

**The transition of students with SEND from rehabilitation  
centers to mainstream schools in the UAE**

انتقال الطلاب من ذوي الاحتياجات التعليمية والإعاقات من مراكز إعادة التأهيل إلى  
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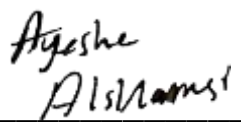
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## **ABSTRACT**

Students with disabilities have had the opportunity to attend mainstream schools in recent years as a result of right-based policies and obligations. This has ensured equal access to education by meeting all of their needs and providing support to overcome their inherited barriers. However, due to a variety of complicating factors, some students are still left behind in special classrooms, such as rehabilitation centers (Abdat, 2020). Such centers were initially established to provide care and education to students with disabilities in order to prepare them to be socially and educationally integrated with their non-disabled peers. Many people have an impact on the transition from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools, including educators, students, and parents. As a result, the purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that influence the transition of students with disabilities from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools in the UAE. It covered three major topics: teaching practices in a rehabilitation center for transitioning students, challenges teachers face when transmitting to their students, and parents' perceptions of inclusion and transition. The study was conducted using the qualitative method to provide descriptive data involving the feelings and thoughts of the participants. The data were collected using several approaches. Semi-structured interviews (10 parents), two focus groups (15 teachers), and four non-participant observations were used to collect data (4 teachers). Thematic analysis of parent interviews revealed the following issues: 1) difficulties with school enrollment, 2) a service gap, 3) anticipated threats, 4) the complexity of disabilities, 5) fears about the future. Furthermore, teachers revealed their difficulties in achieving a successful transition, which included 1) a curriculum hiatus, 2) inadequate compensation, 3) group collaboration, 4) the complexity of disabilities. Observations also revealed teaching methods used to prepare students for their transition. Finally, the study provides recommendations on the status of transition from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools for students with disabilities.

**Key Words:** transition, rehabilitation, teaching practices, teachers challenges, parents perceptions, SEND

## ملخص البحث:

لقد أُتيحت للطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة فرصة للإلتحاق بالمدارس العامة في السنوات الأخيرة نتيجة للسياسات والالتزامات القائمة على الحقوق المتساوية. كما تجلت ثمار هذه السياسات من خلال الحصول على التعليم على قدم المساواة مع أقرانهم و تلبية جميع احتياجاتهم وتقديم الدعم للتغلب على تحدياتهم. ومع ذلك، وبسبب مجموعة متنوعة من العوامل المعقدة، لا يزال يوضع بعض الطلاب في فصول دراسية خاصة مثل تلك الموجودة في مراكز إعادة التأهيل. لقد كان الهدف الرئيسي من إنشاء هذه المراكز في البداية هو تقديم الرعاية والتعليم للطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة من أجل إعدادهم للاندماج الاجتماعي والتربوي مع أقرانهم في المدارس العادية. و بما أن الكثير من الأشخاص مثل المعلمين والطلاب وأولياء الأمور ممن ينتمون لهذه المراكز و المدارس العادية لهم تأثير على الانتقال من هذه المراكز الخاصة بإعادة التأهيل إلى مدارس التعليم العام لذا كان الهدف من أجراء من هذه الدراسة هو النظر في هذه العوامل و التي قد تؤثر على عملية انتقال الطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة من مراكز إعادة التأهيل إلى المدارس العادية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. ولقد تم تناول هذه العوامل من خلال مناقشة ثلاثة موضوعات رئيسية ألا وهي: ممارسات التدريس المطبقة في مركز إعادة التأهيل مع الطلاب المرجو انتقالهم، التحديات التي يواجهها المعلمون عند إرسال طلابهم لصفوف التعليم العام، وتصورات أولياء الأمور عن الدمج والانتقال. لقد أجريت هذه الدراسة باستخدام المنهج النوعي لتوفير بيانات وصفية لمشاعر وأفكار المشاركين. حيث تم الاعتماد على عدة طرق نوعية لجمع البيانات مثل استخدام المقابلات شبه المنظمة (تضمنت 10 من أولياء الأمور) ومجموعتي مناقشات جماعية (تضمنت 15 معلماً) وأربع حصص مشاهدة (تضمنت 4 معلمين). كشف التحليل الموضوعي لمقابلات أولياء الأمور عن المشاكل التالية:

