to be the source of many other difficulties is the incoherence in the educational policies between the general education policy and the special education policy. This has also been documented internationally; Thomas and Loxley (2007) describe the tension between policies that aim to raise education standards and policies oriented to inclusive education. The general education strategy is racing towards excellence and achieving higher ranks in educational levels, evaluated by national and international assessments. Teachers, in response, are pressured to teach towards passing the exams and the evaluation tests in order to achieve higher ranking, as well as teaching towards covering a heavy curriculum. Therefore, adding a student with disabilities in such a classroom becomes a burden, and a problem rather than an opportunity for learning and variation to achieve better education for all.

This incoherence needs to be addressed at a legislative level, in the form of revisions to the law, as well as the resulting measures and instruments. It should also be addressed on the school level, where the mindset of educators needs to be changed to consider the following facts:

1. All students have the right to be educated together
2. All children are unique with different strengths and weaknesses, and it is the teachers' responsibility to address them.
3. Lesson planning should address different learning styles, while differentiation in strategies and materials should aim at making lessons more accessible to all students.

As a final note, it is worth mentioning that despite the negative connotation of labelling and the system incoherence, this mindset, where all students are valued equally and encouraged to reach their full potential, is currently in operation in some government schools, exercised by innovative teachers who are encouraged by committed principals; however, it is not the norm.

In the following section a set of recommendations are suggested to address some of the barriers identified earlier, in an attempt to make a positive contribution to the UAE journey to inclusive education.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

The planning and the implementation of an effective inclusive environment is not just the responsibility of the government as legislators as well as the MOE and the schools as implementers of the law and the resulting initiatives. The responsibility is shared with higher education institutes, where the teachers gain their initial qualifications and training, as well as the social services, where children with disabilities can get access to support services. It is also shared with the health agencies, where early detection of certain conditions can prevent disabilities in some cases, or can lead to early intervention which enhances future social and academic achievements for children with disabilities.

In the journey towards inclusive education, the guiding principle should not only be to providing access to educational settings, but also engagement; through recognition of the barriers as well as the resources needed to create an environment that promotes inclusive cultures, policies and practices. In this study a number of barriers as well as resources have been recognised following the implementation of the inclusive initiative ‘School for All’; accordingly, the following recommendations present ideas that can inform future planning at both Ministry and school level.

*Teachers’ education and pre-service training.* Beacham and Rouse (2012) claim that the content and the pedagogy of teacher education courses are by far the most significant predictors of student teachers’ attitudes to inclusion and diversity. Therefore, in recent years, greater focus has been placed on the development of student teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and

practices as part of their initial teacher education programmes. The shortage of qualified special education teachers as well as the preparedness of the general education teacher to work with students with disabilities is an international concern (Boe & Cook 2006; Rouse 2008). In the UAE, this shortage has been documented by previous studies (Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Anati 2012; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad & Thabet 2009), and still appears to be the main concern according to evidence in the current study. The MOE is addressing this issue by providing in-service teachers' training; however there are still major concerns about the quality of the training. To address this shortage, tertiary education policies should also consider updating the pre-service programmes for teachers to match the demands for the additional knowledge and skills needed to work in diverse-ability classrooms, since the national universities in the UAE are the primary source of teachers for government schools. Sharma et al. (2007) also suggests that pre-service training and teachers' academic education should address teachers' concerns towards inclusive education. Following a study of 607 pre-service teachers in Australia, Canada, Singapore and Hong Kong, three variables were identified, namely confidence in training students with disabilities, knowledge about local disability laws and acts, and contact with people with disabilities to be significantly related to these concerns. In the UAE, Alzyoudi et al. (2011) concludes the urgent need to enhance pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education by increasing their knowledge base about students with disabilities and successful teaching strategies to meet their needs, possibly through collaboration with successful inclusive teachers.

*In-service training.* Ainscow and Miles (2008, p. 7) posits that "teachers are the key to the development of more inclusive forms of education". The in-service training currently available requires a modified strategy as well as improved content in order to infuse the needed skills and hands-on experience that is urgently needed to be transferred into the

classrooms. Although the current training has provided the theoretical background about inclusive education as well as information about various teaching strategies, teachers are still apprehensive about having students with disabilities in their classrooms. It was observed that teachers' rhetoric has improved immensely; however, unless the training provides skills that can be successfully implemented, the deeply held beliefs and attitudes about inclusion will not change (Florian & Rouse, 2009). This is in agreement with Carrington (1999) who affirms that effectively applied inclusive practices resulting in successful outcomes positively influence teachers' attitudes and beliefs.

There should be a shift in the training available in both content and strategies. Carrington (1999) argues that teachers' development programmes should be a balance between theoretical content that includes presentation of information and strategies of inclusive education, with practical content; where teachers are given the opportunity to practice learned strategies in the context of their classrooms together with their colleagues to encourage shared commitment for developing inclusive practices, and reflection on their outcomes. Carrington (1999) also warns against the professional development model of a day workshop, where external consultants present a selected topic without following up implementation and practical related issues in the school community. Similarly, Angelides (2002) confirms that in-service training should not take place in amphitheatres; instead it should target teachers in the classroom to practically demonstrate collaborative approaches and analyse local practice. Finally, teachers' development programs should allow for continuous access to information and support. The teachers are currently receiving a softcopy of the material, which is not being used, as it does not contain any useful practical material. This should be replaced with model lessons, worksheets, and resource materials related to the Emirati curriculum.

Development programmes should also provide the opportunity for collaborative partnerships



and peer tutoring between teachers and trainers, which can facilitate reflection on practices as suggested by Carrington and Robinson (2004). Additionally, there is evidence that collaboration between schools can strengthen the ability to respond to students' diversity (Ainscow & Miles 2008).

To address the above training pedagogies, this study recommends modernising the training strategy by adding the technological element. Most of the teachers were noted to be competent technology end users with regard to the Internet and the social networking applications, not just on personal computers but also using their smart phones and portable tablets such as the I-Pads. Such technological knowledge should be incorporated into training programmes. The suggested solution comprises building a web-based tool which would firstly be designed to aid the trainers in archiving all the training materials to stand alone as an on-line reference manual for teachers. However, the next step would be to encourage teachers and schools to upload their lesson plans, teaching materials, classroom activities and differentiated worksheets and exams, as well as videos of best-practice related to the classrooms in government schools. The Ministry can encourage schools by initiating competitions or awards for best contributions. The web-tool could also be developed to provide a forum for teachers to exchange ideas and collaborate in lesson planning and teaching strategies in general. Such a tool could be funded by assistive technology companies and distributors of teaching equipment and materials in return for advertising space about their products, which would be informative to schools and parents.

*Awareness campaigns.* Schools should continue with internal awareness campaigns to ensure the commitment of the school community of teachers, students and parents to inclusive education. Educational workshops, school activities and awareness leaflets should address all causes of apprehension; including fear of work overload, or fear of failure and inadequacy,

fear of students imitating disabled behaviours, or fear of social stigma. The UAE is a Middle Eastern society where social stigma resulting from having a child with disability is prevalent; it affects the parents and all the children as discussed by Crabtree (2007). Therefore, awareness campaigns should address the rights of students with disabilities by highlighting not only the policies and legislations that guide the inclusive initiative, but also the moral and religious case that underpins the Federal Law 29/2006.

The awareness campaigns should also address the benefits of inclusion to students in general, specifically emphasising the benefits to students without disabilities. Benefits include appreciation, acceptance, patience and respect of individual differences and diversity, social responsibility and preparedness for adult life in an inclusive society, as well as greater academic reward as a result of engagement in peer tutoring and mentoring roles (Byrd 1990).

Awareness campaigns should also target the employment of public figures, especially the ones who could influence the attitudes of the community such as prominent politicians, sports champions and famous artists. Additionally, the achievements of students with disabilities should be highlighted in the media, and schools should open their doors to the community especially during public occasions to showcase the reality of inclusive education in order to raise awareness and break the barrier of fear. All the above should only be carried out following the consent of the parents, and the children with disabilities.

Through awareness campaigns, schools could also target local business organisations to create partnerships; they could sponsor school activities, new facilities or additional equipment and teaching materials, in order to overcome the barrier of limited funding.

*Teachers' collaboration.* The shift in the role of the special education teacher from a teacher in a special classroom to a consultant to subject teachers and a collaborator in their classrooms

need to be enhanced and emphasised further. The subject teachers should assume the primary responsibility in educating students with disabilities, while the special education teacher provides the necessary support. Additionally, the resources of teaching materials and equipment available in the resource room should be available to support all students and not just the ones with disabilities. Teachers' collaboration requires time for management and planning. This time can be dedicated by the special education teacher, once she is freed from the heavy schedule of regular individualised lessons for students with disabilities. There should be a gradual transition into the co-teaching model, so that teachers can combine their expertise, while jointly teaching classrooms with varied abilities. Special education teachers should move away from supporting one student in the classroom as it is stigmatising and disruptive for the whole classroom. Professional development programmes should address the uncertainty that usually accompanies the implementation of the co-teaching model (Meijer 2003).

*Effectiveness of assistive technology.* Specialist equipment for students with sensory disabilities such as magnifiers, Braille typewriters and readers, special radio aids for deaf students are urgently required. Such equipment should be available for students throughout the day in all school settings. Without this equipment, the students would face communication difficulties, leading to social isolation, less opportunity for development academically and socially, as well as putting them at risk of bullying and behavioural problems.

The availability of equipment is not sufficient to support the inclusion of students with disabilities. Teachers and students need to be properly trained on how to use the equipment. The training provided needs to include pedagogical-related aspects with respect to the national curriculum as well as technical aspects, so that teachers can hone their skills and experience in employing the tools and equipment to complement the curriculum delivery. For

example, tool kits that support reading, writing and Maths need to be introduced to the teachers with reference to the curriculum, similarly, technological equipment such as the smart boards and the related software should be introduced to the teachers using examples of websites related to the Arabic-based curriculum.

*Civil society role in promoting social inclusion.* The role of civil society is an underdeveloped avenue for spreading the notion of inclusion and developing community awareness about disability; this is due to the fact that the UAE as a modern society is still very young.

A good starting point for developing the role of the civil society is through building the awareness of the parents of students with disabilities in the schools. Parents need to organise themselves to establish pressure groups, and advocate their rights by illustrating how disabled children are disadvantaged in society (Alzyoudi et al. 2011). This kind of movement could be organised through parents' councils in the schools with encouragement and support from the schools' administration.

Civil society organisations, especially the non-governmental organisations (NGO's) for disabled people, should fulfil their role of (1) educating the general public about the rights of individuals with disabilities, (2) ensuring that the government is fulfilling its commitments towards the rights of people with disabilities, (3) providing people with disabilities with much needed assistance in locating support services and (4) properly channelling their cases of injustice and discrimination.

## **5.7 Personal gains and further research**

My interest in special needs was triggered by my personal experience of my own child who was diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of six. I was most fortunate in seeking out a private inclusive primary school that was equipped to recognise and support children with special

needs. For the next five years the teachers not only taught him the essential skills to access the curriculum and engage in the school life, but also coached me to become a teacher's assistant.

My role entailed attending Talal's weekly individual pull-out session as well as working closely with the class teacher, enabling the children to view me as a friendly presence in the class, which in turn impacted positively on my son. The knowledge I gained from this permeated into my practice in the lecture theatres at the University where I have been an IT tutor for the last thirteen years. My regular participation in two children's charities has also played a part in my need to pursue this study on special needs.

Having lived through the success of Talal overcoming his obstacles due to dyslexia, and transforming into a sporting hero as well as an academic achiever, I was ready to share my experience to help others in a similar situation. The opportunity came to gain the needed scientific knowledge and qualification at British University in Dubai (BUID). This would formalise and ground my quest to help special needs children as well as fulfil my aspiration to progress academically.

This research journey has opened my eyes on the wider issues related to special education and disabilities. Armed with research skills, I conducted a number of research studies where I worked closely with children with Down syndrome, autism and physical disabilities. I moved on to look at the transition of individuals with disabilities into rehabilitation and employment, engaging with theories and concepts of self-efficacy, self-determination, autonomy and human agency. I was intrigued with the notion of inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the UAE community. However, I realised the key role of education played in informing attitudes and cultures to enable the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the wider community. This narrowed down my focus to investigate the educational opportunities for children with disabilities in primary schools in the UAE.

This research study enabled me to join the journey of teachers, parents and students as they discovered the new opportunities as well as the challenges that were introduced by the 'School for All' Initiative. The nature of this journey has been multi-faceted full of uncertainty, discovery, and hope. Becoming aware of the diverse needs of the children made me more sensitive and accepting of people's varying abilities in general, which in turn was reflected in my teaching skills. The extensive field experience improved my listening skills which led me to empathise more with both teachers and parents, who could recognise the children's special needs, but were uncertain how to support them. Experiencing the teachers' and parents' fears and frustrations, stemming mainly from the lack of knowledge and skills, I became more determined to continue advocating for better services for inclusion and to continue engaging in research studies in order to create a greater level of awareness that could inform policy and practice.

The results of this study raise several areas for future research. Further research studies could extend the scope of this study to include inclusive classrooms in middle and high schools, where gender differences is expected to play a significant role with respect to teachers attitudes towards inclusion of students with disabilities, based on previous studies in the UAE that suggest that male teachers are less accepting of students with disabilities in their classrooms (Gaad 2004).

It would also be insightful to utilise the set of barriers and resources to inclusive education that have been identified in this study to examine the stakeholder's perspectives in all the Emirates, using quantitative approach, which would provide a broader view of the implementation of the inclusive initiative in the UAE.

Research could also be conducted to explore ways in which children's perceptions could be recorded, as it is expected to give further aspects to the implementation of inclusive

education, and novel ideas on improving the current provisions and services. Finally, the data provided by this study would inform future research projects in the UAE with regard to the possibility of employing the 'Index for Inclusion' as a tool for designing future school development plans.

## **5.8 Final thoughts**

The journey of government schools towards inclusive education in the UAE has just begun with the introduction of the 'School for All' initiative. Many advances have been made in terms of policy and practice, while school and community cultures are also changing accordingly.

The provisions provided by the initiative addressed five educational aspects, namely: teachers' training and development, school structures, support services, assistive technology and awareness programmes. In each of these aspects barriers as well as resources have been identified. The schools in general have succeeded in creating a welcoming climate for students with disabilities and their parents, and there is certainly more understanding, acceptance and enthusiasm amongst all the stakeholders regarding educating students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. However, the lack of sufficient professional teacher training, adequate support services, inclusive classroom structures and assistive technology equipment are delaying the progress and causing frustration and uncertainty amongst educators and parents. The curriculum is another issue that has been highlighted as one of the main barriers by all educators, conforming to previous studies in the UAE (Arif & Gaad 2008). Teachers are demanding flexibility and guidance to carry out curriculum modifications that are necessary to fulfil the needs of students with disabilities.

Regular school teachers in the UAE are now expected to discover new flexible methods to support and educate students with disabilities in their classrooms, while following the same rigid curriculum. They have to develop new working relationships with special education teachers based on collaboration and co-teaching; they have to develop new skills to manage relationships with parents and they need to be innovative in spreading awareness about disability and inclusive education. This is a substantial responsibility, considering they had limited professional development, while the students were actually in their classrooms, with minimum support services. Thus, feelings of tension, fear, and confusion are to be expected. However, despite all of this pressure, I observed innovation, determination, commitment and hard work, which sow the seeds for hope of a brighter future for all children, particularly the ones with disabilities as they are highlighted not because of their impairments, but in spite of them; for their abilities, contributions and talents.

Finally, I can find no better note to end on than concurring with Joseph Kisanji (1999, p. 13), when he reminds us of “the stark reality of life: change is sometimes painful; change will be more painful to those of us who have made a living out of, and wield some power in, special education. However, if we believe in Education for All, we need to surrender the power we hold and work collaboratively to create effective schools and inclusive education”.



## References

- Abberley, P. (1999). *The significance of work for the citizenship of disabled people* [online]. [Accessed 5 June 2010]. Available at: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disabilitystudies/archiveuk/Abberley/sigofwork.pdf>
- Abbott, C. (2007). Defining assistive technologies - a discussion. *Journal of Assistive Technologies*, vol. 1(1), pp. 6–9.
- Abdat, R. (2010). *Research series regarding disability in the UAE*. Dubai: MSA, Department of Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled.
- Ainscow, M. (1994). *Special needs in the classroom: a teacher education guide*. London: Jessica Kingsley/UNESCO.
- Ainscow, M. (2002). *Understanding the development of inclusive schools*. London: Falmer Press.
- Ainscow, M, & Miles, S. (2008). Making education for all inclusive: where next? *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, vol. 38(1), pp. 15–34.
- Alahbabi, A. (2009). K-12 special and general education teacher's attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special needs in general education classes in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). *International Journal of Special Education*, vol. 24(2), pp. 42–54.
- Albert, B. (2006) *The social model of disability, human rights and development. Disability KaR Research project: Enabling disabled people to reduce poverty* [online]. [Accessed 10 July 2010]. Available at: [http://www.disabilitykar.net/pdfs/social\\_model\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.disabilitykar.net/pdfs/social_model_briefing.pdf).
- Alghazo, E. M. (2005). Special education teacher perceptions towards effective instructional practices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). *The Journal of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*, vol. 28(3), pp. 221–229.
- Alghazo, E. M., Dodeen, H., & Algaryouti, I. A. (2003). Attitudes of pre-service teachers towards persons with disabilities. *College Student Journal*, vol. 37(4), pp. 515–522.
- 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*, vol. 31(2), pp. 94–99.
- Alshamsi, A. (2010). *Promoting the right to work of disabled people in the United Arab Emirates: Lessons drawn from the experiences of the US, Great Britain, Sweden and Belgium*. Ph.D. Thesis. School of Law, University of Essex.
- Alzyoudi, M., AlSartwai, A. & Dodin, H. (2011). Attitudes of pre-service teachers towards inclusive education in UAE and Jordan (a comparative study). *International Journal of Disability, Community and Rehabilitation*, vol. 10(1), pp. 1–23.

- Anati, N. (2012). Including students with disabilities in UAE schools: A descriptive study. *International Journal of Special Education*, vol. 27(2), pp. 1–11.
- Angelides, P. (2002). A collaborative approach for teachers' in-service training. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, vol. 28(1), pp. 81–82.
- Arif, M. and Gaad, E. (2008). Special needs education in the UAE: A system perspective. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, vol. 8(2), pp. 111–117.
- Bankar, N. (2012). Role of parental acceptance and involvement in the rehabilitation process of child with disability. *Golden Research Thoughts*, vol. 1(7), pp. 1–5.
- Barnes, C. (1991). *Disabled people in Britain and discrimination, a case for anti-discrimination legislation*. London: Hurst & Co.
- Barnes, C. (2004). 'Disability, disability studies and the academy', in J. Swain, S. French, C. Barnes & C. Thomas (eds). *Disabling barriers – enabling environments*. London: Sage. Ch. 4.
- Barton, L. (2008) *Inclusion, disabled learners: barriers and possibilities* [online]. Paper presented at the Centres for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) for Inclusive Learning Conference, Northumbria University. [Accessed 14 June 2010]. Available at: <http://www.cettl.org.uk/len%20barton-paper-newcastle-march-08.pdf>
- Beacham, N. & Rouse, M. (2012). Student teachers' attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and inclusive practice. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, vol. 12(1), pp. 3–11.
- Berliner, D. (1986). In pursuit of the expert pedagogue. *Educational Researcher*, vol. 15(7), pp. 5–13
- Bladd, J. (2010). Prejudice hampers effort to get UAE's disabled into work. *Arabian Business.com* [online] 20 July 2010. [Accessed 1 August 2010]. Available at: <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/593080-prejudice-hampers-effort-to-get-uae-disabled-into-work>.
- Boe, E. E., & Cook, L. (2006). The chronic and increasing shortage of fully certified teachers in special and general education. *Exceptional Children*, vol. 72(4), pp. 443–460.
- Booth, T. & Ainscow, M. (2011). *Index for Inclusion: Developing learning and participation in schools*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE).
- Booth, T., Ainscow, M. & Kingston, D. (2006). *Index for Inclusion, developing play, learning and participation in early years and childcare*. Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE).
- Booth, T. & Black-Hawkins, K. (2001) *Developing learning and participation in countries of the south: the role of an Index for Inclusion* [online], Paris: UNESCO. [Accessed 14 January 2013]. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001471/147140eo.pdf>

- Boyer, L., & Mainzer, R. W. (2003). Who's teaching students with disabilities? A profile of characteristics, licensure status, and feeling of preparedness. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, vol. 35(6), pp. 8–11.
- Bradshaw, K., Tennant L. & Lydiatt S. (2004). Special education in the UAE: anxieties, attitudes and aspirations. *International Journal of Special Education*, vol. 1(1), pp. 49–55.
- Brown, S.C. (2001). 'Methodological paradigms that shape disability research', in G. Albrecht, K. Seelman & M. Bury (eds). *Handbook of disability studies*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 145–170.
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Byrd, D.E. (1990). Peer tutoring with the learning disabled: a critical review. *Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 84(2), pp. 115–119.
- Carrington, S. (1999). Inclusion needs a different school culture. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 3(3), pp. 257–268.
- Carrington, S., Robinson, R. (2004). A case study of inclusive school development: a journey of learning. *The International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 8(2), pp. 141–153.
- Cipani, E. (1995). Inclusive education: what do we know and what do we still have to learn? *Exceptional Children*, vol. 61(5), pp. 498–500.
- Collins, S.P. (2003). *Inclusion reconsidered*, *Philosophy of Education Archive* [online]. [Accesses 3 July 2011]. Available at: <http://ojs.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/pes/issue/view/15/showToc>
- Corbett, J. (2001). Teaching approaches which support inclusive education: a connective pedagogy. *British Journal of Special Education*, vol. 28(2), pp. 55–59.
- Crabtree, S. A. (2007). Family responses to the social inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in the United Arab Emirates. *Disability & Society*. vol. 22(1), pp. 49–62.
- Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design, choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2008). *Educational research, planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, vol. 39(3), pp. 124–131.

Crow, L. (1996). 'Including all our lives: renewing the social model of disability', in C. Barnes and G. Mercer (eds), *Exploring the divide: Illness and disability*. Leeds: The Disability Press, pp. 55–72.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Department for Education (2012). *Equality Act 2010* [online]. [Accessed 20 December 2012]. Available at.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/policiesandprocedures/equalityanddiversity/a0064570/-equality-act-2010>

Duke, J. (2009). *The use of the Index for Inclusion in a regional educational learning community* - unpublished [online]. [Accessed 20 December 2012]. Available at <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/29400/>.

Edyburn, D.L. (2006). Assistive technology and mild disabilities. *Special Education Technology Practice*, vol. 8(4), pp. 18–28.

Embassy of the UAE in Washington DC. (2009). *Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Founder of the UAE* [online]. [Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> November 2010]. Available at <http://www.uae-embassy.org/uae/history/sheikh-zayed>.

Engelbrecht, P., Oswald, M. & Forlin, C. (2006). Promoting the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in South Africa. *British Journal of Special Education*, vol. 33(2), pp. 121–129.

Ferguson, D., Desjarlais, A. & Meyer, G. (2000). *Improving education: the promise of inclusive schooling* [on line]. National Institute for Urban School Improvement. [Accessed 15 November 2009]. Available at <http://www.urbanschools.org/publication/promise.htm>.

Finkelstein, S. (2004). 'Representing disability', in J. Swain, S. French, C. Barnes & C. Thomas (eds). *Disabling barriers – enabling environments*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage. Ch. 2.

Florian, L. & Rouse, M. (2009). The inclusive practice project in Scotland: teacher education for inclusive education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 25 (4), pp. 594–601.

Forlin, C. (2001). Inclusion: identifying potential stressors for regular class teachers. *Educational Research*, vol. 43 (3), pp. 235–245.

Forlin, C. (2004). Promoting inclusivity in Western Australian schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 8(2), pp. 185–202.

Forlin, C. & Chambers, D. (2011). Teacher preparation for inclusive education: increasing knowledge but raising concerns. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 39(1), pp. 17–32.

- Forlin, C., Douglas, G. & Hattie, J. (1996) Inclusive practices: How accepting are teachers? *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, vol. 43 (2), pp. 119–133.
- Foster, P. (1996). *Observing schools – a methodological guide*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Frederickson, N. & Cline, T. (2002). *Special educational needs, inclusion and diversity a textbook*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.
- Freire, S. & Cesar, M.A. (2003). Inclusive ideals/inclusive practices: How far is a dream from reality? Five comparative case studies. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, vol. 18(3), pp. 341–354
- French, S. & Swain, J. (2004). ‘Whose tragedy: Towards a personal non-tragedy view of disability’, in J. Swain, S. French, C. Barnes & C. Thomas (eds) *Disabling Barriers – enabling environments*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage. Ch. 5.
- Gaad, E. (2004). Cross-cultural perspectives on the effect of cultural attitudes towards inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 8(3), pp. 311–328.
- Gaad, E. (2011). *Inclusive education in the Middle East*. New York: Routledge.
- Gaad, E. & Khan, L. (2007). Primary mainstream teachers attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs in private sector: a perspective from Dubai. *International Journal of Special Education*, vol. 22(2), pp. 95–108.
- Gaad, E. & Thabet, R. (2009). Needs assessment for effective inclusion in United Arab Emirates’ government schools. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, vol. 4(6), pp. 158–173.
- Gardner, W. (1995). Developing a quality teaching force for the United Arab Emirates: mission improbable. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, vol. 21(3), pp. 289–301.
- Ghesquière, P., Maes, B. & Vandenberghe, R. (2002). Implementation of inclusive education in Flemish primary schools: a multiple case study. *Educational Review*, vol. 54(1), pp. 48–56.
- Ghesquière, P., Maes, B. & Vandenberghe, R. (2004). The usefulness of qualitative case studies in research on special needs education. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, vol. 51(2), pp. 171–184.
- Giangreco, M.F., & Doyle, M.B. (2007). ‘Teacher assistants in inclusive schools’, in L. Florian (ed.), *The Sage handbook of special education*. London: Sage. pp. 429–439.
- Gibson Jr., L. (2013). Differentiated instructions and students with learning disabilities. *Advances in Special Education*, vol. 24, pp. 161–183.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers, an introduction*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Boston: Pearson Education.

Gonzalez, G., Karoly, L., Constant, L., Salem, H. & Goldman, C. (2008). *Facing human capital challenges of the 21st century: education and labor market initiatives in Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

Hamid, S. (2008). Proposal to term 'special needs' people as 'disabled' sparks debate. *Khaleej Times* [online]. 9 July 2008. [Accessed 19 February 2010]. Available at: [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?section=theuae&xfile=data/theuae/2008/july/theuae\\_july341.xml](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticleNew.asp?section=theuae&xfile=data/theuae/2008/july/theuae_july341.xml)

Hewitt, M. (1999). Inclusion from a general educator's perspective. *Preventing School Failure*, vol. 43(3), pp. 133–134.

Hong Kong Education and Manpower Bureau (2004). *Teacher training on inclusive education database – Catering for Student Differences: Indicators for Inclusion-A Tool for School Self-Evaluation and School Development* [online]. [Accessed 10 January 2013]. Available at [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/Data/299157-1242058318159/AP04\\_3\\_Catering\\_for\\_Student\\_Differences.doc](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/Data/299157-1242058318159/AP04_3_Catering_for_Student_Differences.doc)

Hornby, G. (1999). Inclusion or delusion: can one size fit all? *Support for Learning*, vol. 14(4), pp. 152–157.

Hornby, G. & Witte, C. (2010). Parent involvement in inclusive primary schools in New Zealand: implications for improving practice and for teacher education. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, vol. 6(1), pp. 27–38.

Howell, J. J. & Gengel, S. (2005). Perspectives of effective teachers of students with low incidence disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, vol. 1(4) Article 6 [on line]. [Accessed 26 July 2011]. Available at <http://escholarship.bc.edu/education/tecplus/vol1/iss4/6>

Ison, N., McIntyre, S., Rothery, S., Smithers-Sheedy, H., Goldsmith, S., Parsonage, S., & Foy, L. (2010). 'Just like you': A disability awareness programme for children that enhanced knowledge, attitudes and acceptance: Pilot study findings. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation*, vol. 13(5), pp. 360–368.

Judge, S., Floyd, K., & Jeffs, T. (2008). Using an assistive technology toolkit to promote inclusion. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, vol. 36(2), pp. 121–126.

Kauffman, J. M., Landrum, T. J., Mock, D. R., Sayeski, B., & Sayesk, K. L. (2005). Diverse knowledge and skills require a diversity of instructional groups. *Remedial and Special Education*, vol. 26(1), pp. 2–6.

Kellehear, A. (1993). *The unobtrusive researcher: a guide to methods*. Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty.

Khamis, V. (2007). Psychological distress among parents of children with mental retardation in the United Arab Emirates. *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 64(4), pp. 850–857.



Kinsella, W. & Senior, J. (2008). Developing inclusive schools: a systemic approach. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 12(5), pp. 651–665.

Kisanji, J. (1999). Historical and theoretical basis of inclusive education. In Keynote Address for the workshop on ‘Inclusive Education in Namibia: The Challenges for Teacher Education’ [online]. Rossing Foundation, Khomasdal, Windhoek, Namibia, March 24 to 25, pp. 1–14. [Accessed 10 May 2012] Available at [www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/hist\\_theoretic.doc](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/hist_theoretic.doc)

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lindsay, G. (2007). Educational psychology and the effectiveness of inclusive education/mainstreaming. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, vol. 77(1), pp. 1–24.

Lipsky, D. K. & Gartner, A. (1996). Inclusion, school restructuring, and the remaking of American society. *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 66(4), pp. 762–795.

Lupart, J., & Webber, C. (2012). Canadian schools in transition: moving from dual education systems to inclusive schools. *Exceptionality Education International*, vol. 22(2), pp. 8–37.

Meijer, C.J.W. (ed.) (2003) *Inclusive education and effective classroom practices* [online]. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. [Accessed 2 February 2013]. Available at: <http://www.european-agency.org/publications/ereports/inclusive-education-and-effectiveclassroom-practice/IECP-Literature-Review.pdf>

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mertens, D. & McLaughlin J.A. (2004). *Research and evaluation methods in special education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Ministry of Education Research and Studies Department. (2011). *Ministry of Education in figures*. [online]. [Accessed 10 November 2012]. Available at: <http://www.moe.gov.ae/Arabic/Docs/MOE%20Book.pdf>

Ministry of Education (MOE). (2010). *School for All: General rules for the provision of special education programs and services (Public & Private Schools)* [online]. UAE: Dubai. [Accessed 10 August 2010]. Available at: <http://www.moe.gov.ae/English/Documents/Rules/SNrulesEn.pdf>

Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA). (2006). *Federal Law no 29 of 2006 in respect of the rights of people with special needs* [online]. UAE: Abu Dhabi. [Accessed 15 September 2010]. Available at: <http://www.msa.gov.ae/MSA/EN/pages/Rules.aspx>

- Mitchell, D. (2008). *What really works in special and inclusive education using evidence-based teaching strategies*. New York: Routledge.
- Moran, A. (2007). Embracing inclusive teacher education. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 30(2), pp. 119–134.
- Morris, J. (2001). Impairment and disability: constructing an ethics of care that promotes human rights. *Hypatia*, vol. 16(4), pp. 1–16.
- Nes, K. (2009). The role of the Index for Inclusion in supporting school development in Norway: a comparative study. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, vol. 4(3), pp. 305–318.
- Norwich, B. (2010). ‘A response to ‘Special Educational Needs: A new look’, in L. Terzi (ed). *Special educational needs: A new look*, London: Continuum International Publishing, pp. 47–114.
- Norwich, B. & Nash, T. (2011). Preparing teachers to teach children with special educational needs and disabilities: the significance of a national PGCE development and evaluation project for inclusive teacher education. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, vol. 11(1), pp. 2–11.
- Odom, S. L., Brantlinger, E., Gersten, R., Horner, R. H., Thompson, B. & Harris, K. R. (2005). Research in special education: scientific methods and evidence-based practices. *Exceptional Children*, vol. 71(2), pp. 137–148.
- Oliver, M. (1990). *The individual and social models of disability* [online]. [Accessed June, 5<sup>th</sup> 2010]. Available at: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Oliver/in%20soc%20dis.pdf>
- Oliver, M. (1996). *Understanding disability: from theory to practice*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Oliver, M. (2004). ‘If I had a hammer: The social model in action’, in J. Swain, S. French, C. Barnes & C. Thomas (eds). *Disabling barriers – enabling environments*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. London: Sage. Ch. 1.
- Peters, S. (2002). Inclusive education in accelerated and professional development schools: a case-based study of two school reform efforts in the USA. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 6(4), pp. 287–308.
- Porter, G. (2008). Making Canadian schools inclusive: a call to action. *Education Canada*, vol. 48(2), pp. 62–66.
- Reindal, S. M. (2008). A social relational model of disability: a theoretical framework for special needs education? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, vol. 23(2), pp. 135–146.



- Ridge, N. (2010). Teacher quality, gender and nationality in the United Arab Emirates: a crisis for boys. *Working paper no. 10-06, Dubai School of Government*, pp. 1–34.
- Rillotta, F. & Nettelbeck, T. (2007). Effects of an awareness program on attitudes of students without an intellectual disability towards persons with an intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*, vol. 32(1), pp. 19–27.
- Rouse, M. (2008). Developing inclusive practice: a role for teachers and teacher education? *Education in the North*, vol. 16(1), pp. 6–11.
- Schein, E.H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Shaikh, E. (2009). Islam and human rights: friend or foe? *Annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association 67th Annual National Conference* [online]. The Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, IL. 2 April. [Accessed 3 October 2012] Available at [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p361045\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p361045_index.html)
- Shakespeare, T. & Watson, N. (2002). The social model of disability: an outdated ideology? *Research in Social Science and Disability*, vol. 2(1), pp. 9–28.
- Sharma, U., Forlin, C. & Loreman, T. (2007). What concerns pre-service teachers about inclusive education: An international viewpoint? *KJEP*, vol. 4(2), pp. 95–114.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Sage.
- Skrtic, T. M. (1996). ‘School organization, inclusive education, and democracy’, in J. Lupart, A. McKeough, & C. Yewchuk (eds.), *Schools in transition: Rethinking regular and special education*. Toronto, ON: Nelson Canada, pp. 81–118.
- Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. (1985). The merger of special and regular education: Can it be done? A response to Lieberman and Mesinger. *Exceptional Children*, vol. 51(6), pp. 517–521.
- Stainback, S. & Stainback, W. (1992). Including students with severe disabilities in the regular classroom curriculum. *Preventing School Failure*, vol. 37(1), pp. 26–31.
- Stake, R.E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R.E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. NY: Guilford Press.
- Stanford, B., & Reeves, S. (2009). Making it happen: using differentiated instruction, retrofit framework, and Universal Design for Learning. *Teaching Exceptional Children Plus*, vol. 5(6), pp. 1–10.
- Stein, M. K. & Nelson, B. S. (2003). Leadership content knowledge. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, vol. 25(4), pp. 423–448.
- Stoll, L. (1998). School culture. *School Improvement Network's Bulletin*, vol. 9, pp. 9–14.

Swain, J., & French, S. (2000). Towards an affirmation model of disability. *Disability & Society*, vol. 15(4), pp. 569–582.

Teacher Development Authority (TDA). (2010). *Inclusive teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities training toolkit* [online]. [Accessed 1 August 2011]. Available at: <http://www.tda.gov.uk/local-authority/standards-qualifications-training/sen-and-disability/sen-training-resources>

Terzi, L. (2004). The social model of disability: a philosophical critique. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. 21(2), pp. 141–157.

Thomas, C. (2004). How is disability understood? An examination of sociological approaches. *Disability & Society*, vol. 19(6), pp. 569–583.

Thomas, G. (1997). Inclusive schools for an inclusive society. *British Journal of Special Education*, vol. 24(3), pp. 103–107.

Thomas, G. & Loxley, A. (2007). *Deconstructing special education and constructing inclusion*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Thorpe, A. & Azam, S. (2010). Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, vol. 5(3), pp. 163–172.

UAE Cabinet. (2010). *Constitution of UAE*. [online]. [Accessed 27 November 2010]. Available at: <http://www.uaecabinet.ae/English/UAEGovernment/Pages/ConstitutionOfUAE.aspx>

UAE National Bureau of Statistics. (2011). *Education 2010/2011*. [online]. [Accessed 5 November 2012]. Available at: <http://www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/ReportDetailsEnglish/tabid/121/Default.aspx?ItemId=2048&PTID=104&MenuId=1>

United Nations (UN). (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. [online]. [Accessed 20 November 2009]. Available at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2009). *Policy guidelines on inclusion in education*. [online]. [Accessed 18 December 2011]. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf>

United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2011). *World data on education: United Arab Emirates*. [online]. [Accessed 3 October 2012]. Available at: [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/United\\_Arab\\_Emirates.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/United_Arab_Emirates.pdf)

- Vision 2021. (2011). *United in ambition and determination*. [online]. [Accessed 5 November 2012]. Available at: <http://www.vision2021.ae/downloads/UAE-Vision2021-Brochure-English.pdf>
- Warnock, M., Norwich, B., & Terzi, L. (2010). *Special educational needs: a new look*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Continuum.
- Williams, J. (2003). *Teacher training on inclusive education database – Index for inclusion in the Arabic world* [online]. Save the Children Organization [Accessed 10 January 2013]. Available at [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/Data/299157-1242058318159/AB03\\_1\\_Index\\_Inclusion\\_Arabic\\_World.doc](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DISABILITY/Resources/Data/299157-1242058318159/AB03_1_Index_Inclusion_Arabic_World.doc)
- Wolger, J. (2003). ‘The tide has turned: A case study of one inner city LEA moving towards inclusion’, in C. Tilstone & R. Rose (eds). *Strategies to Promote Inclusive Practice*. London: Routledge-Falmer, pp. 187–202.
- Wright, K. (2010). Count us in – achieving inclusion in Scottish schools: an analysis of policy. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 14(2), pp. 153–164.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research, design and methods*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Zigmond, N. (2003). Where should students with disabilities receive special education services? Is one place better than another? *The Journal of Special Education*, vol. 37(3), pp. 193–199.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### School consent forms

Dear Madam

I am currently registered in the British University in Dubai (BUID) in the doctorate of education program; my research interest is inclusive education for children with disabilities. Part of my research is to produce a report based on a case study of schools that are adopting the “School for All” initiative which apply inclusive education practices. The purpose of the project is to unravel the extent to which the implemented provisions have helped the school achieve inclusive education, and consequently devise recommendations that can inform policy and practice on both school and Ministry levels.

I hope you can approve my request of conducting my study based on your school, while assuring you of complete confidentiality of any information conveyed and anonymity of school and participants’ names, which is in line with the British University in Dubai (BUID) ethical code of conduct. I am also attaching a letter from BUID requesting your permission for conducting the research study in the school. Please see below the requirements of the study, and the interview protocol. I look forward to hearing from you, meantime, please accept my best regards.

Nadera Alborno

MSc Computer engineering  
Lecturer at American University in Dubai  
Research Assistant at British University in Dubai  
Mob 0506451136  
Email [nalborno@aud.edu](mailto:nalborno@aud.edu)

1. Requirements for the study:
  - a. Interview with principle
  - b. Interview with Special Education teacher
  - c. Interview with two class teachers that include children with disabilities.
  - d. Observations of two classes while the selected teachers are delivering lessons.
  - e. Observation of selected students during individual support time
  - f. Observation of the two classes during activity and play time

- g. Future visits during school events such as National Day, sports day, Prophet Birthday celebration, or Islamic New Year celebration.
- h. Permission to participate in a school trip including students with disabilities.
- i. The school will be responsible for obtaining teachers' consents.

2. Interview Protocol

- a) Appointments will be requested ahead of time using email and confirmed by phone calls
- b) Participants will be briefed prior to interaction with the study purpose and objectives explaining the following
  - Anonymity (names will be coded if there is a need to mention them).
  - Privacy of answers (negative points will not be conveyed to administration).
  - Right to refrain or withdraw without any negative consequences
- c) Permission for recording the interview will be requested at the beginning of the interview.
- d) Notes will also be taken during the interviews.
- e) Interviewees will be given the chance to check the data collected for authentication.
- f) All data collected throughout the study will be safely kept in a private locked cupboard until the end of the project and the dissemination of the results. Later hard copies will be disposed using a shredder and all electronic files and recordings will be deleted.

If accepted, please sign below

Name:

Position:

Date:

## Appendix 1(Cont'd)

### School consent form

التاريخ:

السيدات: مدرسات مدارس الدمج  
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

الموضوع: دعوة للمشاركة في بحث ميداني لمشروع دمج الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة في المدارس الحكومية

أود أن أحيطكم علماً أنني بصدد إعداد بحث ميداني بخصوص دمج الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة في المدارس الحكومية التي إنضمت لمبادرة "المدرسة للجميع"، وذلك كمتطلب لرسالة الدكتوراة في التعليم (مسار الإحتياجات الخاصة) التي أقوم بإعدادها في الجامعة البريطانية في دبي.

إن الهدف من هذا البحث هو تقييم أولي لتطبيق مبادرة الدمج في ثلاث مدارس حكومية (حلقة أولى) حيث سيتم دراسة تطبيق البرامج والخدمات التربوية والتعليمية المقدمة للطلبة من ذوي الإعاقة والكشف عن النقاط الإيجابية والسلبية لتطبيق هذه المبادرة، وبالتالي تقديم التوصيات التي نأمل أن تكون عنصر مساعد في وضع السياسات و الإستراتيجيات الناجحة والفعالة و القابلة للتطبيق المستقبلي للمبادرة. وسيتم ذلك بدون ذكر أسماء المدارس و المدراء و الاداريون و الطلاب و المساهمون في اجراء البحث الا اذا رغبتم بذلك.

سيطلب البحث إجراء مقابلات مع مديرة المدرسة ومدرسة التربية الخاصة ومدرستين لمواد أساسية في صفوف الدمج. كذلك سيطلب مراقبة الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة في صفوف الدمج وخلال تقديم الدعم اللازم لهم في غرف المصادر و كذلك خلال مشاركتهم في الأنشطة المدرسية والرحلات. وسيتم جدولة المواعيد اللازمة لتنفيذ ما تقدم بالتعاون مع إدارة كل مدرسة على حدة.

نأمل ان تقوموا بالتكرم بالمشاركة في هذا البحث وذلك لأغتنام الفرصة لإبداء ارائكم و مقترحاتكم لنعمل معا على انجاح هذا المشروع تلبية لحاجات ذوي الإعاقة إنطلاقاً من التزام كافة أجهزة الدولة بالتجاوب مع إحتياجاتهم الطبيعية و على رأسها التعليم. في حالة الموافقة على المشاركة، أرجو التكرم بالتوقيع أدناه.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم معنا.

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق التقدير و الاحترام

نادرة البورنو - باحثة

Mobile: 050 6451136

Email: [nalborno@aud.edu](mailto:nalborno@aud.edu)

موافق (موافقة) علي الإشتراك في البحث

الاسم:

التوقيع:

## Appendix 2

### Ethics Form

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Nadera ALBorno

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER: 050 645 1136

EMAIL ADDRESS: [nalborno@aud.edu](mailto:nalborno@aud.edu)

DATE: 14/6/2011

PROJECT TITLE: 'The Journey into Inclusive Education: A Case Study of Three Emirati Government Primary Schools'

BRIEF OUTLINE OF PROJECT (100-250 words; this may be attached separately. You may prefer to use the abstract from the original bid):

This project is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctorate of Education (Special Needs). The main research objective is to investigate the implementation of the educational provisions introduced through the UAE's inclusive initiative 'School for All' in the context of three primary government schools. Additionally, it will explore the extent to which these schools have successfully achieved inclusive education.

The research study will be based on qualitative research methodology where data will be collected using qualitative data collection methods of semi structured interviews, participant observations and document analysis. Research participants will include all concerned stakeholders on three levels; firstly policy makers which include government officials. Secondly, service providers such as subject teachers, Special Education teachers and school principles, and finally on the receiving end students and parents. All observation accounts will take place in natural settings of the class room, play ground and possible external activities such as school trips. Moreover, all the available documents such as school policies, Individualised Educational Plans (IEPs), school reports and communication with the parents will be collected and analyzed to support the arguments which will be underpinned in related literature. The study will aim to possibly produce a set of recommendations for future practice to enhance services rendered by the school and the Ministry of Education.

MAIN ETHICAL CONSIDERATION(S) OF THE PROJECT (e.g. working with vulnerable adults; children with disabilities; photographs of participants; material that could give offence etc):

DURATION OF PROPOSED PROJECT (please provide dates as month/year):

June 2011 - January 2013

DATE YOU WISH TO START DATA COLLECTION:

June 17<sup>th</sup> 2011

Please provide details on the following aspects of the research:

1. What are your intended methods of recruitment, data collection and analysis?

*Please outline (100-250 words) the methods of data collection with each group of research participants.*

The sites will be selected using purposive sampling, which will allow the researcher to choose the sites that best illustrate the educational provisions under study with the assistance of the Special Education Department in the Ministry of Education. The three selected schools will be inclusive schools that have been implementing the initiative provisions for two years.

Researcher aims to recruit three schools in the Northern Emirates, as they have been implementing inclusion for two years. Access will be facilitated by the head of Special Education Department in MOE where permissions and consent letters will be obtained prior to any field visits. Within each school two classes will be selected, one in lower grades (2 or 3) and the other in higher grades (4 or 5). For each class two subject teacher will be selected provided that the teacher has attended the Special Education training that was conducted by the Department of Special Education and also has been teaching in the school for at least two years within the inclusive system. In each classroom one student with disabilities will be selected in order to contact their parents.

On the school administration level, the headmistress of each school and the Special Education teacher will be selected as subjects for the study. Moreover, on the Ministry level, the head of Special Education Department will be contacted as well as the schools' supporting staff such as speech and occupational therapists as well as physiotherapists.

Semi-structured interviews will be used which will take approximately one hour each. I will be taking notes and interviews will be recorded following participant voluntary consent. Pseudo names will be used to maintain anonymity of participants. The questions used in interviews will go along the following guidelines according to participant:

#### The teachers

##### Vision and attitude:

1. What do you know about the "School for All" Initiative?
2. From your experience, do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful?