- (1) صعوبات في الإلتحاق بالمدارس (2) فجوة في الخدمة (3) وجود التهديدات المتوقعة (4) حدة الإعاقة و الظروف الصحية الملازمة لها وما يترتب على ذلك من تعقيدات (5) مخاوف بشأن المستقبل. علاوة على ذلك، كشف المعلمون عن الصعوبات التي يواجهونها في تحقيق انتقال ناجح، والتي تضمنت (1) فجوة في المنهج الدراسي (2) التعويض غير الكافي (3) عدم وجود تعاون بين المجموعات المختلفة (4) حدة الإعاقة و الظروف الصحية الملازمة لها وما يترتب على ذلك من تعقيدات. كما أظهرت حصص المشاهدة عن ماهية طرق التدريس المستخدمة حالياً لإعداد الطلاب لعملية الانتقال. أخيراً، توفر الدراسة توصيات بخصوص كيفية تحسين الوضع الحالي لعملية الانتقال من مراكز إعادة التأهيل إلى المدارس العادية للطلاب من ذوي الإعاقة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الانتقال ، إعادة التأهيل ، ممارسات التدريس ، تحديات المعلمين ، تصورات أولياء الأمور ، الطلاب ذوي الاحتياجات التعليمية والإعاقات

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To my twin, sister, and best friend “Fatma”,

Thank you for always being available to me.

I wouldn't have made it if you hadn't held my hand.

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## Chapter One

### 1.0 Introduction

Students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have challenging characteristics in different developmental domains that could restrict their learning journey (Mag et al., 2017). Many students with SEND need therapeutic and educational support to prevent the negative impacts of disabilities (Abdat, 2020). Policies and regulations in the UAE have protected the educational rights of students with SEND because their special conditions are not an excuse to exclude them from receiving a proper education like their typically developed same-aged peers (MOE, 2010). Federal Law No. 29 is a response to the international movement to guarantee the rights of people with disabilities, which includes qualified education (MSA, 2006). A recent policy launched in 2017 is titled ‘the national policy for empowering people of determination’, which aims to create an inclusive society by providing services that facilitate the needs of people with disabilities (uae.com, 2022). Inclusive education refers to a diverse educational community that promotes equity through providing accommodated learning to students with SEND to receive equitable opportunities as their same-aged peers (KHDA, 2019).

Learning settings that respect diversity support students and educators to grow their social skills and responsibility toward their community (KHDA, 2019). However, many children with SEND are still excluded from typical mainstream schools due to severe or complicated disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities and autism. Those children need early intervention support and therapeutic services from special centers, including rehabilitation centers. The rehabilitation centers aim to provide social and academic skills that prepare students with SEND for social inclusion, which includes the transition to mainstream schools. In the UAE, the rehabilitation alongside the health pillar provides programs for early diagnosis and intervention to enable students with SEND to overcome their impairments (uae.com, 2022). However, the rehabilitation centers are considered special education centers that separate students from their peers in a limited learning environment. Therefore, transmitting the young students with SEND to mainstream schools is necessary to obtain the privilege of a bigger diverse environment (Warren & Thew, 2019). The

transition could be challenging for many parents and teachers due to various complicated reasons that lead to disappointment (Abdat & Gaad, 2022). This study investigates the transition of students with SEND from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools in the UAE. The aspects covered in this study are teaching practices applied by the teachers to prepare students for inclusion, the challenges teachers face when moving their students to inclusive settings, and parent's perceptions of the transition and inclusion.

Well-planned teaching practices in early intervention, which include assessments, modification, assistive technology, accommodation, and suitable pedagogies, produce better outcomes for the students (Early et al., 2001). Paving the way for teachers, by identifying and addressing their struggles, increases efficiency and produces positive results as well (Majoko, 2018). Furthermore, parents as a vital component of students' development shall be involved in the whole transition process to achieve stressless transition for their children (Abdat, 2020). The main aim of this study is to investigate multi-dimensions that contribute to supporting students with SEND to smoothly transmit from rehabilitation centers to the typical mainstream schools. Hopefully, this study will support teachers and parents to learn about the practices that could advance students with SEND to social and academic inclusive settings.