##### Curricular dimensions:

3. Is the curriculum modified for the students with disabilities?
4. Who carries out the modification and based on what?

##### Pedagogical dimensions and communication:

5. Have you received any training prior to inclusion of students with disabilities? Where and how, and has it been helpful?
6. What are your responsibilities in managing your inclusive classroom?
7. Is there any special lesson planning done for the students with disabilities?
8. Who is involved in the lesson planning? (SENCO, Admin, Parents)
9. Do students with disabilities get any extra professional help outside class such as occupational/ speech/ physiotherapy?
10. What are the main challenges that you encounter in your daily teaching in the class with respect to children with disabilities?
11. What are the means of communication with the parents? Do you organise parents support?
12. Can you describe the relation between the students with disabilities and their peers in the class? Do they get teased or excluded from play and activities?
13. Considering one of your students with disabilities, can you describe the strategy to support his/her learning?
14. In your opinion, what can you do as a subject teacher to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in your classroom?
15. What needs to be done on the subject department level to support the inclusion process?
16. What are the strategies that need to be introduced by the school to support the inclusion process?

##### Evaluative Dimension:

17. Is there target setting for each student according to abilities?
18. How is the study plan monitored and revised?
19. Are students assessed according to their individual learning plan and their set targets?



20. Do students with disabilities get special reports at the end of the year? How are they moved to the next year?

### Special Teachers

#### Questions:

#### Vision

1. What is the vision of the school, especially with respect to students with disabilities?
2. From your experience, do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful?

#### Structural dimension:

3. What is the admission policy?
4. What kind of referral is needed to accept a student? Do you require a specialist diagnosis report?
5. What is the number of students in special classes, if any, and the number of students included in mainstream?
6. What are the types of disabilities accepted in the school?
7. What is the average number of included students in any class, and in what levels?
8. What is the set up in the mainstream classes where students with disabilities are included?
9. Can you describe the school interaction with the parents? Are the parents involved in setting the Special Educational plans for their children?
10. Do you have mechanisms for parents or teachers to voice their concerns?

#### Pedagogical dimension:

11. Can students with disabilities be provided with dedicated help in class (shadow) if needed? What are the qualifications of that person?
12. Do you have any specialists in the school like a speech therapist or an occupational therapist or child psychologist to help in preparing or carrying out remedial plans?
13. Is there any development plans for teachers to improve their awareness and knowledge?
14. Are there any future plans for improving the service provided for the students with disabilities either with respect to teachers' training or resources such as teaching aids?
15. In your opinion what are the qualities required to be a successful teacher for a child with disabilities?
16. What are the main problems that you face on daily basis with respect to administration, parents and children?

#### Curricular

17. Is the curriculum modified for the students with disabilities?
18. Who carries out the modification and based on what
19. Are you involved in setting up the Individual learning plans for students with disabilities?
20. Are you involved in monitoring these plans?

#### Evaluative dimension:

21. How are the students assessed? Do they follow the same exams as mainstream?
22. What kind of certification will they get at the end of primary school? Will it facilitate their transition into secondary school?

#### The parent:

##### Questions:

1. Can you give me a background about your child's case and his education so far?

##### Vision and attitude:

2. What do you know about the "School for All" Initiative?
3. Do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful?

##### Curricular dimensions:

4. Do you know what curriculum your child is following?

##### Pedagogical dimensions and communication:

5. Where you involved in any lesson planning for your child?
6. What are the main challenges that you child face academically?

7. Does your child get any extra assistance in class (shadow teacher)?
8. Does your child students get any extra professional help outside class such as occupational/ speech/ physiotherapy?
9. What are the main challenges that you encounter in helping you child progress? How can the school help you to make it easier?
10. What are the means and procedures of communication with the school admin and teachers?
11. What kind of relation does your child have with his peers? Does he have any school friends visiting at home?
12. What can the school do to support you in this process?

Evaluative Dimension:

13. Is there target setting for each student according to abilities?
  14. How is the study plan monitored and revised?
  15. Are students assessed according to their individual learning plan and their set targets?
  16. Do students with disabilities get special reports at the end of the year? How are they moved to the next year?
2. How will you make sure that all participants understand the process in which they are to be engaged and that they provide their voluntary and informed consent? If the study involves working with children or other vulnerable groups, how have you considered their rights and protection?

Throughout the data collection period, and before carrying out any interviews or observations, participants will be informed about the objectives of the study, and informed consents will be obtained which emphasise the following points:

- Anonymity. Participants' names and identities will not be conveyed, pseudo names will be used across all the study, and key to these names will be locked for researcher's use only in cupboard secure environment. In addition, while the context of the schools will be adequately described, care will be taken so that identification of the school or any participant will not be possible.
- Confidentiality. Participants' responses will not be conveyed to the administration in any manner that could be harmful to job security or position at the school.
- Freedom. Participants have the right to refrain from answering any question and even to withdraw at any stage, without any negative consequences.

It will be necessary for the researcher to stress the voluntary aspect of participation on all levels: administration, class teachers, parents and students, since the schools would be advised to cooperate with the researcher by the Department of Special Needs in MOE, which might cause some participants to feel pressured to take part.

3. How will you make sure that participants clearly understand their right to withdraw from the study?

It will be clearly explained to them and also stated in the consent form which they will need to sign if they agree to participate. The form will clearly state that they have the right to withdraw at any time without any negative emotional or materialistic effect.

4. Please describe how you will ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Where this is not guaranteed, please justify your approach.

Fictitious names will be used in the study for all participants wherever necessary. Names will be deleted from all the collected documents including school name, logo and contacts. Extra care will be taken when recording observations so that the setting remains anonymous

5. Describe any possible detrimental effects of the study and your strategies for dealing with them.

Not applicable

6. How will you ensure the safe and appropriate storage and handling of data?

The safe keeping of all the data collected will be taken into account until the end of the project and the dissemination of the results. It will be kept in a locked cupboard in my house, where I am the only owner of that key. Later data will be disposed by the use of a paper shredder and all recordings and electronic files will be permanently deleted.

7. If during the course of the research you are made aware of harmful or illegal behaviour, how do you intend to handle disclosure or nondisclosure of such information (you may wish to refer to the BERA Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2004; paragraphs 27 & 28, p.8 for more information about this issue)?

I will inform my supervisor and she will take the necessary action depending on the possibility of harm inflicted on any stakeholder. Our aim at the end of the day is to protect the stakeholders and provide the best possible learning and nourishing environment for the students.

8. If the research design demands some degree of subterfuge or undisclosed research activity, how have you justified this?

Not applicable

9. How do you intend to disseminate your research findings to participants?

A summary of the research study will be shared with the head of the Special Education Department as well as summary of recommendations will be shared with each participating school.

Declaration by the researcher

I have read the University's Code of Conduct for Research and the information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate.

I am satisfied that I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations as researcher and the rights of participants. I am satisfied that members of staff (including myself) working on the project have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached document and that I, as researcher take full responsibility for the ethical conduct of the research in accordance with the Faculty of Education Ethical Guidelines, and any other condition laid down by the BUID Ethics Committee.

Print name: Nadera Alborna

Signature:

Date: 14/06/2011

**Declaration by the Chair of the School of Education Ethics Committee (only to be completed if making a formal submission for approval)**

The Committee confirms that this project fits within the University's Code of Conduct for Research and I approve the proposal on behalf of BUID's Ethics Committee.

Print name:

(Chair of the Ethics Committee)

Signature:

Date

## Appendix 3

### Request to Ministry and Authorization



14 June 2011

Nouza Ibrahim Al Marri  
Director,  
Special Education Department  
Ministry of Education  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

This is to certify that **Ms Nadora Emran Alborno** (Student ID: 80016) is a registered student on the **Doctor of Education- Special Needs** programme in **The British University in Dubai** since September 2009.

As partial fulfilment of the Doctor of Education (Special Needs) programme Ms Alborno is currently preparing her final proposal for her thesis: *An investigative study on the transition of Emirati government primary schools into inclusive education, following the "School for All" initiative.*

Ms Alborno would require access to Ministry of Education to investigate the implementation of the educational provisions introduced through the "School for All" initiative in the context of government primary schools.

This letter is issued on Ms Alborno's request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nandini Uchil', written over a horizontal line.

**Nandini Uchil**  
Head of Student Administration



## Appendix 3 (Cont'd)

### Ministry Authorization

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



الإمارات العربية المتحدة  
وزارة التربية والتعليم

الرقم: 538.....

التاريخ: 2011/10/11م

المحترمين

السادة/ مدراء المناطق والمكاتب التعليمية

تحية طيبة... وبعد ،،،

#### الموضوع / تسهيل مهمة باحث (نادرة عمران البورنو)

نهديكم أطيب التحيات ونشكركم على جهودكم لخدمة العملية التعليمية والتربوية .....

تقوم الطالبة /نادرة عمران البورنو ( طالبة دكتوراه بالجامعة البريطانية بدبي) بعمل بحث في التربية الخاصة ، وتود القيام بالملاحظة والزيارة لبعض المدارس التي تطبق برامج التربية الخاصة ( الدمج ) وفق الجدول التالي :

م	المنطقة	المدرسة	موجه التربية الخاصة
1	دبي	هند بنت مكتوم للتعليم الأساسي	أ. عماد المدرك
2	الشارقة	النخيلات للتعليم الأساسي	أ.فاطمة عبدا لله العبيدلي
3	عجمان	الحسن البصري للتعليم الأساسي	أ.شيخه عبيد سلطان
4	الفجيرة	المتنى بن حارثة للتعليم الأساسي	أ.خالد آغا

لذا نرجو التعاون معها وتسهيل مهمتها.

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير ،،،،،

فوزية حسن بن غريب

وكيل الوزارة المساعد لقطاع العمليات التربوية



هاتف الباحثة :

- نادرة عمران : 050 6451 136

نسخة :

- إدارة التربية الخاصة .

www.moe.gov.ae

أبوظبي • هاتف: 4089999 2 + 971 2 4089906 • فاكس: 4089906 2 + 971 2 • ص.ب: 295 • أبوظبي • الإمارات العربية المتحدة  
ABU DHABI • TEL.: +971 2 4089999 • FAX: +971 2 4089906 • P.O.BOX: 295 • ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES  
دبي • هاتف: 2633333 4 + 971 4 • فاكس: 2638178 2 + 971 2 • ص.ب: 3962 • دبي • الإمارات العربية المتحدة  
DUBAI • TEL.: +971 4 2633333 • FAX: +971 4 2638178 • P.O.BOX: 3962 • DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

## Appendix 4

### Summary of data collected in the Pilot Study

Pilot Study				
RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the 'School for All' initiative?				
		<b>1. Staff Training &amp; Development</b>	<b>2. School Structures &amp; Student placement (enrolment, assessment, monitoring)</b>	<b>3. School Structures (Modifications and Adaptations)</b>
Interviews	I Zone coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training has started with awareness and is moving now into gaining information and skills</li> <li>• Victor Pineda workshop about importance of inclusion</li> <li>• 10 workshop portfolio. We are trying to update the contents all the time I am one of the trainers. We monitor the feedback and we understand that it needs updating</li> <li>• National cadres for specialised therapies</li> <li>• Zayed university mini diploma (6 hours in the Summer course)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOE following the January budget advertises in all local newspapers as well as TV and radio about opening registration for new students.</li> <li>• Enrolment requests submitted to the zone office according to residence.</li> <li>• Referrals from schools, based on SST reports of students who have not been able to access the curriculum in all subjects following one year of remedial plans</li> <li>• In March and April, (MET) carries on testing including the physical abilities, psychological and mental abilities, speech abilities and the Special Education aspects which includes testing of learning aptitude which depends on the chronological age. Parents are closely involved in this period</li> <li>• International standard testing used</li> <li>• Report referred to the zone coordinator who will meet with MET members to discuss the report. Accordingly school is appointed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary IEP is prepared on zone level and is part of the documentation that accompany a child enrolment in a school</li> <li>• The report also details accommodations or modifications required to allow this child to access the curriculum, as well as the services needed from the zone, such as speech therapy or psychological sessions.</li> <li>• Parents are involved a</li> <li>• Parents are involved and their consent is requested for every step in the process</li> </ul>

	<p>I Principal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have attended the awareness workshop by MOE Special Education department and Victor Pineda workshop</li> <li>• We have piloted inclusion on 2009 with accepting a blind student in grade two who joined us from a centre</li> <li>• Before the student joined, 2 teachers were enrolled in a training course in the summer for Braille coding and mobility</li> <li>• We became an inclusion school in 2009 with the new initiative, we were the first school.</li> <li>• All our teachers who has students with disabilities have attended the 10 portfolio workshops</li> <li>• Now we are training centre for the zone</li> <li>• We have In-house training also for our teachers carried out by our experienced Special Educator</li> <li>• I always try to bring in specialists for day workshops to give the teachers more experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ratio is 2 DS / 20 classroom</li> <li>• Teachers load is decreased from 28 hours to 18-20 hours</li> <li>• We accept all disabilities referred form MOE</li> <li>• Resource room used to support students with LD on pull out basis</li> <li>• Parents involved with IEP &amp; monitoring and they are always welcome</li> <li>• Slopes/toilets/busses/ trained drivers/ elevator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very noticeable social improvement</li> <li>• Academic improvement is also visible, students graduating to second cycle and learning objectives in most IEP are exceeded</li> <li>• Students included in every school activity including sports day and school trips</li> <li>• Curriculum modification and adaptations are carried out by the teachers with the advice and participation of the zone-coordinator and the SENCO</li> <li>• There is no special curriculum. Our blind students is cared for by her teachers, where they type all the pages in the books in Braille and they fix it for her in the book, They use many resources such as raised ink and tactile resources to create drawings, maps and the use 3 dimensional models for her.</li> </ul>
--	--------------------	---	---	--



<p style="text-align: center;">I Special Educator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 years of experience in Special Education from Egypt and UAE, 5 years in current job</li> <li>• Introductory workshop MOE</li> <li>• Victor Pineda work shop about inclusive education</li> <li>• 10 portfolio training sessions</li> <li>• Some teachers have also attended workshops at Zayed University.</li> <li>• National Cadre program including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision impairment support which include Braille and mobility training (3 teachers)</li> <li>• Autism support (2 teachers)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Workshop about using Braille type writer</li> <li>• Workshop about Autism</li> <li>• continuous workshops for teachers in the school to help them deal with certain cases</li>   <li>• I do a lot of class modelling where teachers from the school and other schools attend to see practical lesson differentiation.</li> <li>• We need more support and cooperation from teachers and trainers from rehabilitation centres; they have extensive experience. We can learn from them so that we can gradually move more students to inclusive schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school has a special classroom for 3 students and a resource rooms where students with DS and LD are supported.</li> <li>• Inclusion started earlier as school project in 2008 following the law and then was one of the pilot schools in 2009 as part of initiative.</li> <li>• School population is 487 with 25 students with learning difficulties and 7 students with inclusive services:</li> <li>• 3 models of inclusion: 1 full inclusions (all day in classroom with possible pull out if needed), 3 partial inclusions where they attend all core subjects in resource room, and 3 attend the special classroom for core subjects and only included for activities and some subjects</li> <li>• Disabilities accepted in the school are Vision impairment, Cerebral Palsy, intellectual disabilities, Speech disorder and motor skills difficulties, delayed growth</li> <li>• Transition to Cycle 2 is supported through inter school meetings and field visits. 1 girl was successfully moved last year</li> <li>• We need direct relation with cycle 2 schools so that transition can be more successful and effective for students. It should not be a personal effort, it should be a rule</li> <li>• The administration work required is very large and a big load, but it is to guarantee the students' rights and to monitor their progress, especially when moved between years or when graduating or when a teacher is changed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students have IEP, that specifies the objectives / skills they need to attain/ advice about the worksheets and assessment</li> <li>• All students get differentiated worksheets and differentiated exams, prepared by teachers with support from Special Teacher</li> <li>• Full inclusion students attend all classes in mainstream, Special ed teacher will assess needs through observation and support on pull out basis if needed</li> <li>• Partial inclusion attends all core subjects in special class 2 classes/ week and the rest in the classroom, aiming to join classroom</li> <li>• Special Ed sometimes attends 1<sup>st</sup> ten minutes to help adjustment and assign the activity.</li> <li>• Students with behavioural issues will attend special class for behavioural support until they can manage mainstream classroom all day.</li> <li>• I encourage teachers to work hard with the students and I support and monitor progress, their reward is to recognise their effort on student IEP when objectives are achieved and we together set new objectives.</li> <li>• Behaviour strategy in class – DS to become teacher assistant, self-control strategies, individual attention and understanding</li> <li>• Learning strategy according to type of disability, I carry it out in special class; I support teachers to carry it out in classroom. I also show parents how to support.</li> <li>• Objectives of the IEP are the main guide but not necessarily the ceiling of ability. Teacher should always push for better results. and moving into higher objectives but without overloading.</li> </ul>
---	---	--	---

	I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DS included in classrooms for activity classes (social inclusion around school, no barriers between students)</li> <li>• Introductory workshop by MOE</li> <li>• Victor Pineda workshop (successful inclusion with practical videos)</li> <li>• Attended 10 portfolio workshops (extensive but very theoretical)</li> <li>• Zayed University course about class management and teaching strategy</li> <li>• Visited centre of disabled to understand the different abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' number in class is still 22, they promised only 20. And hours are not 18 as promised. No recruitment for new teachers and no cadre for teacher assistants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiated worksheets, differentiated tests.</li> <li>• When lesson is within IEP, DS gets a lot of attention, otherwise I provide separate activity (Maths booklet) to reinforce previous</li> <li>• Students attend support lessons with SENCO twice a week</li> <li>• SENCO attends classes for observation and support if needed</li> <li>• SENCO very supportive and helpful in preparing worksheets and exams as well as teaching strategies</li> <li>• Too many reports and extra load in preparation</li> </ul>
	O Classroom	<p>Jamila (blind) in the English classroom. Jamila arrives to the classroom unaided. She does not need to use a white cane, although she was given one. According to principal she does not need it as she knows the school structure very well and all the students assist her if needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is clean and tidy, the classroom is clean spacious for her unassisted movement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No special books, instead teacher has updated the book with Braille coded additional pages.</li> <li>• Also all shapes, maps are drawn with puffy ink and other tactile materials to allow access to shapes and diagrams</li> <li>• Jamila moves independently in the classroom without any aid</li> <li>• Peers helped her in locating a book</li> </ul>
Observations	O Special Class	<p>Special classroom, for 3 students where they spend most of the day. One student with CP and intellectual disability, two other students with vision impairment and intellectual disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One student is using a wheel chair, peers help her around. She used to have a full time helper for toilet use; the SENCO has managed to toilet train her after the special toilets have been fixed. Now she refuses the helper in the classroom.</li> <li>• The three students have been enrolled in 2009 in the special classroom. They have made very good progress both socially and academically.</li> <li>• It is not possible to move them to the classroom for core subjects. They need very slow and concentrated teaching to grasp the concept</li> <li>• They attend some English lessons this year and some social studies with their peers.</li> <li>• There has been gradual transition to mainstream</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The curriculum is modified by the SENCO and she uses many strategies and teaching materials to deliver the concepts.</li> <li>• All worksheets are enlarged, they depend mostly on identifying concepts rather than writing</li> <li>• The writing is still slow but the finger grip has improved</li> </ul>

RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the 'School for All' initiative?				
		4. Support Services (Physiotherapy, speech therapy, psychotherapy)	5. Assistive Technology	6. Awareness programs
Interviews	I Zone coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have 3 speech therapists, 3 psychological therapists</li> <li>We don't have occupational or physiotherapist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools are given mobile smart board, Braille typewriters, laptops and special devices called clarity for vision impaired. The Special Education teacher requests the devices according to need.</li> <li>We need more training for the teachers as AT is not useful unless teachers are well trained to use it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The situation has improved but slowly, we struggled for two years just to break the barrier of fear with teachers. Now at least they are discussing the concept.</li> <li>Another struggle was the parents of both disabled and non-disabled. The society still carries a negative stigma.</li> <li>The success of a school depends substantially on the leadership of the school. The principal and her relation with teachers and her enthusiasm and belief determines the success</li> </ul>
	I Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speech therapy twice a week and psychological support whenever needed</li> <li>We need occupational therapy and physiotherapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is minimal so far, we have Braille and white cane for Jamila</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large school - quite successful with supporting students with special needs for a long time.</li> <li>very experienced SENCO</li> <li>Students very understanding and are used to having students with disabilities</li> <li>Teachers cooperative and doing their best and we only accept the best</li> <li>Parents are kept aware with all kinds of workshops, meetings and activities in the school.</li> <li>Parent assistant project has been very successful and helped parents to learn to help their children</li> </ul>

	I Special Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech therapist comes to the school twice a week. I make sure the students get two sessions per week. I follow up with the therapist to make sure the students are benefitting. I make sure they come to our school (3 in the zone)</li> <li>• The zone has 3 Psychologists we call them if needed.</li> <li>• Vision mobility services by teacher in school</li> <li>• Parent as assistant teacher Project (2009)- 5 parents attend school twice a week as full day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Braille typewriters</li> <li>• Smart board in resource room</li> <li>• Text enlargement</li> <li>• Laptop to aid writing as DS has physical deformity of palm- not possible to hold pen</li> </ul> <p>PROBLEM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We still need more resources especially for hearing disorders more tactile and multi-sensory learning resources</li> </ul> <p>We also need a special table for the student with CP to aid her writing and tablet computers that are connected to the board, as she cannot go to the board easily to write and demonstrate her work like others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School administration is very supportive and understanding and is always pushing for excellence and innovation.</li> <li>• We are very supportive to parents as we believe they are our partners to help students achieve:</li> <li>• Introductory workshop to all <b>mothers</b> especially the new ones about disability types and Inclusion initiative to remove attitude barriers</li> <li>• Individual meetings with parents</li> <li>• Individual workshop with mothers to teach them how to support their children at home behaviour and academics depending on disability</li> <li>• The only problem when parents are not educated, it affects the progress</li> <li>• School admin is very supportive of the teachers and pressures the Ministry to provide enough teachers so that teacher load is not over 18 hours/ week and less administration work when DS are included</li> <li>• Teachers did not accept inclusion at the beginning, it was an extra load and they felt inadequate, but I have been very supportive and cooperative with all the teachers. I am willing to support in class and out of class but I require them to put the effort and I require them to learn. They say I am very strict and pushy but I feel it is my duty in front of God to help these kids</li> <li>• PROBLEM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no incentives for teachers such as awards or even gratitude letters. They need to feel that their extra work is rewarded. We understand it's our duty but also we need motivation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
--	--------------------	---	--	---

	I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech therapy, twice a week, half hour for each child. 2 different therapists to cover all cases in school.</li> <li>• Students need occupational therapy for many students</li> <li>• Students need regular psychological therapy for behavioural issues</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion is successful in moderate disabilities. Behavioural issues need amendment in special class before inclusion.</li> <li>• I am not Special Educator so I need support from SENCO</li> <li>• I am evaluated according to IEP so it's OK</li> <li>• Some parents are very cooperative and helpful. Others are not bothered (education and age makes a difference)</li> <li>• Students need more awareness programs about all sorts of disabilities and how to play and support them.</li> <li>• There are friendships around the school, some of the girls are active socially and some are not. Most of the girls are improving</li> <li>• Teachers eager to be recognised and rewarded for their extra effort, Teacher Training succeeded in removing stigma and barrier of accepting disabled students</li> </ul>
	O Classroom		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jameela uses her Braille coder which she carries with her in a box from one class to another</li> <li>• Teachers has another 2 for creating her resources</li> <li>• Principal requests better technological devices for the Blind and the visual impaired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jameela interacted with all her peers along the way to the classroom,</li> <li>• She is very active in the classroom</li> <li>• She is high achiever in terms of academics</li> <li>• Her peers cheered her and the relation seemed quite friendly</li> </ul>
	O Special Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls get speech therapy twice a week however the SENCO carries out all sorts of exercises to improve their speech and writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The classroom has a smart board which the teacher use in presenting the lessons, the girls enjoy writing on the board so much and it is a reward to do that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls are very friendly and happy. There was a lot of laughter and cheering as they were learning. Very active classroom.</li> <li>• They shared the rewards (sweets) amongst them and they also shared with me</li> </ul>

## Appendix 4 (Cont'd)

### Interviews with Head of Special Education Department (1<sup>st</sup> Interview)

**Date:** Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**Duration:** 1.5 hours (9am)

**Location:** Special Education Office in the Ministry of Education (MOE)

#### **Interviewee Background Information:**

**Qualifications:** MA Special Education (USA)

**Years of experience:** 15 years

**Years in current job:** 3 year

At first, Mrs Al-Murry welcomed the research subject, also confirmed that this particular focus would be of great benefit to the Ministry and to the Special Education Department. Mrs Al-Murry promised to provide all necessary support and assistance as long as the Researcher will allow the Ministry to put the research conclusions and outcomes into practice.

Mrs Al-Murry agreed to issue the Researcher with permission to visiting the Ministry Office, also to go to the schools detailed in the letter of the British University which was delivered to Mrs Al-Murry's Office earlier.

#### **1. Selection of the Inclusion Schools.**

The selection of the Inclusion Schools is not compulsory; however, it is achieved through three stages.

##### **The First Stage:**

The Ministry sends a recommendation form to the specified schools consists of a questionnaire about their interest to be changed into Inclusion Schools. The questionnaire is intended to find out their capability with regard to carrying out the inclusion duties and responsibilities.

The questionnaire also takes account of the availability of teachers of Special Education, and if the existing teachers are ready to attend training courses and workshops, the size of the school whether big or small, also the existing number of disabled pupils?

The questionnaires are not sent to the Education District, but directly to the specified schools to ensure their ultimate willingness to the changing which will help in accepting the required modifications.

##### **The Second Stage:**

The Special Education Directors at the Ministry of Education will examine the questionnaires submitted to the Department.

##### **The Third Stage:**

- A. The selection of the Inclusion Schools will be established upon the Director's conclusion. A decision will be handed out to the selected schools clarifying the required responsibilities to complete the inclusion.

B. A decision will be issued to assess the Inclusion progress and development, followed by the yearly valuation report. The new planning is founded according to the fiscal year (January/December) and not according to the academic year (June/ May)

An Expert Group in the field of the special needs will be formed to be in charge of joining the disabled pupils; this group will classify them according to their individual needs, in view of that, they will be admitted to Inclusion Schools or other specific schools.

## **2. Procedures of admission.**

The parents should fill an application form at the District Office. All documents including medical reports should be attached with the form. The Expert Group will examine the applications and interview the parents or the person in charge of the pupil in order to discuss each individual case, and thus to determine the necessary needs.

The parents can apply directly to the Inclusion School; however their applications will be sent to the Expert Group to examine each application and to give their decision.

Some Inclusion Schools admit disabled pupils with special needs directly without informing the District Office and the Expert Group; consequently, some problems arise as a result of the shortage of some essential requirements needed for such pupils, also in terms of changing or amending the teaching technique. Therefore, it is very important that the Department of Special Education should be informed prior to any admission in order to arrange for the necessary equipment and the suitable methods.

Another problem happens when the parents refuse to declare that their son/daughter is disabled with special needs. This attitude might be due to the avoidance of shameful feelings or because of the society's approach towards their son/daughter. Also, because the parents are not aware of such needs.

The registration usually begins during March of each year whereas an advertisement is published in the newspapers, also in the Ministry's electronic website where applications could be filled and submitted.

## **3. What happens in case of lack of Inclusion Schools?**

At this time all schools are fitted with special classrooms also with the necessary sources rooms whereas we started with 10 schools, then added 18 followed by 22 schools to reach 50 schools located in the different parts of the country by the beginning of the academic year 2011/2012. Currently, the Department of Special Education is doing every possible effort in order to accommodate all disabled children.

**What is the average number of pupils with special needs in classrooms?**

The guideline given to schools is to admit 2 disabled pupils at each classroom, and that the total number of pupils is to be reduced to 20 pupils, but some schools do not implement this guideline exactly.

The Ministry ensures that the three methods are founded; these are the complete inclusion, partial inclusion through sources rooms, and completely separate special classrooms according to disability and special needs.

#### **4. Services and programmes provided by the Department of Special Education to schools in order to be developed into Inclusion Schools.**

The Department of Special Education provides 4 basic services to the Inclusion School, these services are:

- A. Field training for expert teachers and workshops for all teachers at an Inclusion School.
- B. Essential changes.
- C. Supporting tools for disabled pupils.
- D. Promotion competition to choose the best Inclusion School.

#### **5. Training of teachers and administrative staff at Inclusion Schools.**

The selected schools are chosen between January and March of each year. The Department of Special Education will inform the Districts' Offices about the different available training courses. The Districts' Offices and the Inclusion Schools should specify their basic and highlighted needs of the training courses, and thus will be detailed and start from March of each year.

##### **A. The Training Period:**

The Department of Special Education had specified 19 training centres which were designated for the first Inclusion Schools. The training timetable is each Tuesday from 12:00 to 2:00 pm for 10 weeks during each half term. The training subjects will be repeated during each term. Each centre accommodates 25 teachers, 5 free seats are labelled for teachers at private schools. Training is in Arabic language. Each teacher will be required to apply the training subject to his school in order to ensure all teachers had acquired the type of training essential for inclusion.

The training period and its compulsion are defined by an administrative order to confirm the participation of every Inclusion School.

##### **B. Training at the Ministry:**

Schools will be required to nominate the teachers participating in the training courses, their names will be sent to the Ministry, and then an order with the participants will be issued by the Ministers Council. By the end of the year, almost 200 teachers will be fully trained - during equal periods - on disability, talent, activities analysis, and classroom management. The tutors are either natives or visitors according to the training subjects.



### C. Zayed University:

The Department of Special Education signed an agreement with Zayed University to start training programme for teachers during July. The programme consists of Education and Management courses held on 6 equal periods (3 hours each). The participants will be awarded a Diploma in Further Education. This programme has become more accepted by the teachers as they will be accredited with an acknowledged certificate.

The programme encompasses 120 participants, it is offered to the new schools joined the Inclusion Scheme; the tutors are from the academic staff.

The programme is classified in accordance with the teachers' specialisations. For example, the teachers of the Arabic and English languages will study the Learning of Reading course. Maths and Science teachers will be trained on Maths and Science course. Schools' Headmasters will take courses in leadership subject. The training packages and selected subjects will be organised in co-operation with the Special Education Director being well-acquainted with the Inclusion Schools' needs, for instance, the University Lecturer should not teach any odd subjects that do not meet the terms of the state of things as they are in the Emirates.

### D. The National Cadres (Team) Programme:

National cadres had been fully trained in the following fields:

- 25 experts in visual disability.
- 25 experts in speech and language.

This programme was completed through 4 irregular workshops, each continued between 3 to 7 days. As for the visual disability, an agreement has been signed with Barkins School of America to assess and evaluate these experts to be issued with an international certificate in the field of training the pupils with visual disability.

- E. At the beginning of each fiscal year and after the selection of Inclusion Schools, edification sessions take place whereas the senior teachers at these schools put their experiences - both positive and negative - in front of the new trainees in order to encourage them, also to confirm their contributions.
- F. The future plan is to establish support centres at each district to joining disability experts and special care directors in order to offer the necessary services needed for the district's schools, such as following-up and evaluation. At the present time, two centres are being established and should be ready by 2012.
- G. Three schoolgirls were sent to America to study the education for pupils with special needs in order to improve the national cadres (team) in the field of the care for the country's children.

**6. Courses and special courses for the disabled, are they just one course, or there are special courses according to the type of disability?**

At this stage, it is difficult to plan a special course for each case of disability; therefore we depend on qualifying the teachers to study and prepare the Individualised Education Programme (IEP) for each pupil to suit his/her disability and capabilities according to each subject.

The pupil is taught in agreement with the targets specified in this programme; the pupil will be evaluated at the end of the academic year according to this programme and not on the basis of subject given to the other pupils.

There are many considerations that should be counted for during the examinations period, the Director of Special Education should be present to ensure offering the necessary facilities and support for each pupil depending on his/her capabilities. These facilities include reading/writing/recording the exam's questions, giving extra time, omitting the questions that contain photos especially in cases of the visual disability, and to give an alternative question instead of spreading the due marks on the other questions.

The Ministry had published a pamphlet (guide) on the method of producing the individual programmes, and circulated it to the schools, also uploaded it on the Ministry's official website.

Producing the individual programme for each pupil is to be achieved in cooperation with the teacher of the subject (teacher of Special Education) and with the Director of the Special Education Department, also with parents

## Appendix 4 (Cont'd)

### Interview with Head of Special Education Department (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)

**Date:** Thursday, November 23, 2012

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Location:** Special Education Office in the Ministry of Education (MOE)

#### Questions:

**1. What are the current statistics with respect to number of schools adopting the initiative and the number of students in Special Education in the UAE Government schools?**

The current statistics are available, this year the total schools is 104 schools in all cycles. As you know we started with 10 schools in 2009, then we added 18 schools in 2010, then another 22 schools in 2011 and finally this year (2012) we added 64 schools in all cycles. Total number of schools in all cycles is 420 in 2011.

Year	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2015
Number of schools	10	28	40	104	420

- Last year 2011, we managed to cover all KG schools meaning that all KG schools in the 6 Emirates are inclusive schools. Training has been carried out to cover 45% of the teachers in all the KG schools.
- The table below depicts the total number of students with disabilities in Government schools, which include all students with special needs whether in special classrooms or included in mainstream (first row).

Year	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Number of DS	6494	7009	8019	9282

- The total numbers of students that have been accepted in the inclusion classrooms have increased from 185 students in 2011 to 235 in 2012, which reflects the increase in the number of schools joining the initiative.
- The future prospect is by the year 2015 all government schools in all cycles will be inclusive schools.

**2. What are the latest provisions with respect to teachers' training?**

The teachers' training has been going in three directions:

- **Training portfolio**, it has been going successfully for the third year, every year we try to update it according to feed back that we get from the teachers and the participant trainers. We have trained so far approximately 2965 teachers from a total of 13065 (2011-MOE Statistics) teachers in all schools in the UAE except AD.
- **National Cadre program**, 70 teachers are included in this program yearly. We started in 2010 with 11 workshops for each specialty (speech therapy, visual impairment, gifted and talented). In 2011 we added another specialty (Autism) which included 11 workshops with centre of Autism + attending a conference + ABA course. (I actually met the teachers in the conference, but they could not make use of it as it was all in English and there were no translation provided)

- **Ministry provided courses;** the Ministry provide workshops about certain subjects such as behavioural management, class management and others which we decide upon depending on need and the availability of trainers and lecturers. This training includes **200 teachers** on yearly basis.

This year we have added provisions for **parents** to attend these training workshops in order to aid awareness and get their support for our efforts.

**3. I would like to ask about the origin of designing the 10 workshop portfolio as it represents the main training provision?**

The original 10 workshops were compiled by our internal team. We did not employ a readymade course ... instead we worked for about 6 months a team of 15 people to create the 10 workshops... and after around 3 revisions we started employing it the first time in 2009 when we prepared the first 10 schools for inclusion. Since then there has been constant updates to make it more suitable according to feed back. We did not depend on a certain western model; instead it was our collective experience with respect to the UAE school context.

**4. What are the latest structural provisions in the schools?**

The same provisions of

- elevators ( we have completed 75 in various zones, this year there is a plan for 7 more according to Budget)
- toilets
- slopes
- As for busses, the Ministry of transport has 50 special busses available. I know that so far only 13 are utilised and I have not had any complain about the availability of the busses.

**5. What are the latest awareness programs?**

This year we started a special awareness program for parents. It was very well organised conference, it included lectures, debates and focus groups where parents can ask questions and voice their concerns. It included full description of their rights and their responsibilities and the process that they need to go through and the services and expectations. The workshops also included an exhibition by a number of providers of AT so that they can realise the availability of such tools.

**6. What about Assistive Technology?**

This question was answered by the person in charge in the team, who has a Masters in Information Technology and Education. He explained that the following are the available provisions so far in the schools depending on the need:

- Portable smart boards + projector
- Speech support equipment to aid speech therapist
- Equipment for visual impairment (enlargement, speech recognition, Ibsar to help reading in support for Arabic language)
- Special grip pens, tilted pen
- Computers for students with CP
- Special tables for students with physical disabilities
- Braille printers (Hala is in charge of compiling a team of National experts to train teachers on using Braille)... Need to enquire
- Equipments for visual and hearing impairment assessment

**7. How successful was the inclusion competition between the schools?**

The inclusion competition is not run by our department... There is a special department in the Ministry that takes care of all the competitions.

**8. Can you tell me what happened to the plan about the support centres in the various education zones?**

The five support centres are ready and complete with all equipments, software, diagnostic tests and the specialists. It is expected to be open this year. It will provide the right environment for assessment, diagnosis and follow up.

**9. What are the main obstacles and challenges so far that hinders development?**

There are two main obstacles:

- Specialists especially with all sorts of therapy such as OT, speech therapy, physiotherapy and support for all sorts of sensory disabilities.
- The special teachers are not equipped so we are trying very hard to train them and to overcome their apprehension
- Parents can be a real obstacle as some of them do not understand the concept of the IEP and considers that their child is not progressing and that the school and teachers are not helping his child. They do not still see the social benefit of inclusion.

**10. What has “School for All” accomplished so far?**

3. The main new accomplished this year is that we managed to finally convince two very important bureaus (School Endorsement Bureau and School Inspection and Conduct Bureau) in the Ministry to include indicators of Special Education provisions in their inspection programs. Consequently if a school has no provisions for special needs they will get a lower grading and it is possible that it will not get an endorsement. The School Endorsement Bureau as a result will prepare a plan with a number of set objectives that the school has to reach and put in action to reach the level of endorsement.

We have assisted by preparing a list of required provisions for schools to support students with disabilities in order to aid inspectors during their visits to the schools. It includes the following categories, where each category has a set of indicators in order to specifically assess the progress of the school

- (1) Academic achievement,
- (2) school leadership,
- (3) learning and teaching quality and
- (4) social and personal development,

**My Diary**

- The head of the Special Education was extremely helpful and very interested in the results of the study; she actually repeated more than once that she hopes that I will provide a copy of the research study and especially the recommendations.
- The team at the office were diverse. The assistant head was also very helpful and she just had to confirm again with the head that I can get the statistics.
- The gentleman who was in charge of training was also very helpful and was complaining about the new system where the Special Ed supervisors will not be monitoring closely the work of Special Ed teachers in the schools.
- The last gentleman who is in charge of AT, was quite possessive of the data. He insisted on getting permission again, although he had the chance to do so, he said he will do that later. He gave me a brief about AT but he made sure not to give me any printed data. He invited me to attend a training workshop on Sunday 9:00 to 2:00 for a large number of teachers from all zones to use the mobile Smart Board.

## Appendix 5

### Observation Guides

#### Class room observation guide

Role of observer:

Grade:

Date:

Time:

Duration:

Total number of students:

Number of students with disabilities:

Types of disabilities:

Levels of disabilities:

Diagram of class plan:

What's on the wall?

	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Inclusive Learning Environment</b>				
1	Student can see & hear teacher clearly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background noise</li> <li>• Lighting</li> </ul>			
2	Student can see & hear resources used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual/ sound aides</li> </ul>			
3	Is there any Stigma/ hostility/ isolation attached to seating			
4	Adequate space to maneuver independently			
5	Suitable furniture (adjustable chair or desk)			
6	Resources position is accessible <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laptop</li> <li>• Learning tools</li> </ul>			
7	Resources to aid independent learning such: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wall charts/ posters/ memory cards</li> </ul>			
8	Resources labeled clearly to aid independent use.			
9	Seating allows adult/peer support			
10	Risk points in class are addressed (Safety) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edges</li> <li>• Steps</li> <li>• Electrical points</li> </ul>			
11	Adequate accommodations available and properly used depending on disability: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Magnifying glasses</li> <li>2. Braille</li> <li>3. Computer aided reading, writing,</li> <li>4. Wheel chair/ special table</li> <li>5. Special pen etc</li> <li>6. Seating arrangement</li> <li>7. Extra time during assessment</li> </ol>			
<b>Teaching approach and strategy</b>				
12	Teacher has prepared differentiated work sheets/ home works/ exams			
13	Teacher follows differentiated learning			

	objectives for the student			
14	Teacher follows differentiated / alternative learning style for the student			
15	Teacher provides sufficient and adequate instructions for student to work independently			
16	Teacher uses effective prompts depending on disability and age group			
17	Teacher accommodates varying attention spans			
18	Teacher facilitates participation in discussion			
19	Teacher allows sufficient practice			
20	Teacher checks for understanding instructions			
21	Teacher follows positive methods to deal with behavioral problems			
22	Teacher gives motivating, sincere and positive feedback			
<b>Student Interaction</b>				
23	Mutual respect between students			
24	Students seem to get along			
24	Students encouraged to collaborate and share			
25	Peer tutoring or buddies are facilitated			
26	Variety of student grouping to aid social skills and relations			
<b>Teacher–student Interaction</b>				
27	Teacher uses motivational techniques to encourage participation			
28	Teacher encourages students to express their opinions			
29	Teacher maintains encouraging eye contact			
30	Teacher interested in student’s ideas			
31	Teacher values students equally			
32	Extra adult support available if needed			
33	The extra adult is qualified and familiar with student			
<b>Learning Assessment</b>				
34	Appropriate and differentiated learning outcomes are defined			
35	Alternative assessment techniques available			
36	Extra time during assessment is facilitated			
37	Students understand assessment instructions is ensured			

Extra-curricular activity observation guide

Role of observer:

Grade:

Date:

Time:

Duration:

Total number of students:

Number of students with disabilities:

Types of disabilities:

Levels of disabilities:

Type of activity (sports day/ school trip/school celebration/ class activity):

	Indicators	Y/N	Evidence	Comments
<b>Inclusive Learning Environment</b>				
1	Student can see & hear teacher clearly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background noise</li> <li>• Lighting</li> </ul>			
2	Student can see & hear resources used <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual/ Audio aides</li> </ul>			
3	Is there any Stigma/ hostility/ isolation attached to position			
4	Adequate space to maneuver independently			
8	Resources labeled clearly to aid independent use.			
9	Position allows adult/peer support			
10	Health and Safety measures addressed with respect to particular disability			
11	Accommodations depending on disability: (transportation/ toilets/ tools or aids to facilitate participation)			
<b>Activity approach and strategy</b>				
12	Teacher has prepared differentiated activity depending on disability			
13	Teacher gives equal opportunity to participate			
14	Teacher gives sufficient and adequate instructions for student to participate independently			
15	Teacher uses effective prompts depending on disability and age group			
16	Teacher accommodates varying attention spans			
17	Teacher allows for sufficient practice			
18	Teacher checks for understanding instructions			
19	Teacher uses positive methods to deal with behavioral problems			
20	Teacher gives motivating, sincere and positive feedback			
<b>Student Interaction</b>				
21	Mutual respect between students			
22	Students seem to get along			
23	Students encouraged to collaborate and share			
24	Peer playing or buddies are facilitated			
25	Variety of student grouping to aid social skills and relations			



Teacher–student Interaction				
26	Teacher uses motivational techniques to encourage participation			
27	Teacher encourages students to express opinion			
28	Teacher Maintains encouraging eye contact			
29	Teacher is interested in student’s ideas			
30	Students are valued equally			
31	Extra adult support available if needed			
32	The extra adult is qualified and familiar with students			

## Appendix 6

### Interview Guides

#### Interview Guide for Special education Zone Coordinator

Date:

Duration:

Location:

#### Interviewee Background Information:

Qualifications:

Years of experience:

Years in current job:

#### Questions:

##### Vision and attitude: (Culture & policy)

1. Do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful?
2. How do you relay the vision of “School for All” to your staff?
3. How do you relay the vision to the community?
4. What has your department accomplished in terms of awareness of parents? And what are your future plans?

##### Structural dimension: (policy & practice)

5. How are the schools selected to join the initiative? Is there special criteria?
6. What is the admission policy ( in terms of requirements) for students with disabilities
7. What is the exact process followed to accept a student in an inclusive primary school?
8. What kind of referral is needed to accept a student? Is there specialist diagnosis report?
9. What is the acceptable ratio of students with disabilities in mainstream classes?
10. What are the types of disabilities accepted in the schools?
11. Can you describe the school interaction with the parents? Are the parents involved in setting the special educational plans for their children?
12. What are the provisions currently provided by MOE to assist the schools to become inclusive, once they join the initiative?
13. Can you elaborate on the teachers’ training provided by MOE?

##### Curricular dimensions: (policy & practice)

14. Is the curriculum modified for the students with disabilities?
15. Who carries out the modification and based on what?

##### Evaluative Dimension: (Policy & practice)

16. Do you have mechanisms for parents or teachers to voice their concerns?
17. Does the special department have any means of monitoring the policies and practices in the inclusive schools?
18. In your opinion, what are the main challenges to the success of inclusion?

## Interview Guide for School Principals

Date:

Duration:

Location:

### Interviewee Background Information:

Qualifications:

Years of experience:

Years in current job:

### Questions:

#### Vision and attitude:

1. What do you know about the “School for All” Initiative? **(culture)**
2. Do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful?**(culture)**
3. How do you relay the vision of “School for All” to your staff?**(policy, practice)**
4. Are you worried about social stigma? For example the school for underachievers.**(culture)**

#### Structural dimension: (policy)

- ~~5. What is the admission policy?~~
- ~~6. What kind of referral is needed to accept a student? Do you require a specialist diagnosis report?~~
7. What is the number of students in special classes, if any, and the number of students included in mainstream?
8. What are the types of disabilities accepted in the school?
9. What is the average number of included students in any class, and in what levels?**(policy)**
10. What are the modifications and the adaptations provided in the mainstream classrooms to support the inclusion of students with disabilities? **(policy, practice)**
11. Can you describe the school interaction with the parents? Are the parents involved in setting the special educational plans for their children? **(practice)**
12. Do you have mechanisms for parents or teachers to voice their concerns?**(culture)**

#### Pedagogical dimension: (practice and culture)

13. Can you tell me more about the progress of the school with respect to special education?**(practice)**
14. Are students with disabilities included in the daily life of the mainstream school such as morning assembly, national day celebrations, sports day and others?**(culture)**
15. Does the school provide extracurricular activities for students with disabilities?**(culture, practice)**
16. What are the problems that are arising in your opinion as a result of this initiative?