## 1.1 Background

Education in the UAE has developed over the last five decades by local leaders to be free and accessible for all Emiratis, and primary education has become mandatory (Alhebsi et al., 2015). Upon the plans identified by the leaders to develop the country, raising the number of Emiratis in schools to 90% was one of the main concerns. Therefore, several policies were established to eliminate discrimination and welcome all students including girls and students with special needs to UAE schools (Anati, 2012). However, schools used to refuse students with bold disabilities that could be identified as more than mild conditions, such as Down Syndrome, Autism, and other physical disabilities. Inclusive education has entered a new era since the UAE adopted the international movement of maintaining the rights of people with special needs, following the introduction of Federal

Law No. 29 in 2006, which was narrowed in 2009 to serve people with disabilities in particular (Gaad & Almotairi, 2013). The law aimed to guarantee all the rights for people with disabilities, including living with the same equity as people with non-disabilities and to avoid any discrimination due to any special conditions including the right to education (MSA, 2006).

The UAE is always keen to embed the importance of education and fully ensure access to schools despite any barriers students might struggle with; thus the UAE ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010. This established accountability for all regulations that ensure the rights of people with disabilities as established by the United Nations (UN) in 2006 (Alborno, 2013). Accordingly, the UAE Ministry of Education (MOE) established an initiative ‘school for all’, which creates an inclusive educational environment that aims to pave the way for students with disabilities to learn in the same culture with their same-age non-disabled peers while adapting to their abilities and capacities (MOE, 2010).

Although inclusion is the desired choice for all children with different disabilities, some conditions need rehabilitation services and early intervention to receive the required therapies before inclusion. Federal Law No. 29 mentioned the demand for providing early diagnosis and intervention services in Article No. 11 “The committee shall specifically carry out ....Establishing the programs of early detection, diagnostics, raising ..... providing the means of early and specialized intervention...” (MSA, 2006). Furthermore, the National Policy for Empowering People of determination is the latest federal strategy that aims to empower people with disabilities, also named ‘the determined ones’ by providing them high-quality care that includes rehabilitation services (MOCD, 2021). The Ministry of Community Development (MOCD) which used to be the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) is the entity tasked with establishing governmental rehabilitation and early intervention centers for Emirati students and authorizing the private centers in the UAE. These centers aim to prepare students with disabilities for social and educational integration through receiving needed therapy with parental training to support the families of students

with disabilities (MSA, 2006). The MOCD currently runs seven governmental rehabilitation centers in the following Emirates: Dubai, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah, Um Al Quwain, and Fujairah, to serve students ranging from four to 18 years old by providing special educational classes, vocational training, and therapeutic sessions (Abdat, 2020). The centers serve students with severe disabilities only, which fall under the umbrella of neurodevelopmental disorders (MOCD, 2021).

According to America's Children and the Environment Agency, neurodevelopmental disorders include autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability amongst others (2015). Students who need early intervention could also be recognized with developmental delay disorders, which are characterized by delay in core domains such as speech, social interactions, and motor skills (Thomas, 2016). As the main aim of rehabilitation centers is enabling students with disabilities to be socially integrated, thus transmitting students with disabilities to inclusive education is also one of the goals that educators shall achieve. The transition refers to the process of getting students with disabilities into the mainstream schools with other non-disabled students to experience a full inclusive scholarly environment (Warren & Thew, 2019).

It is a country's concern to emphasize inclusion policy and ensure equity in learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2017). The smooth transition requires fundamentals that are; early intervention programs, accommodated practices by the teachers, and parents' involvement in the process (Siddiqua, 2014). The teaching practice in early intervention aims to provide modified content and instructions before the transition to meet the needs of children with disabilities. However, teachers reported challenges with the transition process as they do not receive enough support to provide effective intervention (Warren & Thew, 2019). Additionally, parents' involvement in the transition process plays an important role as they facilitate their children's needs during the procedure of transition (Abdat, 2020).

## 1.2 Rationale

The transition of students with SEND to inclusive settings contributes to creating a diverse social and educational environment in both the long- and short-term. Recently, the concept of inclusion, which promotes the idea of equity and diversity is highly demanded by policymakers and educators (Siddiqua, 2014). The transition of students with SEND to mainstream schools is not only a goal of political and social agendas, but also that when the students get involved in regular mainstream classrooms they benefit from all the privileges as their same-aged peers (Warren & Thew, 2019). In contrast, involving students with SEND in more segregating settings escalates complex situations like stigmatization and discrimination (Caruana & McDonald, 2011). Early intervention is vital to reduce the effects and symptoms of disabilities on children. It could also help them achieve developmental milestones in the physical, cognitive, and social-emotional domains (Abdat & Gaad, 2022). The teaching practices in early intervention (rehabilitation centers) require involvement from all stakeholders, including educators and parents to design and implement a developmental plan accompanied by supportive materials and resources to get the student with SEND to evolve in the educational phases (Caruana & McDonald, 2011). Studies show that the transition requires academic preparation based on accommodated assessments and plans that target the unique characteristics of each child with SEND (Warren & Thew, 2019).