## Interview Guide for Special Education Teachers

Date:

Duration:

Location:

### Background Information:

Position :

Qualifications:

Years of experience:

Years in current job:

### Questions:

#### Vision and attitude:

1. What is the vision of the school, especially with respect to students with disabilities?  
**Policy and culture**
2. From your experience, do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful? **Culture**

#### Structural dimension: Policy and practice

3. What is the number of students in special classes, if any, and the number of students included in mainstream?(**Policy**)
4. What are the types of disabilities accepted in the school?(**practice**)
5. What is the process that is followed in the school in order to enroll a student with disabilities?(**policy & practice**)
6. What are the services provided so far for the identified students by the Ministry?(**practice**)
7. What are the modifications and adaptations provided in the classrooms and the school as a whole to facilitate the inclusion of these students? (**practice**)
8. Can you describe the school interaction with the parents? Are the parents involved in setting the special educational plans for their children? (**practice & culture**)
9. Do you have mechanisms for parents or teachers to voice their concerns?(**practice & culture**)

#### Pedagogical dimension: practice

10. As the special teacher in the school, what are your main responsibilities?(**policy & practice**)
11. Can students with disabilities be provided with dedicated help in class (shadow) if needed? What are the qualifications of that person?(**policy and Practice**)
12. Do you have any specialists in the school like a speech therapist or an occupational therapist or child psychologist to help in preparing or carrying out remedial plans?(**policy & practice**)
13. Is there any development plans for teachers to improve their awareness and knowledge?(**policy & practice**)
14. Are there any future plans for improving the service provided for the students with disabilities either with respect to teachers' training or resources such as teaching aids? (**policy & practice**)
15. In your opinion what are the qualities required to be a successful teacher for a child with disabilities? (**culture**)

16. What are the main problems that you face on daily basis with respect to administration, parents and children?(**practice & culture**)

**Curricular (practice)**

17. Is the curriculum modified for the students with disabilities? How?  
18. Who carries out the modification and based on what?  
19. Are you involved in setting up the Individual learning plans for students with disabilities?  
20. Are you involved in monitoring these plans?

**Evaluative dimension: (policy & practice)**

21. How are the students assessed? Do they follow the same exams as mainstream?  
22. What kind of certification will they get at the end of primary school? Will it facilitate their transition into secondary school?

## Interview Guide for Subject Teachers

Date:

Duration:

Location:

Background Information:

Position:

Qualifications:

Years of experience:

Years in current job:

**Questions:**

**Vision and attitude: culture**

1. What do you know about the “School for All” Initiative?
2. From your experience, do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful?

**Curricular dimensions: practice**

3. Is the curriculum modified for the students with disabilities?
4. Who carries out the modification and based on what?

**Pedagogical dimensions and communication: practice**

5. Have you received any training prior to inclusion of students with disabilities? Where and how, and has it been helpful?
6. What are your responsibilities in managing your inclusive classroom?(**practice**)
7. What are the modifications and adaptations provided in the classrooms and the school as a whole to facilitate the inclusion of these students? (**Practice**)
8. Is there any special lesson planning done for the students with disabilities?
9. Who is involved in the lesson planning? (SENCO, Admin, Parents)(**practice & policy**)
10. Do students with disabilities get any extra professional help outside class such as occupational/ speech/ physiotherapy? (**practice & policy**)
11. What are the main challenges that you encounter in your daily teaching in the class with respect to children with disabilities? **Practice & Culture**
12. What are the means of communication with the parents? Do you organise parents support? **Practice and culture**
13. Can you describe the relation between the students with disabilities and their peers in the class? Do they get teased or excluded from play and activities? **Culture**
14. Considering one of your students with disabilities, can you describe the strategy to support his/her learning? **Practice and culture**
15. In your opinion, what can you do as a subject teacher to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in your classroom? **Practice and culture**
16. What needs to be done on the subject department level to support the inclusion process?
17. What are the strategies that needed to support the inclusion process?

**Evaluative Dimension: policy and practice**

18. Is there target setting for each student according to abilities?
19. How is the study plan monitored and revised?
20. Are students assessed according to their individual learning plan and their set targets?
21. Do students with disabilities get special reports at the end of the year? How are they moved to the next year? **Policy**

## **Interview Guide for Parents**

Date:

Duration:

Location:

Present:

### **Background Family Information:**

Number of siblings:

Any other disabilities:

Child position:

Parent education:

Parent profession:

### **Questions:**

1. Can you give me a background about your child's case and his education so far?

#### **Vision and attitude: (Culture)**

2. What do you know about the "School for All" Initiative?
3. Do you believe that the inclusion of students in mainstream classes will be successful?

#### **Curricular dimensions: (Practice)**

4. Do you know what curriculum your child is following?

#### **Pedagogical dimensions and communication: (Practice)**

5. Where you involved in any lesson planning for your child?
6. What are the main challenges that you child face academically?
7. Does your child get any extra assistance in class (shadow teacher)?
8. Does your child get any extra professional help outside class such as occupational/ speech/ physiotherapy?
9. What are the main challenges that you encounter in helping you child progress? How can the school help you to make it easier?
10. What are the means and procedures of communication with the school admin and teachers?
11. What kind of relation does your child have with his peers? Does he have any school friends visiting at home?
12. What can the school do to support you in this process?

#### **Evaluative Dimension: (Culture & practice)**

13. What about later after primary school, do you know what is her certificate going to be?
14. Do you think your child will be able to continue in school and graduate?

## Appendix 7

### Work Plan and Data Collection Schedule

Phase 1- Fall Term (September 17<sup>th</sup> – October 31<sup>st</sup> / 2011)

- Proposal submission
- Obtain ethics approval from BUID for pilot study
- Conduct a pilot study
  - Interview with a school head principal
  - Interview with subject teacher
  - Interview with Special Education teacher
  - Telephone interview with a parent
  - Observe a classroom including students with disabilities
  - Prepare a draft report of the study
- Discuss difficulties and possible changes with DOS
- Update instruments and work plan according to the results of the pilot study.
- Produce final copy for proposal accordingly
- Proposal defence

(November 1<sup>st</sup> – December 15<sup>th</sup> / 2011)

- Obtain final Ethics approval from BUID
- Identify and approach Ministry officials participants
- Identify and approach schools/ teachers/ students/ parents
- Gather participants permissions, parental consents for observation of their children's activities
- Interview with head of Special Education in the Ministry of Education
- Interview with key people from the Special Education Support team
- Update project database

Phase 2-Winter term (January 8<sup>th</sup> – March 22<sup>nd</sup>/2012)

- Day1 (in three schools)
  - Interview school principal
  - Collect school documentation (policies with respect to students with disabilities, initial assessments, parental reports)
  - Get familiar with the school and get introduced to the selected teachers
- Drafting data collected and preliminary analysis
- Obtain peer review and member checking
- Evaluate results, revise objectives and research questions
  
- Day2 (in three schools)
  - Observe class (1) during lesson time of teacher (1).
  - Observe support time for a student(1) with disability (outside classroom)
  - Interview teacher(1)
  - Interview support teacher



- Collect documents about the selected student (IEP's, school reports, parents' communication, differentiated instructions)
- Day3 (in three schools)
  - Observe class(2) during lesson time of teacher(2)
  - Observe support time for a student (2)with disability (outside classroom)
  - Interview with teacher(2) of class(2)
  - Interview support teacher
  - Collect documents about the selected students (IEP's, school reports, parents' communication, differentiated instructions)
- Drafting data collected and preliminary analysis
- Obtain peer review, and also obtain member checking possibly through email
- Evaluate results, revise objectives and research questions
- Consult DOS and discuss results, concerns and difficulties

#### Phase 3 – Spring Break (March 25<sup>th</sup> – April 5<sup>th</sup>/2012)

- Phone call interview with parents of the six selected students
- Draft data collected and analysis
- Mid-Project evaluation (evaluate results, revise schedules, objectives, limitations, challenges)

#### Phase 4 – Spring Term (April 8<sup>th</sup> – July 15<sup>th</sup>/2012)

- Day 4
  - Observe class(1) during an activity within school or trip
- Day 5
  - Observe class(2) during an activity within school or trip
- Day 6
  - Observe the school on a public celebration day such as National Day, Prophet Birthday or sports day
- Drafting data collected and analysis

#### Phase 5- Summer Break & Fall Term (July-November 2012)

- Project evaluation, review of current project development and provisional findings
- Data Analysis
- Collection of any missing or additional data (interviews, observations, documents)
- Consult DOS

#### Phase 6 (November – May 2013)

- Drafting final report
- Corrections, redrafting and finalizing report
- Preparation for defence

Appendix 7 (Cont'd)

Data Collection Schedule

RESEARCH FOLLOW-UP

<b>Place</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Status</b>
MOE	Interview with Head of Special Ed	16/6/2011
MOE	Interview with Head of Special Ed and the team	23/11/2012
<b>School</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Status</b>
(Pilot) -		
1	I – School Principal	18/10/2011
2	I – Class teacher (English)	18/10/2011
3	I – Special Education Teacher	25/10/2011
4	I – Ed Zone Supervisor	25/10/2011
5	O – Class with student with SEN (VI)	18/10/2011
6	O – Individual (small group)support (CP, VI, ID)	25/10/2011
8	Training (5 sessions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing Individual education Plan</li> <li>• Individualizing Learning strategies</li> <li>• Class environment adaptation</li> <li>• Learning Difficulties</li> <li>• Successful Inclusive Ed cases</li> </ul>	25/10, 1/11, 8/11, 15/11, 22/11
Case A	Activity	Date
1	I – School Principal	8/12/2011
2	I – Class teacher (Arabic )	19/2/2012
3	I – Special Ed Teacher	16/1/2012
4	I – Ed Zone Supervisor	8/12/2011
5	I – parent of child with SEN	16/4/2011
6	I – Class teacher 2 (English teacher)	16/4/2011
7	O – Class (Amal-DS) English Inclusion/ G3	19/2/2012
9	O – Class (Hind )– Arabic Inclusion	16/1/2012
10	O – Class (Hind) – English Inclusion	16/4/2012
	O- Individual (Hind) - Arabic	16/4/2012
11	O – play time /	16/4/2012
12	Collecting Documentation & online resources	All days
Case B	Activity	Date
1	I – School Principal	13/12/2011
2	I – Class teacher (Maths & Science)	19/4/2012
3	I – Special Education Teacher 1	19/4/2012
4	I – Special Education Teacher 2	7/5/2012
4	I – Ed Zone Supervisor –	13/12/2011
5	I – parent of child with SEN- Mother of Abdulrahman	7/5/2012
6	I – Class teacher (2) (Arabic & Religion)	19/4/2012

7	O – Class with student with SEN (1) Arabic -2 students with LD	7/5/2012
8	O – Individual support (1) Zayed G2	19/4/2012
9	O – Class with student with SEN (2) Maths with Zayed	7/5/2012
10	O – Individual support group with LD	7/5/2012
11	O- play time/ extra-curricular Activity- lunch break	19/4/2012
12	Collecting Documentation @& online resources	All days
13	O – training provided by school Special Ed teachers	7/5/2012
14	O – training provided by Zone Supervisor	13/12/2011
<b>Case C</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>date</b>
1	I – School Principal	20/2/2012
2	I – Class teacher (1)	22/2/2012
3	I – Special Ed Teacher	22/2/2012 & 17/3/2012
4	I – Ed Zone Supervisor –	17/3/2012
5	I – telephone with parent of child with SEN	Not done
6	I – class teacher (2)	22/5/2012
7	O – Maths Class with 2 students with SEN (G2)	20/2/2012
8	O – Individual (small group)support (Arabic 6 students with SEN – G3)	20/2/2012
9	O – Individual (Arabic) Faisal	22/2/2012
10	O – Support (3 students – G1)	22/2/2012
11	O – play time (Lunch Break)	17/3/2012
12	O – Class with teacher 2	22/5/2012
13	Document collection	17/3/2012

Appendix 8

Ministry of Education statistics

1. Number of schools adopting 'School for All' from 2009 to 2012

Ministry of Education  
وزارة التربية والتعليم  
2012

Number of Schools adopting Inclusive Initiative  
2009 - 2012  
عدد المدارس المشاركة في مبادرة الدمج  
2012-2009

السنة	روضة	ح1	ح2	مشتركة روضة+ح1	مشتركة ح2+ح1	مشتركة ح1+ح2+ثانوي	ثانوي	المجموع
2009	2	8	0	0	0	0	0	10
2010	5	5	6	0	2	0	0	18
2011	8	1	4	0	0	2	7	22
2012	54	0	4	2	0	0	4	64
المجموع	69	14	14	2	2	2	11	114

اعداد ادارة التربية الخاصة  
Total  
Secondary  
Cycled + Cycled +  
Cycled +  
Secondary  
KG  
Cycle 1  
Cycle 2  
KG+Cycle  
Cycle 1 +  
Cycle 2

2. Number of applicants for 'School for All' for 2012-2013

ادارة التربية الخاصة

قسم الدمج الأكاديمي

Number of applicants for Special  
Education Services 2012/2013

عدد الطلبات المتقدمة بطلبات الالتحاق لخدمات برامج التربية الخاصة للعام

الدراسي 2013/2012

Zones

عدد الطلبات المتقدمة لبرامج التربية الخاصة في المدارس الحكومية للعام 2012/2011		عدد الطلبات المتقدمة لبرامج التربية الخاصة في المدارس الحكومية للعام 2013/2012		المنطقة التعليمية	م
عدد الطلبات المقبولة	عدد الطلبات المتقدمة	عدد الطلبات المقبولة	عدد الطلبات المتقدمة		
69	74	85	93	نبي	1
36	47	68	81	الشارقة	2
17	20	15	23	عجمان	3
0	0	6	12	ام القيوين	4
25	50	32	74	راس الخيمة	5
27	30	16	28	القعيرة	6
11	15	13	20	مكتب الشارقة	7
185	236	235	331	المجموع	total

Accepted Applicants, Accepted Applicants

Number of applications to inclusive government schools 2011/2012

Number of applications to inclusive government schools 2012/2013

### 3. Portfolio training report 2010-2011

#### تقرير الحقبة التدريبية (المدرسة للجميع) - مراكز التدريب 2010 / 2011

- تم إصدار قرار إداري رقم ( 527 ) لسنة 2010 بتاريخ 28 / 10 / 2010 حول إنشاء ( 28 ) مركز تدريب للمتعاملين مع الطلبة ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة للتدريب على دمجه مع أقرانهم في المدارس .

- تم تطبيق بنود القرار في المناطق التعليمية وكانت النتائج على النحو التالي :

م	الموضوع	البيان / العدد
1	عدد المتدربين في مراكز التدريب	1348 متدرب
2	عدد المدربين	150 مدرب
3	عدد مراكز التدريب	17 مركز
4	متوسط ساعات التدريب ( للمتدرب الواحد )	21 ساعة
5	التكلفة	0 درهم

الإمارة	عدد المراكز	عدد المتدربين			متوسط ساعات التدريب للمتدرب	إجمالي الساعات في المركز	عدد المدربين	إجمالي المتدربين
		الفصل الأول	الفصل الثاني	الفصل الثالث				
رأس الخيمة	2	96	126	40	247	41	262	
أم القيوين	1	69	50	25	141	7	144	
عجمان	2	44	79	75	136	19	198	
الشارقة	2	21	59	92	88	17	172	
هيئة المعرفة	2	19	27	51	162	12	97	
مكتب الشارقة	3	83	74	42	196	35	199	
الفجيرة	5	77	67	132	220	19	276	
الإجمالي	17 مركز	409	482	457	1190	150	1348	

total

Average training hours / trainee    # training hours / centre    # trainees    total trainees    T3 T2 T1    # Centres    ZONES  
number of trainees

4. Portfolio training report 2011-2012

Portfolio training Report 2011/2012

تقرير الحقبة التدريبية لمدارس الدمج 2011 / 2012

إجمالي ساعات التدريب	متوسط ساعات التدريب للمتدرب	إجمالي عدد المتدربين	متوسط ساعات التدريب			عدد المتدربين			عدد المراكز	المنطقة
			الفصل الثالث	الفصل الثاني	الفصل الأول	الفصل الثالث	الفصل الثاني	الفصل الأول		
5820	20	291	19	21	19	109	74	108	5	رأس الخيمة
3600	30	120	30	30	30	45	45	30	1	أم القيوين
3724	19	196	20	20	16	67	64	65	3	عجمان
3300	20	165	13	23	23	44	57	64	2	الشارقة
6384	24	266	27	22	23	96	100	70	3	دبي
3870	18	215	20	20	14	88	79	48	7	م. الشارقة
6372	18	354	17	19	18	133	68	153	7	الفجيرة
33070	21	1607	21	22	21	582	487	538	28	الإجمالي

total training hours    Avg hours for trainee    total trainees    T3 T2 T1    T3 T2 T1    Number of centres    Zones  
 average hours    number of trainees

## 5. Ministry of Education Statistics 2010-2011

خلاصة التعليم في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة للعام الدراسي 2010 / 2011  
Summary of Education in U. A. E for Academic year 2010/2011

Details	طلبة Students	إداريون Administrators	معلمون Teachers	فصول Classes	مدارس Schools	البيان الحلقة ونوعية التعليم
Kindergarten	26110	493	1953	1274	114	رياض الأطفال
Cycle 1	93469	1597	7695	4399	212	الحلقة الأولى
Cycle 2	82886	1158	5691	3435	134	الحلقة الثانية
Secondary	61394	1350	5872	2740	108	الثانوي
M.STAGES		480	2551		148	متعددة المراحل
Religious Education	854	19	117	41	3	التعليم الديني
Technical	3559	117	313		6	التعليم الفني
Ministry of Education Schools	268272	5214	24192	11889	725	إجمالي مدارس الوزارة
Adult Education	17068	272	1589	737	78	تعليم الكبار
Private Schools	545572	15226	31620	22596	473	التعليم الخاص
Grand Total	830912	20712	57401	35222	1276	الأجمالي العام



## Appendix 9

### Index for Inclusion Indicators (Booth & Ainscow 2011)

#### QUESTIONNAIRE 1: INDICATORS

Please tick the boxes for the the groups below which describe your involvement with the school:

- teacher  
  teaching assistant  
  other member of staff  
  parent/carer  
 child or young person  
  governor  
  other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►

Agree  
 Agree and disagree  
 Disagree  
 Need more information

Dimension A – Creating inclusive cultures					
A1: Building community	1	Everyone is welcomed.			
	2	Staff co-operate.			
	3	Children help each other.			
	4	Staff and children respect one another.			
	5	Staff and parents/carers collaborate.			
	6	Staff and governors work well together.			
	7	The school is a model of democratic citizenship.			
	8	The school encourages an understanding of the interconnections between people around the world.			
	9	Adults and children are responsive to a variety of ways of being a gender.			
	10	The school and local communities develop each other.			
	11	Staff link what happens in school to children's lives at home.			
A2: Establishing inclusive values	1	The school develops shared inclusive values.			
	2	The school encourages respect for all human rights.			
	3	The school encourages respect for the integrity of planet earth.			
	4	Inclusion is viewed as increasing participation for all.			
	5	Expectations are high for all children.			
	6	Children are valued equally.			
	7	The school counters all forms of discrimination.			
	8	The school promotes non-violent interactions and resolutions to disputes.			
	9	The school encourages children and adults to feel good about themselves.			
	10	The school contributes to the health of children and adults.			
Dimension B – Producing inclusive policies					
B1: Developing the school for all	1	The school has a participatory development process.			
	2	The school has an inclusive approach to leadership.			
	3	Appointments and promotions are fair.			
	4	Staff expertise is known and used.			
	5	All new staff are helped to settle into the school.			
	6	The school seeks to admit all children from its locality.			
	7	All new children are helped to settle into the school.			
	8	Teaching and learning groups are arranged fairly to support all children's learning.			
	9	Children are well prepared for moving on to other settings.			
	10	The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people.			
	11	The buildings and grounds are developed to support participation of all.			
	12	The school reduces its carbon footprint and use of water.			
	13	The school contributes to the reduction of waste.			

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ►

Agree  
Agree and disagree  
Disagree  
Need more information

B2: Organising support for diversity	1	All forms of support are co-ordinated.				
	2	Professional development activities help staff to respond to diversity.				
	3	English as an additional language support is a resource for the whole school.				
	4	The school supports continuity in the education of children in public care.				
	5	The school ensures that policies about 'special educational needs' support inclusion.				
	6	The behaviour policy is linked to learning and curriculum development.				
	7	Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased.				
	8	Barriers to attendance are reduced.				
	9	Bullying is minimised.				
<b>Dimension C – Evolving inclusive practices</b>						
C1: Constructing curricula for all	1	Children explore cycles of food production and consumption.				
	2	Children investigate the importance of water.				
	3	Children study clothing and decoration of the body.				
	4	Children find out about housing and the built environment.				
	5	Children consider how and why people move around their locality and the world.				
	6	Children learn about health and relationships.				
	7	Children investigate the earth, the solar system and the universe.				
	8	Children study life on earth.				
	9	Children investigate sources of energy.				
	10	Children learn about communication and communication technology.				
	11	Children engage with, and create, literature arts and music.				
	12	Children learn about work and link it to the development of their interests.				
	13	Children learn about ethics, power and government.				
C2: Orchestrating learning	1	Learning activities are planned with all children in mind.				
	2	Learning activities encourage the participation of all children.				
	3	Children are encouraged to be confident critical thinkers.				
	4	Children are actively involved in their own learning.				
	5	Children learn from each other.				
	6	Lessons develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between people.				
	7	Assessments encourage the achievements of all children.				
	8	Discipline is based on mutual respect.				
	9	Staff plan, teach and review together.				
	10	Staff develop shared resources to support learning.				
	11	Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all children.				
	12	Homework is set so that it contributes to every child's learning.				
	13	Activities outside formal lessons are made available for all children.				
	14	Resources in the locality of the school are known and used.				

Three things I like best about this school:

Three things I would most like to change:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 10

### Sites and Participants Information

#### Information concerning the pilot school and the three selected cases

Case	School Gender	Area	Total Students	Total SEN Students	Total students with disability (with services)	Types of Disabilities
Pilot	F	Urban	487	25	7	Vision impairment, cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, speech disorder and motor skills difficulties, delayed growth
Case A 'Inclusion!!! Only because we have to'	F	Urban	445	8	3	Down syndrome, delayed growth, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADD)
Case B 'Trapped Inclusion'	M	Rural	420	18	5	Autism, cerebral palsy, speech disorder and motor skills difficulties, attention deficit disorder(ADD)
Case C 'We are the Champions'	M	Rural	483	17	6	Cerebral palsy, partial vision impairment, emotional behavioural disorder, motor skills difficulties, speech disorder

Selected students and teachers for observation and interviews

Case	Student Grade	Student Disability	Teacher's Subject	Teacher's Years of Experience
<b>Pilot</b>	Grade 4 (Jamila)	Vision Impairment	English	8
	Grade 3 (Raysa )	Partial vision impairment, intellectual disability and fine motor skills difficulties	Arabic - Support	15
<b>Case A (Inclusion... Only because we have to)</b>	Grade 3 (Amal)	Down Syndrome	Arabic	10
	Grade 2 (Hind)	Learning disabilities, delayed growth- attention deficit disorder (ADD)	English	9
<b>Case B (Trapped Inclusion)</b>	Grade 2 (Zayed)	Developmental disorders - ADD	Maths	14
	Grade 2 (Abdul)	Autistic spectrum disorder (Mild)	English	5
<b>Case C (We are the Champions)</b>	Grade 3 (Faisal)	Cerebral palsy, fine motor skills difficulty, partial visual impairment	Arabic	13
	Grade 2 – (Zayed & Ali)	(Z)Fine motor skills difficulty partial visual impairment (A) Behavioural difficulties	Maths	12

## Appendix 11

Tabulated summary mapping findings from Cases A, B and C to research questions one and two, (Summary of data collected)

CASE A: Inclusion... Only because we have to!!				
RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the 'School for All' initiative?				
		<b>1. Staff Training &amp; Development</b>	<b>2. School Structures (Student placement / enrolment, assessment, monitoring)</b>	<b>3. School Structures (Modifications and adaptations, curriculum, teaching strategy)</b>
Interviews	I Zone coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory workshop</li> <li>• 10 portfolio training sessions.</li> <li>• Some teachers have also attended workshops at Zayed University. National Cadre program including:</li> <li>• Vision impairment support which include Braille and mobility training</li> <li>• Down syndrome support</li> <li>• Autism support</li> <li>• Hearing impairment support</li> <li>• Speech therapists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently joining initiative is voluntary, compulsory in the future. it is the LAW</li> <li>• DS apply to zone; they get tested by MET, then referred to MES with an IEP</li> <li>• Students can also be referred by SST then will go through the same process.</li> <li>• Schools have to follow recommended ratio of 20% per class. Classes have maximum of 20, but practically can be 22 sometimes</li> <li>• Mild disabilities are only accepted. Including Down syndrome. Behavioural Disorders are more difficult, we r still not equipped as no psychotherapists are enough</li> <li>• Parent consent needed in all stages, testing, IEP and monitoring</li> <li>• Open door policy with parents</li> <li>• Great load of work with increasing numbers ... we are short staffed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramps, toilets and busses.</li> <li>• Assessment and enrollment services (MES).</li> <li>• Objectives in IEP specifies simplified, curriculum based on omissions and simplification</li> <li>• Modifications carried out by teacher and Special Educator under my supervision</li> <li>• I follow and monitor the progress of students</li> </ul>

I Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New principal-not trained yet</li> <li>• Shortage of skilled teachers with respect to disability support.</li> <li>• Training not enough, very theoretical</li> <li>• Timing of training is wrong, should be end of year, not during the year</li> <li>• No educational psychologist in school/.zone has 3 Psychologists to cover 75 schools!!!!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special classes closed/ students are included(3)</li> <li>• New students from school in process to be added to inclusion program</li> <li>• Mild disabilities only are accepted, after probation period otherwise referred to centre</li> <li>• Currently only 1/ class, can go up to 2</li> <li>• Resource room used to support students on pull along students with learning difficulties</li> <li>• Parents involved with IEP &amp; monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slopes/toilets/busses</li> <li>• Classes has smart boards and laptop</li> <li>• Social inclusion has progressed well</li> <li>• Academic advancement is slow</li> <li>• DS included in all activities/ sports day/morning assembly/ school trips</li> <li>• DS miss activities because of extra academic lessons</li> </ul>
I Special Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 workshop portfolio, teachers attend every Tuesday. All teachers involved have done it</li> <li>• National cadre program (1to2 per week): I attend Braille and mobility, my colleague attend speech therapy, problem theoretical and less practice</li> <li>• Don't know about future plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No special classrooms, support in class &amp; resource room</li> <li>• Students accepted following MES with IEP.</li> <li>• We have 3 students (2 Down syndrome, Delayed Growth and HDD)</li> <li>• Currently trying to add 2 more students. In process. Takes at least 1 year after parent consent. SST carries out tests and observations before requesting for zone testing</li> <li>• Assistant teachers badly needed</li> <li>• No retention updated IEP and will move to middle school with certificate specifying disability and IEP objectives and required services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DS supported in resource room twice a day for Arabic and Maths, I also attend 2 periods a week in classroom sometimes (not very useful)</li> <li>• Dedicated help in classroom can be provided on parents responsibility, usually a helper</li> <li>• Special teacher needs to be patient, don't rush results, willing &amp; believe in educating the disabled, determined</li> <li>• Good working environment (respect and support among staff)</li> <li>• Simplified curriculum</li> <li>• IEP prepared and monitored through cooperation (Myself, subject teacher, zone coordinator)</li> <li>• Assessment according to IEP objectives with differentiated tests (I do the testing sometimes in resource room)</li> </ul>

I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory workshop with Dr Pineda</li> <li>• Attended 10 portfolio workshops (extensive but very theoretical)</li> <li>• I have Students with LD with remedial plans from years before</li> <li>• Training need to address real class situations, not just inclusion theory using videos and practical exercises</li> </ul> <p><b>English Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops were useful in introducing the idea of inclusion and removing the fear.</li> <li>• I learned how to create IEP and differentiated worksheets and testing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open door policy with parents, parent meeting per term</li> <li>• Monitoring and assessment is done by subject teacher + Special Ed, supervised by zone coordinator and principal</li> <li>• No year retention, instead updated objectives of IEP</li> <li>• Parents sign and approve IEP, term reports, weekly calls, meetings (parents are different)</li> </ul> <p><b>English Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English is not supported by Special Education Teacher (only Maths and Arabic)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DS follow IEP objectives and goals based on modified Curriculum</li> <li>• No special curriculum</li> <li>• IEP preparation Joint responsibility (Zone Coordinator, Special Ed., subject teacher)</li> <li>• Special teacher &amp; I prepare worksheets and exams. No mention of parents</li> <li>• <b>Adaptations included:</b> DS always in the front, I address with special questions to encourage participation, attends revision classes and easy concepts ones, attends resource room for reinforcement and new concepts, I give 5 minutes special time in class</li> <li>• Time management is difficult, heavy curriculum, remedial plans + IEP in same classroom is too much</li> <li>• Special Ed is great support in Arabic and Maths, need to decrease paper admin work</li> </ul> <p><b>English Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In English students have problem with reading</li> <li>• I confront behavioural difficulties in older classes (4 &amp; 5)</li> <li>• Students in bigger classes ... gap is very big and no support</li> </ul>
-------------------	--	---	--

	I Parent		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Not involved in lesson planning /IEP</li> <li>• Writing challenges, voice too low, very shy, forgets quickly, she needs extra help</li> <li>• The advantage is that Hind will be able to go later to another inclusive school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No help in class</li> <li>• No help outside school</li> </ul>
Observations	O Classroom		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First row on same table with peers,</li> <li>• Colourful Comfortable, safe space and furniture</li> <li>• Class tables support peer tutoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources on the walls not utilised</li> <li>• Differentiated work sheet in Arabic, or same sheet in English <b>but not all questions are expected!!!</b></li> <li>• Exercise in the book is too advanced</li> <li>• Repeats concept in varying ways using multiple resources</li> <li>• Hind and Amal both supported by Special Ed teacher in Arabic class</li> <li>• Hind not supported in English</li> <li>• Teacher checks for understanding by asking questions</li> <li>• Sincere motivation to all as a feedback</li> <li>• Equal chances of participation</li> <li>• Hind and Amal were given chances to participate by differentiating questions</li> <li>• Mixed level tables enabling peer tutoring</li> <li>• Teacher allows hind to participate by writing on the board as it helps her concentration</li> <li>• Participating in table exercises and competitions facilitated by teacher</li> <li>• Charts on the wall only Arabic and not utilised</li> </ul>



O Special Class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spacious classroom comfortable &amp; child friendly</li> <li>• DS attends one Arabic and One Maths lesson every day either individual or with a group of 4/5 children with learning difficulties</li> <li>• Hind attended the resource room as full day for a whole term, only on the second term she accepted to be in the classroom without her Special Educator.(<b>gradual inclusion</b>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson specially prepared for HIND</li> <li>• Special work sheets</li> <li>• Clear learning objective</li> <li>• Variety of teaching methods story/ flashcards/worksheet/ Q&amp;A using PowerPoint</li> <li>• Writing on the board/ acting the story together</li> <li>• Teacher very descriptive with varying voice tone and face expressions</li> </ul>
O Playtime		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large playground/ shaded/ safe/ colourful walls with cartoon characters depicting stories/ posters about national day/ lots of posters about good behaviour and high morals</li> <li>• Special Toilet/rail handles/</li> <li>• Food is not very healthy, variety contains chips, chocolates and low quality fruit gums</li> </ul>	

Case A – Inclusion!!! Only because we have to!				
RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the ‘School for All’ initiative?				
		<b>4. Support Services (Physiotherapy speech therapy, psychotherapy)</b>	<b>5. Assistive Technology</b>	<b>6. Awareness programs</b>
<b>INTERVIEWS</b>	I Zone coordinator	We are understaffed with respect to special services	Some are available according to disability need. For vision we have Braille and white cane. Some schools have special computers. Special tables, special chairs. Writing packs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believe in inclusion. Its children right. I am very excited, previously a Special Educator for 2 included students, just became a zone coordinator</li> <li>● Teachers are apprehensive at the beginning, I listen to their concern, assist in solving challenges</li> <li>● Teachers feel inadequate, they lack experience and afraid of failing but the only way forward is to get on with it with whatever we have and we will get the experience and become better</li> <li>● I encourage the schools to run open days for all parents to enhance their view of disability and inclusion</li> <li>● Schools also celebrate disability week, white cane day, deaf week and so on to spread awareness from children to families</li> <li>● Involve the media and press</li> </ul>

I Principal	Very few sessions given...not effective		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New principal-not trained yet</li> <li>• Inclusion is possible only with amendments and conditions</li> <li>• Special classes should not be closed (continuum services is required)</li> <li>• Inclusion does not stigmatise school</li> <li>• School is considered special because of special services by MOE</li> <li>• Achieving children might leave</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> week awareness for all students about disability</li> <li>• Parents and helpers allowed to attend 1<sup>st</sup> week</li> <li>• Parents worry about Stigma &amp; Certification</li> <li>• Open door policy/ parent awareness days/ meetings</li> <li>• School has mother council/ parent member in school board</li> <li>• There is good awareness about disability among students/ teachers/ parents (accepted/ welcomed)</li> </ul>
I Special Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech therapy badly needed for 3 students, getting 1 session a month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data show in classrooms</li> <li>• FM device for voice (teacher own expense)</li> <li>• Special grip pens.</li> <li>• Nothing special for students with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe in social inclusion only. They can join the class for activities</li> <li>• Students will perform better with individual teaching (all core subjects individually)</li> <li>• I tried full inclusion where I support in class. It was not successful. It was disruptive for the whole classroom</li> <li>• The school run many awareness sessions for parents especially at the beginning of the year.</li> <li>• Student's awareness at the beginning of the year.</li> </ul>

	I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DS getting inconsistent sessions, of speech and psychotherapy hence no results</li> <li>• No occupational therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They can make use of I pads or touch computers to aid their hand writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe in social inclusion not academic</li> <li>• Younger teacher believes it is the correct philosophy, currently behavioural problems with higher grades</li> <li>• Experiencing negative outcomes than positive so far</li> <li>• We are carrying out inclusion because we have to</li> <li>• We need teacher assistants &amp; more practical training</li> <li>• Not fair on achieving students</li> <li>• Parent meetings, open door policy with parents, direct contact with parents or through the social worker</li> <li>• Students are lovely together, kind helpful, supportive,</li> </ul>
	I Parent	Not getting any in school or outside school	Don't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hind now in classroom learning like other girls. She will not repeat years</li> <li>• I am afraid of less progress especially writing</li> <li>• Hind is very happy, she loves school and friends</li> </ul>
	O Classroom		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microphone to help project her voice/</li> <li>• PowerPoint presentation (story/questions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher give many positive comments</li> <li>• Peers very supportive, help in locating her books, get along lots of laughing and talking(hind)</li> <li>• Peer tutoring facilitated, peers enjoy it</li> </ul>
Observations	O Special Class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microphone to help project her voice/</li> <li>• PowerPoint presentation (story/question)</li> <li>• Needed special grip pen, touch screen/I pad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher very supportive/ very loving/ lots of encouragement</li> <li>• Students have lots of affection to Special Ed</li> </ul>

O Playtime			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hind plays a game with her peers (positive interaction)</li> <li>• Amal assisted by peers to buy sandwich from canteen but sits on bench alone to eat</li> <li>• Student supervisors (different uniform) of grade 4&amp;5. Consoling a crying girl.</li> <li>• When asked about ‘School for All’, comments were <b>that they cannot learn like us and they need our help</b></li> <li>• <b>They are not all nice</b>, there is one girl in our classroom who is always <b>hitting us and she pokes us with her pencils</b>, I don’t like her and I will not play with her.</li> </ul>
School Documents	IEP and Enrolment Report(MES) both recommend speech and counselling to boost confidence and social interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Leaflets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Leaflets</li> </ul>

CASE A – Inclusion!!! Only because we have to!				
RQ2. What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative?				
		Inclusive Cultures	Inclusive Policies	Inclusive Practices
Interviews	I Zone Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Firm believer, Special Ed teacher for 7 years,</li> <li>• It is their right, successful experience with 2 blind girls, moved to secondary, collaboration between schools</li> <li>• Bureaucracy problems, papers get delayed</li> <li>• Students and parents are welcomed in schools</li> <li>• Teachers apprehensive, workload, worried about failure, feeling inadequate</li> <li>• Build awareness in school parents and children –workshops, celebrate disability related days, get media involved</li> <li>• Parents are still worried about society stigma</li> <li>• We are understaffed in the zone with respect to therapists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting the initiative is on voluntary basis (so far)</li> <li>• Admission through the zone, MET, comprehensive assessment as per the guidelines</li> <li>• Report referred to most suitable school in the area, equipment if needed is requested, SST gets the report, they prepare the IEP according to the instructions</li> <li>• Ratio is 2 in a total class of 20</li> <li>• Types of disabilities are mild to moderate as per guidelines</li> <li>• Parents involved throughout the process, testing and discussions of assessment results and IEP, signature compulsory</li> <li>• Student’s referral from school cannot be carried out unless they get parents’ consent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structural changes</li> <li>• Assessment for enrolment</li> <li>• Support services so far is only speech therapy and psychological support</li> <li>• Training programmes for teachers</li> </ul> <p>It consists of 10 sessions that cover the following aspects of inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory workshop about the philosophy of inclusion.</li> <li>• details of types of disabilities,</li> <li>• suitable class environment,</li> <li>• IEP preparation,</li> <li>• differentiated worksheets and assessment,</li> <li>• learning disabilities</li> <li>• successful examples of inclusion in the UAE</li> <li>• curriculum not modified, just difficult parts deleted, modifications carried out by Special Ed +teachers +zone coordinator</li> <li>• Zone coordinator monitor the progress, regular visits, observations and documentation</li> </ul>

	I Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New principal, no previous experience in inclusive schools, just started attending training, Special Ed has the leadership and information</li> <li>• Teachers need to be trained more effectively</li> <li>• We don't have support services</li> <li>• Teachers need financial rewards for extra work</li> <li>• Not worried about stigma to school but some parents are still worried. 'school for All' means school is more specialised and gets more services</li> <li>• The school carry out many events to keep good relationships with parents. We have an open door policy</li> <li>• Active mother council, active parents as board members</li> <li>• We have made good progress in students behaviour and social inclusion</li> <li>• Respect among students, and teachers</li> <li>• I still see the special classroom is a viable solution for some kind of disabilities especially to do with behaviour.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We follow the guidelines of 2 students in a class of 20,</li> <li>• Shortage of therapists especially occupational therapy, speech therapy does not come regular enough, 3 educational psychologist have to cover 75 schools in the zone</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we currently have 3 students in three different classrooms</li> <li>• we do not have a special classroom anymore</li> <li>• we are going through a referral of students with learning difficulties into 'School for All'</li> <li>• students participate in all school activities in campus and off campus</li> <li>• teachers training timing is very disruptive to school year, it should take place at the end of the year</li> <li>• it is too theoretical and teachers are not gaining enough skills to help their students in the classroom</li> </ul>
--	-------------	--	---	---

<p style="text-align: center;">I Special Educator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inclusion challenges, as teachers not skilled</li> <li>• supporting in the classroom is disruptive and a waste of time</li> <li>• students have good relations</li> <li>• I collaborate well with teachers, I help them to understand the IEP, but I do most of the core teaching in the special classroom</li> <li>• Parents are always welcome in the school and their opinions are taken into consideration. The school also organise parents evening and awareness workshops</li> <li>• parents involved in all stages</li> <li>• We have challenges with parents' consents. But we explain that this will give them a chance to progress into secondary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students are assessed according to their IEP,</li> <li>• I do it in the resource room</li> <li>• We have an open door policy, parents have direct relation with us</li> <li>• The zone coordinator assess our work and collaborate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School accepting students with moderate to mild disabilities (DS, CP, ADHD, Intellectual disabilities)</li> <li>• Previously we had students with delayed growth and learning disabilities in special classroom. But currently the special classroom is closed and all students are in mainstream with support from me in resource room</li> <li>• We also have 8 students on remedial plans</li> <li>• We are currently only supporting students up to grade 3 in resource room</li> <li>• Years 4 and 5 are supported by subject teachers using remedial plans</li> <li>• Two students in year 4 not progressing in classrooms with remedial plans so we are trying to enrol them in 'School for All'</li> <li>• No class modifications</li> <li>• I am currently attending Braille coding course and mobility training for the Blind. I am very happy but I don't get the chance to practice to gain the skill</li> <li>• Teachers suggested incentives:</li> <li>• A teacher assistant will be very helpful and the teachers will not then be overloaded.</li> <li>• Introduction of hierarchy system with respect to teachers</li> <li>• Incentives both materialistic and moral</li> <li>• Honorary certificates</li> </ul>
---	---	--	--



<p style="text-align: center;">I Subject Teacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relation with Special Ed is very important, she is very supportive,</li> <li>• Some parents are very supportive, some are not due to non-Arabic origins</li> <li>• Girls have good relation and they support Hind and Amal.</li> <li>• Older girls in years 4 and 5 are not friendly and have many behavioural issues. We think it is because their academic level is way below the classroom, so they are very bored and not motivated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to decrease the amount of documentation required so we can get time for collaboration and creating better strategies to support the students</li> <li>• Training strategies and contents need to be updated so that we can gain new skills.</li> <li>• Training Has been INFORMATIVE BUT NOW WE need the skills</li> <li>• Our work is monitored by the zone coordinator and our school principal</li> <li>• The policy of no year retention, has caused many parents to care less about supporting their children and especially the ones with disabilities</li> <li>• Students with disabilities are only supported for Arabic and Maths by the Special Ed teacher. Other subjects like English and social studies and science... the teacher will have to create her own support in the classroom</li> <li>• Students with behavioural issues referred to SST and social worker for behaviour amendment support in school before referral to zone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum not modified, we choose with Special Ed teacher what to delete and what to keep according to IEP</li> <li>• It is difficult; I don't feel competent to do the job so I depend on Special Ed for main teaching in the resource room.</li> <li>• She is in my class for reinforcement and activities</li> <li>• She always sits in the front table and I try to give her some individual time.</li> <li>• She participates with groups when she can</li> <li>• We need guides on how to create differentiated sheets and home works. We are currently using the same books</li> <li>• Speech and occupational therapy is lacking. she would also benefit from psychologist sessions to boost her morale</li> <li>• Time management in the classroom is a real challenge</li> <li>• The English teacher follow the strategies of peer tutoring and group activities to engage the students with disabilities</li> <li>• Students are in serious need of speech occupational and psychological therapy</li> </ul>
--	---	---	---

	I Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sure about inclusion, worried about not enough support especially writing skills</li> <li>• The principal explained that with this new system now my daughter will be able to go to high school</li> <li>• Parent does not speak good Arabic, so she depends on school totally in supporting her daughter</li> <li>• Happy that her daughter loves school, she does not like to miss any day.</li> <li>• I am happy that she does not have to repeat any years</li> <li>• Her teacher is very supportive and she tries to help her a lot</li> <li>• School always welcoming I can call the teacher anytime I have any concern</li> <li>• My daughter loves her friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hind IEP is not signed</li> <li>• Amal IEP is signed, mother is very educated and understand the system very well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Ed teacher explained the IEP</li> <li>• Teacher said she is progressing well</li> <li>• Problem no extra help for writing</li> </ul>
--	----------	--	---	---

Observations	O Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivated and given chance to participate</li> <li>• Supported by her peers</li> <li>• The girls on the table <b>greeted</b> Hind when she arrived, and they <b>helped</b> her to locate her book.</li> <li>• Hind was <b>comfortable</b> with her group and she <b>shared</b> the answers and <b>participated</b> in <b>solving</b> the puzzle.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students follow IEP's</li> <li>• We have challenges with parents' consents. But we explain that this will give them a chance to progress into secondary school</li> <li>• assessed according to IEP</li> <li>• Differentiated exams are facilitated place and content and strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seating on first table</li> <li>• Colourful classroom, space to manoeuvre</li> <li>• PowerPoint and FM system are used</li> <li>• Special Ed teacher in the class, but no special role to play</li> <li>• Class design facilitate peer tutoring</li> <li>• Amal given differentiated paper</li> <li>• Hind is supported in the Arabic class by the Special Education teacher</li> <li>• Hind sits in the front table with 4 other girls.</li> <li>• Hind was supported by her special teacher during the class, she was given chance to participate. Hind was also given the chance to <b>participate by writing on the Board</b></li> <li>• Lesson pace is too fast for her</li> </ul>
--------------	-------------	---	--	--

	O Special Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hind is greeted by the teacher and <b>she greets her back with no eye contact.</b></li> <li>• Hind required a lot of <b>personal attention</b> and it was clear that there is a lot of <b>affection to the teacher</b> and she was willing to do everything that the teacher asked to please her.</li> <li>• The teacher gave her a <b>lot of encouragement</b> and positive feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students <b>supported in Arabic and Maths</b> by the Special Education teacher (ST). She attends 2 classes a day with ST,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hind's <b>oral capabilities are a lot better than her writing skills.</b> There has been an improvement this year with respect to concentration and eye to eye contact.</li> <li>• Last year <b>she refused to sit in the classroom</b> and insisted to stay with me all year...</li> <li>• Hind could <b>answer the question</b> about what the video is about, and that she can create words from the letters. .</li> <li>• <b>ST was very descriptive</b>, using <b>different voice tones</b></li> <li>• Hind could recognise the letter in the words and in the sentences.</li> <li>• The teacher used <b>a variety of teaching methods</b> of pictures, flash cards, PowerPoint storey and ended the class by using a worksheet for Hind to write the letter and recognise the letter in other words</li> <li>• Teacher also acted the storey out when Hind lost concentration</li> </ul>
--	-----------------	--	---	---

	<p style="text-align: center;">O Playtime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Physical structures:</b> The play ground is a large covered area. ramps &amp; special toilet for disabled</li> <li>• <b>Students Interaction</b></li> <li>• Girls were walking around in homogenous groups of 2 to 5.</li> <li>• <b>Amal</b> assisted by friends to buy her sandwich</li> <li>• <b>Hind</b> was playing with 3 girls, energetic, hugging the girls &amp; laughing.</li> <li>• Mentoring group of girls for supervising play time (grade 4)</li> <li>• They said about ‘School for All’ “we understand that these girls who are having difficulty and disability are now in our classrooms and should not be alone and we have to take care of them and we should be kind to them”.</li> <li>• Asking them how they are different, they said: <b>that they cannot learn like</b> us and they <b>need our help</b>. We are helping them and we play and also help them in studying in class and to buy their lunch.</li> <li>• One of the girls said, <b>they are not all nice</b>, there is one girl in our classroom who is always <b>hitting us and she pokes us with her pencils</b>, I don’t like her and I will not play with her.</li> <li>• Play time is also supervised by 2 teachers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Healthy and safety options</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The food</b> from the canteen was a mix of sandwiches but also contained sweets, chocolates and crisps. As for drinks it was juice and water. I did not see any fruits.</li> <li>• Two teachers were also supervising play time.</li> </ul>	
Documents	<p>School Documents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leaflets</li> <li>2. Reports</li> <li>3. Photographs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IEP</li> <li>2. Student Profiles</li> <li>3. ‘School for All’ Guidebook (was not utilised in this school)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IEP</li> <li>2. Differentiated Worksheets</li> <li>3. Assessment sheets</li> <li>4. photographs</li> </ol>

<b>CASE B – Trapped Inclusion</b>				
RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the ‘School for All’ initiative?				
	<b>1. Staff Training &amp; Development</b>	<b>2. School Structures (Student placement) / enrolment, assessment, monitoring</b>	<b>3. School Structures (Modifications and Adaptations)</b>	
<b>INTERVIEWS</b>	I Zone coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory workshop</li> <li>• 10 portfolio training sessions.</li> <li>• Some teachers have also attended workshops at Zayed University.</li> <li>• National Cadre program including: Vision impairment support which include Braille and mobility training, Down syndrome support, Autism support, Hearing impairment support &amp; Speech therapists</li> <li>• I believe we have managed to overcome the <b>psychological barriers</b> that were so apparent against inclusion in 2009.</li> <li>• First batch teachers are now trainers. More teachers believe in inclusion.</li> <li>• I believe <b>that 50% of the success is achieved</b>, person believes the idea, and then it depends on practice &amp; experience.</li> </ul> <p><b>PROBLEMS:</b></p> <p>1. Absence of national cadres. As for the available ones they mostly lack the experience. For example 128 cases in need of speech therapy, but only 5 specialists, meaning that each one will have to cater for 26 cases. So the service will not be adequate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot inclusion in 2007, 2 cases in primary</li> <li>• Social inclusion/ weekly visit DS from centre</li> <li>• In 2011, <b>8 schools</b> all cycles, total <b>287 DS</b> in the zone, majority is speech &amp; language disorder, also sensory, autism, intellectual &amp; physical disabilities.</li> <li>• The schools in this zone also has 281 students with remedial plans from SST, but no services</li> <li>• Schools still has the choice, selection is done in March every year following new budget depending on school building, teachers experience, area, number of disabilities</li> <li>• Admissions to Ministry, followed by assessment by MET, then placement accordingly</li> <li>• Parent is consulted about school preference</li> <li>• Parents’ consent to any change and update is mandatory, but the problem is sometimes parents do not respond.</li> <li>• Open door policy with parents, they can come to zone office with concerns and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramps, toilets and busses for physically disabled.</li> <li>• Assessment and enrollment services by (MES).</li> <li>• Objectives in IEP based on simplified curriculum objectives using omissions and simplification</li> <li>• Modifications carried out by teacher and Special Educator under my supervision</li> </ul>

		<p>problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ratio and type of disabilities according to 'School for All' guidelines</li></ul> <p><b>PROBLEMS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Impulsiveness in taking decisions without considering the practical consequences which results in abandoning certain plans too quickly sometimes before they reap their fruits</li><li>2. Schools in remote areas cannot be covered by services travelling time added to the load of work makes it impossible for the specialists to reach them.</li></ol>	
--	--	--	--

I Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness workshop by MOE Special Education department</li> <li>• We were requested to be a pilot school out of 10 schools.</li> <li>• All our teachers who has students with disabilities have attended the 10 portfolio workshops</li> <li>• Now we are training centre for the zone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 students in a special classroom were moved into mainstream in 2009. Special class closed.</li> <li>• We have 16 disabled students with services varying disabilities CP, autism, ADHD</li> <li>• Ratio is 2 DS / 22 classroom</li> <li>• We accept all disabilities referred form MOE</li> <li>• Resource room used to support students with LD on pull out basis</li> <li>• Parents involved with IEP &amp; monitoring and they are always welcome</li> <li>• We are developing a school website to aid communication</li> <li>• We are working on creating a database about each child</li> <li>• We have a parent council to run workshops for parents and help in all school activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slopes/toilets/busses/ trained drivers</li> <li>• Classes have laptop</li> <li>• Very noticeable social improvement</li> <li>• Academic is 25-50% improvement</li> <li>• Students included in every school activity including sports day and school trips</li> <li>• We don't provide extracurricular besides the normal PE lessons</li> </ul> <p><b>PROBLEM:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with LD have remedial plans, but with no year retention parents have stopped supporting weak students.</li> <li>• Not easy to have parents' consent on moving their kids to initiative (fear of stigma)</li> <li>• Lack of assistant teachers. There is huge load on subject teachers and special teachers</li> </ul>
-------------	--	---	--



<p style="text-align: center;">I Special Educator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 workshop portfolio, teachers attend every Tuesday. All teachers involved have done it</li> <li>• We are now trainers and our school is a training centre</li> <li>• Workshops are very theoretical as given to us on the CD and accompanied guide. We are constantly working on updating the material with practical daily examples to bring the concepts closer to teachers. We use live examples from daily experiences.</li> <li>• Our training has been quite successful especially with respect to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class environment adaptation</li> <li>• Teaching strategies of certain lessons in Arabic and Maths</li> <li>• Interaction with students of physical disabilities and moderate intellectual such as CP, I also have achieved some success with a student with autism, but I am looking forward to my specialised training for Autism so that I can help them better</li> </ul> </li> <li>• National cadre program (1/2 per week I will be attending course about supporting students with Autism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After 2009, special classroom was closed and all DS moved into mainstream classroom\</li> <li>• Students are supported through resource room on pull out basis similar to students with LD</li> <li>• School is currently a training centre for teachers in our zone</li> <li>• Assistant teachers badly needed</li> <li>• No retention instead updated IEP</li> <li>• DS will move to middle school with certificate specifying disability and IEP objectives and required services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Problems:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School building is very old, we cannot add more classes and we cannot have more teachers according to budget</li> <li>• Teachers' load is very high giving very little time for consultation and collaboration (24 hour / week for each teacher and 40 students)</li> <li>• In need for teacher assistant or ability to employ more teachers.</li> <li>• Mimio was used by Ali (CP) replaced his weak pen grip, gave him confidence and enabled his participation. Have not been utilised for anyone else.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DS supported in resource room 2/ day for Arabic and Maths, rest of day in class</li> <li>• Special teacher also attend 2 periods a week in classroom sometimes (not very useful).</li> <li>• Special teachers cannot attend more classes because of heavy workload with students with LD</li> <li>• Zayed: lacked communication skills/ aggressive, so I started behavioural augmentation, giving him small tasks to build his confidence. Train him to follow orders through games, positive feedback and rewards. I also worked on his class behaviour such as asking for permission and sharing with peers, taking turns. Now he loves school.</li> <li>• Weak pen grip, I use games with small coloured discs, arranging pens etc. In bad need of occupational therapist</li> <li>• Building academic skills 2nd year.( reading &amp; writing)</li> <li>• Zayed loves coming to school and gets upset if he has to miss a day for a doctor's appointment. His homework is immaculate. Very helpful father adamant about his son's progress</li> <li>• Abdulrahman goes privately to speech therapist and I communicate with therapist automatically. We introduced the computer this year, he is a competent user right now</li> <li>• Differentiated worksheets and exams (dotted lines, pictures, multiple choice questions) and questions with high cognitive skills are cancelled.</li> </ul>
---	--	--	--

I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory workshop by MOE and our principal</li> <li>• Attended 10 portfolio workshops (extensive but very theoretical)</li> <li>• Training need to be done as active classes not lectures</li> <li>• The main thing we learned is the types of disabilities, preparing IEP and some skills for class management and teaching strategies</li> <li>• Training succeeded in removing stigma and barrier of accepting disabled students</li> <li>• A visit to centre of disabled help to understand the different abilities more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open door policy with parents +parent meeting per month</li> <li>• Monitoring and assessment is done by subject teacher + Special Ed, supervised by zone coordinator and principal</li> <li>• No year retention, instead updated objectives of IEP</li> <li>• Parents sign and approve IEP, term reports, weekly calls, meetings (parents are different)</li> <li>• <b>We provide term reports about each child. We also have to show all worksheets that have been done by the students and monitor their progress every term because the IEP will be updated accordingly. All these reports are monitored by the school principal and the zone director.</b></li> <li>• <b>They have the same reports like all the other students, except it says “inclusion” and it is attached to the IEP which lists the achieved objectives and the services needed.</b></li> <li>• <b>English is not supported by Special Education Teacher (only Maths and Arabic)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DS follow IEP objectives and goals. No special curriculum</li> <li>• Differentiated sheets in classroom. When the other students are adding numbers, his worksheet to colour the numbers to help him recognise and add numbers.</li> <li>• IEP preparation, worksheets and exams are joint responsibility (Special Ed., subject teacher), revised by principal and the zone coordinator.</li> <li>• Examination in Resource room, better environment, support and extra time.</li> <li>• <b>Adaptations include</b> :DS always in the front, beside students who can assist him (peer tutoring) and I try to give 5 minutes to explain his task</li> <li>• <b>He attends 5 Arabic classes with me and 3 in the resource room</b></li> <li>• Special Ed is great support in Arabic and Maths.</li> <li>• <b>PROBLEMS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time management in the class, we need TA</li> <li>• I have 2 autistic children not sure how to deal with communication</li> <li>• Pen grip and speech</li> <li>• <b>Progress is well, problems with writing (weak pen grips)</b></li> <li>• <b>We need multi-sensory resources for English. Students need resources for extra-curricular activities and sports, so they can have the chance to excel in something else other than academics</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
-------------------	--	--	---

	I Parent		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He follows same curriculum with modified objectives according to IEP</li> <li>• Parent involved with IEP</li> <li>• He will be moved automatically to inclusive school in second cycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The special teacher sometimes attend the class with him, but it is not structured properly for him to make use of her attendance, that's why he is better off attending the special time with her in the resource room</li> <li>• He gets speech therapy in hospital twice a week, special teacher cooperate with therapist and follow her recommendations, therefore there are results</li> </ul>
Observations	O Classroom		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DS is on First row on same table with peers,</li> <li>• The special teacher was too close to the student and was not comfortable for both of them (intimidating)</li> <li>• Colourful Comfortable, safe space and furniture</li> <li>• Class tables support peer tutoring</li> <li>• Extra time was given for exercises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson objectives identified clearly on the board</li> <li>• Charts on the wall only Arabic and not utilised</li> <li>• Zayed participated well in the class and was always eager to answer questions and take turns with his classmates.</li> <li>• competitions between tables, motivated the students</li> <li>• Worksheet was not differentiated, so he needed support of special teacher</li> <li>• Learning tools were distributed equally to all tables. S1 had access to all material as all other students</li> <li>• He was quizzed about certain concepts to ensure understanding</li> <li>• Follows objectives of IEP. He added single numbers while classroom added double numbers</li> </ul>

O Special Class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spacious classroom comfortable &amp; child friendly it has coloured walls with many educational charts of letters and sentences in Arabic as well as Cartoon characters</li> <li>• Classroom accessible, in the same corridor as the rest of the classrooms</li> <li>• Both Zayed and Abdulrahman attend 3 classes per week for each core subject (Arabic and Maths) in resource room.</li> <li>• The rest of the hours are attended in the classroom (special teacher can attend based on her schedule)</li> <li>• He requires extra time as he has motor skills challenges, so he takes his exams in the special class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple teaching strategies to reinforce a concept using (flash cards, games, smart board story, coloured shapes and pens)</li> <li>• Positive encouragement to keep their attention as well as rewarding with candy and coloured pens</li> <li>• Varies the lesson between Arabic and Maths to keep them focusing</li> <li>• Playtime with building blocks to enhance their motor skills as a form of OT</li> <li>• Two boys together in the lesson to encourage social skills/ sharing/ cooperation</li> <li>• Special work sheets were used that depended on circling the write answer, recognizing shapes. Following dotted lines</li> </ul>
O Playtime		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large playground/ not shaded/ not friendly/ very old buildings/ no green areas/ no game or playing resources</li> <li>• Special Toilet/rail handles/</li> <li>• Food is not very healthy, variety contains chips, chocolates and low quality fruit gums</li> </ul>	

<b>CASE B : Trapped Inclusion</b>				
RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the 'School for All' initiative?				
		<b>4. Support Services (Physiotherapy speech therapy, psychotherapy)</b>	<b>5. Assistive Technology</b>	<b>6. Awareness programs</b>
<b>INTERVIEWS</b>	I Zone coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have 5 speech therapists in the zone. They carry initial visits to schools. Each student is getting 45 minutes per week.(not ideal, student should get 2 sessions a week)</li> <li>Psychologists will only do school visits if requested by Special Ed teacher</li> <li>There is genuine need for more therapists especially occupational and other disabilities.</li> </ul> <p>Zone assessment office is set as a separate building in a school.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very enthusiastic, Syrian gentleman with experience in Syria</li> <li>I believe in inclusion, I am very excited it is finally being implemented follows the law, our moral values and Quran</li> <li>It needs time and patience to change people mentalities</li> <li>Awareness workshops for all parents in schools and especially parents of DS</li> <li>Individual meetings with parents of children with DS</li> <li>Field visits to early inclusion schools to convince parents</li> <li>I stress the religious values of fairness and caring for the weak</li> <li>People have been cooperative once they understand, the problem is bureaucracy, the process can be slow especially when it comes to decisions about extra budget for resources and placement</li> <li>Leaflets about disability readable for both children and parents</li> </ul> <p>Parents sometimes prefer placement in another area to avoid the stigma attached from the neighbourhoods' peers.</p>

I Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very few sessions given...not regular enough, so not effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mimio smart board Learning equipment such as special pens, coloured sheets,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOE introduced Inclusion through workshop</li> <li>• Apprehensive to start, practical examples were useful</li> <li>• We wanted to conform with the law as early as possible</li> <li>• I believe now that inclusion is possible and can be successful</li> <li>• It's our duty in front of Allah to help them</li> <li>• Staff meeting where I introduced the idea and requested cooperation from all teachers</li> <li>• Parents of DS were worried at the beginning of kids not getting enough help and also bullying, later they can see the progress and kids are happy. Parents of other children again to start worried, then they can see the difference and they are great supporters</li> <li>• Two parents withdrew children first year worried about academic level dropping</li> <li>• Kids were unfriendly and ganging bullying to start, with awareness campaigns around school (exhibition, open days, celebration of disability days) much better now there is cooperation and participation.</li> </ul>
-------------	--	---	--

	I Special Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational therapy and speech therapy are badly needed</li> <li>• I also wish I can have someone to show me techniques to deal with Autism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data show in classrooms</li> <li>• Mimio in resource room, idle now, was used only with Ail.</li> <li>• Data show in resource room</li> <li>• Box of resources, pen grips, FM machine, magnifier glasses, phosphoric papers (BUT no training on how to use resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are both firm believers of inclusion and we are working hard towards making it successful in our school. We are both trainers for the 10 portfolio workshops.</li> <li>• .I prepares the teachers through workshops. They were afraid of failing, extra work and responsibilities</li> <li>• Innovative in changing the 10 portfolio workshops to make them more effective with real types exercises. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Special Education week: At the beginning of each year, the school organised a number of activity over a week which include</li> <li>○ power points in all classes about disabilities,</li> <li>○ Brochures for both teachers and families</li> <li>○ Photography exhibition about the achievements of people with disabilities as well as the description of each one. The gallery is open to all parents and all classes visit the gallery with their teachers.</li> <li>○ Presentation of a case by one of the parents</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Open day for new parents of DC</li> </ul>
--	--------------------	--	--	--

	<p>I Subject Teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech therapy 2/week half hour but sometimes not regular.</li> <li>• They have progressed in term of speech</li> <li>• Fingers grip are very weak, they need occupational therapy.</li> <li>• One student very defensive and aggressive last year, he got better now with the help of the Special Education teacher we need regular psychologist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have problems dealing with the students attitude and short memory span,</li> <li>• So far it is like trial and error//</li> <li>• We need teacher assistants and more training</li> <li>• Parent meetings, open door policy with parents, direct contact with parents.</li> <li>• Boys enjoy helping them and they are very proud to be their assistants( buy his lunch/ to be their peer tutors)</li> <li>• Arabic teacher sees themselves as not equipped to teach and they do not have the resources. They need special curriculum with special exercise book and work sheets and teacher guide</li> <li>• We need TA (Similar to Videos we saw in the training)</li> <li>• Sometimes boys get jealous when he gets special attention in the class...</li> <li>• Boys' relation has improved (activities such as photography exhibition, open days, leaflets to parents and families.)</li> <li>• Younger English teacher is a firm believer in inclusion, although English is not supported by Special Education teacher, she sets the objectives for students and prepare the worksheets accordingly</li> <li>• Educated parents are a great support for their kids especially with English HW</li> <li>• Students have great relation in class supportive and helpful</li> </ul>
--	--	---



	I Parent	No support in school, he gets therapy outside school and special teacher cooperate with therapist		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not believe in inclusion- not happy with her son academic progress (mother is a teacher in the school-AR has Autistic behaviour, speech and occupational disorders) progress with core subjects is slow, not getting enough attention, little individual time</li> <li>• Yes he has improved socially , he plays better with peers, he shares, less aggressive, takes turns, follow instructions, less hyper</li> <li>• Ideal solution is core subjects in special classroom and rest of the day in mainstream</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
	O Classroom	Zayed was supported by Special Ed in mainstream classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adhesive Flash cards</li> <li>• No special pens/ touch pads/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the class was finished they helped him with his bag and told me that they help him in getting his sandwich in the canteen</li> <li>• Zayed looks happy between his peers and was confident to talk to them and participate</li> <li>• There was direct eye contact and she was encouraging all the time</li> </ul>
Observations	O Special Class	Arabic Maths lesson in the resource room for two boys Zayed and Abdulrahman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special pens aid writing</li> <li>• Smart board (interactive stories and Q/A)</li> <li>• Flash cards/colour discs, pens/ coloured shapes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genuine motivating sentences</li> <li>• Students playing together and sharing and participating in building blocks game.</li> <li>• Children well-behaved and listen to instructions</li> <li>• Children take turns</li> </ul>

<b>CASE C – We are the Champions</b>				
RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the ‘School for All’ initiative?				
	<b>1. Staff Training &amp; Development</b>	<b>2. School Structures (Student placement) / enrolment, assessment, monitoring</b>	<b>3. School Structures (Modifications and Adaptations)</b>	
<b>INTERVIEWS</b>	I Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• introductory seminar by The Special Education Department in MOE 2009</li> <li>• We signed up to become an inclusive school in 2009, most of our teachers attended 10 workshop portfolio</li> <li>• 2010 our school became <b>training centre</b> for all schools in the zone.</li> <li>• Special Ed attended 6-hour diploma at Zayed University</li> <li>• Prepared their own research study for winning an award (did not win)</li> </ul> <p>Problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff retention is a problem, after training they get transferred</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevator/ slopes/ special toilet/ <b>staircase handle</b></li> <li>• Open door policy with parents</li> <li>• Parents’ consent essential for IEP following information evening followed by individual meeting. (<b>problem with foreign mothers</b>)</li> <li>• After 2009, special classroom was closed and all DS moved into mainstream classroom</li> <li>• We are trying currently to <b>reassess one of our students</b>. The Zone director disagrees. We are in a great conflict. We are pushing for solution</li> <li>• NO special classrooms.</li> <li>• DS students in mainstream classrooms supported by Special Ed in the classroom and on pull out basis in resource room.</li> <li>• 6 students identified with disability (get MOE services)</li> <li>• 17 students learning Difficulties (Remedial plans)</li> <li>• Ratio 2 to 20/22 in a classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We had recorded the progress of DS with respect to core subjects. We have charts to prove that they have <b>improved academically</b></li> <li>• RDC has a variety of multi-sensory and technology instruments that are used to support students with disabilities</li> <li>• Teachers are creating visual aids and posters as well as tactile teaching aids</li> <li>• DS participate in school activities, there is nothing special for them</li> </ul> <p>Problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Special Education teachers are very stretched and overworked as a result of all the administration</li> <li>• Need AT</li> </ul>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">I Special Educator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 workshop portfolio, teachers attend every Tuesday. All teachers involved have done it</li> <li>• We are now trainers and our school is a training centre</li> <li>• National cadre program (1 or 2 per week will be attending course about speech therapy)</li> <li>• Extensive training programs the last two years</li> <li>• In RDC to use all the technological resources and multi-sensory teaching educational tools. Also workshops to develop teaching strategies for students with disabilities in an inclusive environment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slopes, toilets, busses and elevator</li> <li>• After 2009, special classroom was closed and all DS moved into mainstream classroom\</li> <li>• Recommended IEP is provided as a result of the assessment in the zone office, it contains goals and objectives, types of support needed.</li> <li>• Students are supported through resource room on pull out basis similar to students with LD</li> <li>• School is currently a training centre for teachers in our zone</li> <li>• Assistant teachers badly needed</li> <li>• No retention instead updated IEP</li> <li>• DS will move to middle school with certificate specifying disability and IEP objectives and required services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Problems:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If we do not agree with recommendation and diagnosis, it takes a long time to reassess. It is taking 1 year now with Ali case and not resolved yet.</li> <li>• Teachers' load is very high giving very little time for consultation and collaboration</li> <li>• In need for teacher assistant or ability to employ more teachers.</li> <li>• TOO many reports to fill ( progress reports, IEP's, statistics) and they keep changing the format required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students provided with differentiated worksheets and testing (individual, extra time)</li> <li>• DS supported in resource room 2/ day for Arabic and Maths, rest of day in class</li> <li>• Special teacher also attend 2 periods a week in classroom sometimes (not very useful).</li> <li>• Special teachers cannot attend more classes because of heavy workload (students with LD)</li> <li>• Parents are always welcome.</li> <li>• School Support Team (SST) include Principal, social worker, special teacher and subject teachers doing their best to support any problems. Weekly meetings.</li> <li>• Parents are involved in all stages in inclusion especially with IEP, (parents vary)</li> <li>• We are 2 Special Education teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate &amp; report the use of RDC</li> <li>• Monitor/ update IEP's and create progress reports and statistics</li> <li>• Support all students with L in RDC</li> <li>• Support 6 inclusion students in classroom and on pull out basis in RDC (50% of classes).</li> <li>• Support for all children only in Arabic and Maths</li> </ul> </li> <li>• External help is allowed but parents have to provide. Usually a helper for toilet use and moving around the school</li> <li>• Patience / love and care are the qualities of Special Ed teacher</li> </ul>
---	--	--	---

I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>English Teacher:</b> Introductory workshop by MOE</li> <li>● Attended 10 portfolio workshops (extensive but very theoretical)</li> <li>● The main thing we learned is the types of disabilities, preparing IEP and some skills for class management and teaching strategies</li> <li>● Training succeeded in removing stigma and barrier of accepting disabled students</li> <li>● 6 weeks diploma course in Zayed University about differentiated teaching and preparing the IEP.</li> <li>● I am now a trainer in our school for the 10 portfolio workshops. I present the last workshop about successful cases. I also present class strategies.</li> <li>● <b>Maths teacher:</b></li> <li>● Attended 10 portfolio workshops (extensive but very theoretical)</li> <li>● It has been good to break the fear barrier and to learn about types of disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>English Teacher:</b> Open door policy with parents +parent meeting per month</li> <li>● Monitoring and assessment is done by subject teacher + Special Ed, supervised by zone coordinator and principal</li> <li>● Direct line with parents, problems with cooperation from DS</li> <li>● Load of hours is very high, I am currently teaching 4 sections-85 students which means I have little time for collaboration, innovation</li> <li>● Very heavy load in terms of admin work</li> <li>● <b>Maths teacher:</b></li> <li>● IEP which is set by the Special Education teacher and we modify it together according to his progress</li> <li>● The parents are only involved when there are problems, I get the social worker involved</li> </ul>	<p><b>English Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3 students, one in Grade 3, and 2 in Grade 2DS follow IEP objectives and goals based on modified Curriculum.No special curriculum</li> <li>● English is not supported by Special Education Teacher (only Maths and Arabic)</li> <li>● I use the Internet and look at examples of other schools</li> <li>● Differentiated worksheets less complicated with more pictures and less words.</li> <li>● Individual time as I give a worksheet or an activity to the rest of the class. Peer tutoring very effective.</li> <li>● I have to provide a report about their progress and I cooperate a lot with the Special Education teacher.</li> <li>● English not supported but I collaborate a lot with Special Ed teacher for teaching strategies and teaching materials</li> <li>● Schools need to invest in extra-curricular activities such as sports, art so that students can show other abilities than just academic.</li> </ul> <p><b>Maths Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3 students, one in Grade 3, and 2 in Grade 2</li> <li>● DS gets 5 minutes individual time, differentiated worksheet to get him working on a task. Can't do more I have 22 students. They attends 5 Arabic classes with me and 3 in the resource room</li> <li>● Challenge of time management in class, we need TA.</li> <li>● Weak Pen grip and speech</li> </ul>
-------------------	--	---	--

Observations	O Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class teacher uses Mimio with interactive material, varying teaching strategies &amp; good class management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maths Class:</b> Zayed (partial visual Impairment, motor skills).</li> <li>• Ali (ADHD, EBD). Attend Maths class with Special Ed as shadow in G2 classroom.</li> <li>• Both take support classes in RDC for Maths and Arabic every day</li> <li>• Students sitting separately with support teacher on separate table, no interaction with students</li> <li>• <b>Maths Class:</b> Faisal (CP &amp; partial vision - grade 3) &amp; 2 LD</li> <li>• Seated front table with peers (mixed abilities)</li> <li>• Spacious comfortable class, no Maths aids on wall</li> <li>• Learning tools distributed equally</li> <li>• IEP objectives, differentiated worksheet, extra time, special assessment with explanation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maths Class:</b> Differentiated worksheets Zayed, uses a clock model game and an exercise sheet about adding single numbers while class is doing double numbers</li> <li>• Paper is not magnified, although it could aid learning</li> <li>• No special pen to help his grip</li> <li>• Ali is disruptive, gets a colouring sheet, weak pencil grip and no interest in following instructions</li> <li>• Class teacher varies teaching strategies (Q/A, collaborative learning-group activity, audio visual material, all students are engaged including Zayed)</li> <li>• No posters or materials on the wall to aid learning</li> <li>• <b>Maths Class:</b> Three teaching strategies: discussion, Q/A, group activity, audio and visual materials.</li> <li>• Attractive learning atmosphere, competition between tables, mixed abilities tables, related shapes to life objects, individual time 3mins to Faisal.</li> <li>• No special pen although needed</li> <li>• No magnified worksheet</li> <li>• Extra time is given for worksheet</li> <li>• Differentiated worksheets, where students circle and identify instead of write</li> <li>• According to his Plan he can multiply up to the number 4, while the rest of the classroom goes up to 9</li> <li>• Special Ed in class helping all students according to need</li> </ul>
--------------	-------------	---	---	---

O Special Class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faisal (CP, partial visual, motor skills) in support class (Arabic)</li> <li>• RDC very friendly room with many multi-sensory, tactile resources</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faisal supported Arabic and Maths (2 classes for each/ week)</li> <li>• Objectives following IEP, lessons to reinforce skills according to IEP with cooperation from Subject teacher</li> <li>• Flash cards and storytelling and she tied it to lesson objective. Smart board (interactive lesson), writing skills on smart board, multi-sensory game (letter-clock), snake and ladder (fine motor skills &amp; letter enforcement)</li> <li>• Special worksheet, to improve writing skills, but no special pen used.</li> <li>• The walls have many posters to aid learning such as letters, numbers, Multiplication tables, animal pictures and names. Days of the week and months of the year</li> <li>• teacher repeated the material twice to make sure he understood in different ways</li> </ul>
O Playtime		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large playground/ shaded/ friendly / no game or playing resources</li> <li>• Special Toilet/rail handles put especially by school for CP students/</li> <li>• Food is not very healthy, variety contains chips, chocolates and low quality fruit gums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys are supervised by helpers</li> <li>• Teachers are on duty during play time</li> <li>• DS assisted by peers in canteen and some are Faisal is playing with peers</li> </ul>

<b>CASE C : We are the champions</b>				
<b>RQ1: What educational provisions have been implemented for the disabled students in three Emirati government schools, as a result of the ‘School for All’ initiative?</b>				
		<b>4. Support Services (Physiotherapy speech therapy, psychotherapy)</b>	<b>5. Assistive Technology</b>	<b>6. Awareness programs</b>
I Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech therapy but not regular enough to help students progress ( once or twice/ term)</li> <li>• We need both psychologist and occupation therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource Development Centre RDC (classroom that is equipped with various technological tools and multi-sensory and tactile games and resources to assist in educating DS and LD).</li> <li>• The room is utilised mainly by the special teachers in supporting their students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe its successful but not all disabilities, especially with behavioural /emotional disorders not working</li> <li>• We carry awareness meetings (group and individual) parents of DS and Induction day.</li> <li>• Problem with non-Arab mothers</li> <li>• Open day “<b>My Friend is Disabled</b>”. It included parents of children with disabilities from our school, the Sharjah Humanitarian city as well as parents of peer children). The program included activities (competitions and games with the rest of the students)</li> <li>• Lectures about inclusion, awareness about how to assist them in learning and interaction as well as about health and security issues.</li> <li>• RDC introduced to parents and used by the students as part of the activities.</li> <li>• No stigma is felt, we are school of distinction متميزة because we support students with disabilities and we follow the international standards of inclusive education.</li> <li>• Disappointed this year (worked very hard, created inclusion research, awareness campaigns, in house training) still not recognised as model school.</li> </ul>	

I Special Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech therapy and psychologist visit once a month mainly for reporting. Sessions are not helpful to students</li> <li>• Occupational therapy and psychological therapy are badly needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data show in classrooms</li> <li>• Mimio in lab room, actively used by science and Maths teacher</li> <li>• RDC highly equipped with technology resources supporting Arabic, English, Maths and science.</li> <li>• RDC very well utilised by all special needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our principal was very excited and joined the initiative immediately</li> <li>• Our school was the pioneer in joining the initiative, now we are a training centre</li> <li>• Inclusion is the right strategy for mild intellectual and physical disabilities.</li> <li>• NOT the right place for behavioural and emotional disorders; they need behaviour therapy through regular psychological sessions. Then they can be included ( big challenge with student in G2 – no progress for 2 years)</li> <li>• Parents are always welcome</li> <li>• Parents are mostly helpful and educated, problems with non-Arab or illiterate.</li> <li>• School runs many awareness campaigns- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability week</li> <li>• The disabled is my friend involving the community and the parents</li> <li>• Awareness day for parents at the beginning of the year</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Organised visits from disabled centres raise awareness in the school and provide cooperation and collaboration with experts</li> </ul>
--------------------	--	---	--



	I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Therapies are not regular, so students don't benefit. My students need both speech and occupational therapy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>English teachers</b> has created a lot of visual material, her class is full of posters and projects used by students.</li> <li>Teachers use the RDC once a week and whenever coordinator allow them</li> <li>Classes only has data show</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Maths Teacher:</b> Firm believer of inclusion, DS flourish in mainstream</li> <li>We need to give all our hearts, patience, effort, innovation, internet,</li> <li>Parents are cooperative and understanding as a result of all the awareness campaigns.</li> <li>Students are very helpful, (helping hands program) A group of 4 students who act as a support group for students with disabilities during break time and activities</li> <li>Students proud and helpful. One problem in G2, student with behavioural issues.</li> <li><b>Arabic Teacher:</b> It is working but for mild disabilities excluding behavioural disorders, they need extra help for behavioural therapy. We are not equipped for that.</li> <li><b>English Teacher:</b> Educated parents are a great support for their kids especially with English homework. Also students have great relation in class supportive and helpful</li> </ul>
Observations	O Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Ed teacher individual support in the classroom.</li> <li>Needs occupational therapy(motor skills disorders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mimio smart board</li> <li>Multi-sensory resources on the table (clock model)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No interaction between students although in the same classroom</li> <li>Zayed given the chance to participate in Q/A and writing on the board</li> <li>He was motivated just like all other students</li> <li>He got praise from colleagues when he participated just like all others</li> <li>Peer collaboration, peer praise no patronizing</li> <li>Faisal looked happy, confident spoke with his peers</li> <li>Teacher gave attention and praise</li> </ul>

	O Special Class		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smart board, many multi-sensory tactile resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of motivation from teacher, he was rewarded with a candy at end of lesson</li> </ul>
	O Playtime			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zayed was eating his sandwich on the bench. His peers later walked with him to classroom</li> <li>• 2 teachers and helpers watching the boys</li> <li>• Group of 4 boys are the helping hands, walking around making sure no fights. They spoke to Zayed and asked if he needs help</li> <li>• Peers helped Faisal to buy his Sandwich</li> <li>• boys walked together sharing conversation and laughter</li> <li>• Boys were gentle playing a ball game</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
School Documents				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In school photographs, DS are participating in all school activities PE classes, morning assembly, open days, awards day</li> <li>• Differentiated Worksheets</li> <li>• Inclusion research project carried out by the SST</li> <li>• Statistics about attainment of DS in all subjects over two years</li> <li>• Details of open day for disability “disabled is my friend”</li> </ul>

Case C – We are the Champions				
RQ2. What are the inclusive cultures, policies and practices that evolved in the three schools, following the implementation of the ‘School for All’ initiative?				
		Inclusive Cultures	Inclusive Policies	Inclusive Practices
Interviews	I Zone Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe inclusion is the correct strategy, however it will take time, and teachers’ experiences need to build up, awareness for all teachers, parents and students as well as the community. Our classrooms are still not well equipped but we are moving. It’s the law and we have to help the children following our religion as well.</li> <li>• My relation with teachers is based on cooperation, I try to always be available, and the school is progressing well. They are a school of excellence they are all trying their best the principal has excellent leadership qualities and always encouraging her teachers to participate in all competitions so they are motivated to be more innovative</li> <li>• awareness activities have been highlighted in the media. The programs include the parents and civil society organizations such as the police, civil defense, rehabilitation centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training has been evolving:</li> <li>• Victor Pineda workshop was the start</li> <li>• Descriptive workshops every term to introduce new schools to inclusion through the experiences of other schools</li> <li>• 10 workshop portfolio which has been evolving</li> <li>• National cadres for specialised therapies</li> <li>• Zayed university mini diploma (6 hours in the summer course)</li> <li>• I carry out the monitoring, I visit the schools regularly to set up plans and to give advice regarding any problems.</li> <li>• The case of Ali we are still considering it, re-assessment should not done too fast the schools should try to accommodate the children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Special Education teacher carries a big load, the teachers consult with her, but it’s her responsibility to prepare the portfolio for each child based on her cooperation with all subject teachers.</li> <li>• The teachers now are more accepting and they have began to prepare differentiated lessons</li> <li>• The Special Education teacher supports the children both in the classroom and on pull-out basis in the resource room.</li> <li>• The teachers and I we keep a very close relation with parents. Not all parents are cooperative, it can be due to being very busy with very big families or sometimes they do not come from Arab origins and the communication becomes a barrier.</li> </ul>

	<p>I Principal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We were introduced to the idea in 2009 through an introductory seminar by The Special Education Department in MOE,</li> <li>• We were excited to join the initiative. So we signed up to become an inclusive school in 2009 and in 2010 our school became a training centre.</li> <li>• Inclusion is successful, but not for all disabilities. For example emotional behavioral problem need specialist assistance</li> <li>• We are very committed to the inclusion program and we have prepared our own research study</li> <li>• We organised an open day by the name “The Disabled is my Friend” where we invited parents of children with disabilities from our school and from the Sharjah Humanitarian city as well as parents of peer children</li> <li>• We also celebrate yearly the week of Special Education</li> <li>• We see ourselves as a school of distinction; we follow the international standards of inclusive education.</li> <li>• Parents awareness programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal is putting the ‘School for All’ guidebook in the UAE, to practical use in meetings and discussions with teachers. copies given to teachers.</li> <li>• We do not have a special class anymore.</li> <li>• 6 students identified as students with disabilities included in mainstream classrooms with special services from the MOE. Services include utilizing an (IEP), individualised assessments and possible other services such as speech and psychological therapy</li> <li>• We also have 17 students identified as students with LD, supported through remedial plans but no services</li> <li>• Elevator next year</li> <li>• School equipped with slopes and special toilets</li> <li>• We added stairs handles to aid students with CP, teachers provided training, students use independently</li> <li>• The school has an open door policy with the parents where they can come in any time of day to discuss any concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a resource development centre RDC which is a classroom that is equipped with various technological tools and multi-sensory and tactile games and resources to assist in educating children with special needs. The room is utilised mainly by the special teachers in supporting their children.</li> <li>• School keeping statistics about students performance since beginning of inclusion to show progress in most subjects</li> <li>• The students participate in all sorts of activities in the school as everyone else.</li> <li>• students with disabilities and the ones with learning difficulties are supported in Arabic and Maths on a pull-out</li> <li>• The students participate with all the assigned activities similar to their peers, such as sports, music and school trips</li> <li>• Challenges: Teachers get moved to other schools after being trained and invested in</li> <li>• Students with behavioural disorders (support is failing – need specialist)</li> <li>• Special Ed teachers overstretched, overloaded,</li> <li>• We need assistant teachers, then the load on the subject teacher will be less and she can support these students a lot better.</li> <li>• The services provided by the Ministry need to be improved our students are not getting the needed services of occupational, speech and psychological therapy.</li> </ul>
--	---	--	--

	<p style="text-align: center;">I Special Educator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal was very excited and we joined in from the start. Now we are a training centre for the zone.</li> <li>• I believe in inclusion, but I don't think we are yet equipped to include students with psychological behavioural problems. We need more training and more support.</li> <li>• Parents are always welcome in the school and the principal makes this very clear for them from day1.</li> <li>• There are formal parents days each semester where we explain the children's progress. The school also carries an awareness day at the beginning of the year about the inclusion of students with disabilities</li> <li>• Awareness programs include the Disability week, the Disabled is my friend Day.</li> <li>• We do not have any problem with administration.</li> <li>• Our principal is very understanding and she always motivates us to work hard to get results. We are trying to be a school of excellence with respect to inclusion.</li> <li>• Overloaded with paper work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special classroom is closed and the students placed in mainstream classrooms according to their age with respective IEP.</li> <li>• These students are supported by the MOE( services such as equipments, psychological and speech therapy.</li> <li>• They are also supported by special teachers on a pull out basis in Arabic and Math's.</li> <li>• Special teacher also attends the classes according to a schedule.</li> <li>• Assessment, recommendation and initial IEP is all centralised in the zone assessment office</li> <li>• The "School for all" has provided the school with slopes, toilets, and an elevator which will be functional next year. From the school budget, the principal has added stairs handles specially for Faisal and Ali.</li> <li>• It should be noted that the IEP should be approved by the parent sometimes have a problem of communication with the parents.</li> <li>• We are in charge of curriculum modification according to IEP, in cooperation with subject teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2009, the school also received from an independent foundation (INDEMAJ) a set of <b>technological and multi-sensory learning tools aiming to support the teaching and learning outcomes, as well as a number of training workshops aimed at using the equipments, as well as awareness of inclusion theory and teaching strategies and practice.</b></li> <li>• The training provided by MOE lacked the practical aspect, however it introduced types of disabilities and teachers' roles with respect to IEP's and differentiated worksheets and class strategies</li> <li>• We support 5 students with disabilities with IEP's and 17 students with learning difficulties.</li> <li>• Support is given on a rate of 30% in resource room and 70% in the classroom</li> <li>• The school allows shadow paid by parents. We had a case when parents supplied shadow as child needed help with toilet.</li> <li>• The school gets visits from specialists from the education zone, <b>only once a month.</b> We get the psychologist and the speech therapist. They are here only for reporting but not much therapy.</li> <li>• We carry on communication with middle schools to help our students' transition</li> <li>• Assessment is carried out in the resource room if needed.</li> </ul>
--	--	---	--

I Subject Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• portfolio workshops</li> <li>• Inclusion is working, we are progressing, however success depends on disability</li> <li>• Problem with student with behaviour challenges</li> <li>• Special Ed. is very cooperative, she helps setting up objectives, worksheets and tests, always communicating to follow and monitor students' progress</li> <li>• Students very pleasant together and supportive and helpful with their disabled peers. Except for one student with behavioural problems</li> <li>• Parents communication through parents meetings, participation in events and direct relation with Special Ed</li> <li>• School carried out awareness week,</li> <li>• Mentoring program (helping hands)</li> <li>• Open day about disability with the help of rehab centre and other civil organization</li> <li>• Good working relation with teachers and principal, she is always trying her best.</li> <li>• I am part of the inclusion team, we prepared a action study which helped us to understand inclusion more</li> <li>• Principal always motivate us, budget to attend conferences in Dubai and even in Amman about inclusion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open door policy to allow parents to voice their concerns</li> <li>• Open door with teachers and students as well</li> <li>• Students are enrolled and monitored centrally by zone office</li> <li>• Induction policy to welcome all new students</li> <li>• Problems with referrals and delays due to lack of specialists to carry out testing or probably they do not see an alternative</li> <li>• Students have IEP's derived from the curriculum and it also specifies services and provisions provided and needed.</li> <li>• No grade retention policy, it gives the chance to students to progress in mainstream with their own set of goals, however as a result it is noted that some parents are supporting their children and pushing them to achieve.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modifications is carried out as a collaboration between subject teacher, Special Ed and supervision of coordinator</li> <li>• Received 10 portfolio training workshops. Training too theoretical</li> <li>• I carry out lesson planning and keep close contact with Special Ed. We are constantly meeting to follow up the progress</li> <li>• Curriculum is rigid and not suitable for children with disabilities, sometimes differentiation is very difficult</li> <li>• We need assistant teachers , so we can make use of class time for all students</li> <li>• Students follow IEP goals &amp; are assessed accordingly</li> <li>• Overworked &amp; We have to create a lot of documentation files about each child to proof our efforts, it is very time consuming</li> <li>• We also keep statistics of children progress</li> <li>• Students in general enjoy classroom in RDC because of all the technological tools</li> <li>• We use various strategies such as Q/A, group activities and facilitate peer tutoring.</li> <li>• We need training to create more interesting lessons using the technology. We are still using it at a basic level.</li> <li>• English is not supported but teacher supports children in the classroom and in free periods.</li> </ul>
I parents			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I saw this parent in the school, she said that the principal is always very welcoming and she listens to all our concerns and is trying her best and all the teachers</li> </ul>

Observations	<p style="text-align: center;">O Classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The learning atmosphere created by the teacher was very <b>attractive</b> for pupils which reflected positively on their <b>engagement</b></li> <li>• Students with disabilities on separate table which is not conducive to inclusion</li> <li>• He was motivated by his peers for given the right answer; he was one of the boys.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The classroom is equipped with a portable smart board(<b>Mimio learning tool</b>),</li> <li>• Teachers have <b>been trained to use the system</b> and the lessons available support the national curriculum.</li> <li>• Classroom spacious, 2 students with disabilities on separate table at end of class with Special Ed teacher (segregated). <b>Special Education teacher acting as a shadow during class time</b></li> <li>• The lesson <b>objectives</b> were well defined by the teacher. She <b>has good class management</b>, students moving smoothly between different learning strategies</li> <li>• <b>Discussion and questioning</b> as well as <b>collaborative learning</b> through a <b>group activity, audio and visual materials</b> using the Mimio learning tool.</li> <li>• Student with disability was given a chance to participate, lesson was differentiated for him. Students added 3 digit number, he added single digits so he participated in the lesson</li> <li>• <b>Second student with disabilities is student with behaviour issues; teachers are not able to deal with his case.</b></li> <li>• Students did the clock on PowerPoint, while students with disabilities followed a clock model on their special table</li> <li>• Students got differentiated worksheet</li> </ul>
--------------	--	---

	O Special Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student was excited to write the word on the white board and was happy to show me that he understands the concept.</li> <li>• I was given the chance to participate in the game. S1 had no problem participating with me in the game</li> <li>• Support room is very well lit and has many learning resources, stacked on shelves so it is not distracting.</li> <li>• Learning tools such as smart board or multi-sensory games are all accessible with ease</li> <li>• The walls have many posters to aid learning such as letters, numbers, Multiplication tables, animal pictures and names. Days of the week and months of the year</li> <li>• He was given a candy at one point which he was very happy about.</li> <li>• He was encouraged with praise words</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. S1 is supported by Special Education Teacher (T1) in both Arabic and Math. He attends two Arabic classes and two Math classes a week in the support room on individual basis with Special Education Teacher (T1). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S1 requires a differentiated worksheets and exams to suit his abilities according to IEP</li> <li>• S1 also requires extra time to aid his motor skills difficulties</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher used <b>flash cards</b> and <b>storytelling</b> and she tied it to <b>lesson objective</b>.</li> <li>• She introduced new concept using <b>smart board</b>, student <b>improve</b> his <b>writing skills</b> by writing on the smart board.</li> <li>• Strategies used multi-<b>sensory game</b> using a clock; <b>snakes and ladders</b> game to reinforce counting skill. He moves the little disc on the game to improve his grip.</li> <li>• The next activity was a <b>writing activity on a worksheet</b>; his writing was slow for a grade 3 student,</li> <li>• Improvement noted with respect to <b>motor skills</b>, where individual classes of great benefit to concentrate on his writing skills.</li> <li>• The student wears glasses. The sound and visual affects of Smart board is very clear</li> <li>• He is <b>not</b> given a special pen although he might benefit from one as he has difficulty in writing (fine motor skills difficulty).</li> <li>• His paper is also <b>not</b> magnified to aid ease of reading</li> <li>• He was prompted to pay attention regularly, and teacher repeated the material twice to make sure he understood</li> </ul>
--	-----------------	---	--	--



	O Playtime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playtime is supervised by helpers and teachers walking around the playground</li> <li>• There are no recreational games or equipments</li> <li>• Boys either running together, eating on benches or walking around</li> <li>• 4 boys are designated as mentors, they walk around to help and supervise</li> <li>• Its orderly however very loud</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents show students participating in sports day, sports classes, morning assemblies, award ceremonies, awareness activities</li> <li>• Students were assisted during break time by their colleagues to buy their sandwich</li> <li>• After break, students came in the classroom and told me that they played a game together, when I asked what did they do?</li> </ul>
Documents	School Documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leaflets</li> <li>2. Reports</li> <li>3. Photographs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IEP</li> <li>2. Student Profiles</li> <li>3. 'School for All' Guidebook (utilised by principal and Special Ed teachers, throughout meetings and monitoring sessions)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IEP</li> <li>2. Differentiated Worksheets</li> <li>3. Assessment sheets</li> <li>4. photographs</li> </ol>