Enabling teachers to support students' transitions shall also be considered as educators should receive training, awareness of strategies, and resources on a regular basis (UN, 2017). However, studies show that teachers still struggle with a lack of training, which affects the educational outcomes (Kemp, 2003). The parents also play an important role in moving their children to mainstream schools as they know so much about their children; thus, parents cooperating with the educators to facilitate their progress could show an enormous result in shifting their educational status (Abdat, 2020). Furthermore, a smooth transition is predictable with the appropriate preparation in both school and home contexts (Warren & Thew, 2019). During the last few years, both the MOE and the MOCD have managed to transition students with SEND into mainstream schools, however, there are still students who are enrolled in rehabilitation centers to receive early intervention services,

which shows the importance of further research (Abdat & Gaad, 2022). Therefore, additional research on this area could provide data in the same context and record changes during the updated policies.

From a personal point of view, the researcher teaches students with SEND and has a willingness to understand the practices that could help transmit them into mainstream schools. This research could offer teachers data about teaching practices that help students in the early intervention stage and prepare them for inclusive settings. Furthermore, revealing the challenges that educators face could encourage the policymakers to consider changes that pave the way for better early intervention practices. Moreover, providing information about parents' perceptions on the transition of students with SEND could add updated data to existing literature.

### 1.3 Statement of The Problem

All inclusion policies focus on the concept of leaving no one behind due to any condition or disability. It is children's right to receive equitable learning opportunities in an environment filled with various experiences, resources, social interaction with classmates, and all fortunes other typically developed children receive every day (UNESCO, 2017). When students with SEND get restricted in rehabilitation centers, they only get exposed to a limited number of teachers and learning areas (Pitt et al., 2019). However, there are still students that are not able to enroll in regular schools in the UAE in particular (MOCD, 2015). There are many reasons that could delay the inclusion of students with SEND with one of the most common struggles is that students with intellectual or multiple disabilities require more support to meet the criteria of mainstream schools (Mardiyanti, 2016). The decision of enrolling a child with SEND gets more complicated when they are diagnosed with a severe disability like autism (Beamish et al., 2014).

The children with social-emotional struggles get administrators and educators to question their ability to blend into an inclusive setting with other children (Mardiyanti, 2016). The possibility of transition can be indicated by the quality of teaching practices delivered in the



early intervention (in rehabilitation centers) by teachers (Beamish et al., 2014). However, research has showed that teachers have limited knowledge of and experience with the strategies they should use to ensure a smooth transition for their students (Pitt et al., 2019).

Many teachers reported their challenges are not considered, which affects their efficiency in work (Kemp, 2003). Parents also send their children to rehabilitation centers because of the overwhelming process of inclusion which left them disillusioned (Cross, 2011). Transition to inclusive settings is vital because it enriches social diversity, which can only start from the early years in mainstream schools. When children get to interact with each other and learn about their differences, they grow up more creative, independent, and tolerant (Deloitte, 2019). Since the success of transition relies heavily on the efficiency of the early intervention in rehabilitation centers, it is important to focus on the teaching practices rather than students' limitations and disabilities. With more accommodated strategies and well-designed plans, students with SEND would be able to acquire skills that help them to survive the transition process (Beamish et al., 2014). It is important to consider the challenges teachers face when applying regular teaching practices, such as the lack of training and resources, because by doing so more teaching opportunities will be available to them (Majoko, 2018). The cooperation with parents of children with SEND ensures a successful transition process because a supportive in-home environment is as important as classroom practices (Abdat, 2020).

Although the existing literature offers effective data, there are fewer documents that provide a holistic view of the transition as most of the studies focus on one aspect only. Furthermore, fewer researchers pay attention to the struggles teachers face when getting students through the transition process. Additionally, the number of studies is even less in the local context (in the UAE) because the education system and inclusion policy are new, which means that more studies should take place in the same area (Gaad & Almotairi, 2013). Researching in this area could benefit the stakeholders involved in transmitting students with SEND to mainstream schools. Teachers could understand more about strategies and practices that support students to pass the transition stage. Furthermore,

exposing the barriers faced by teachers during the transition could make the policymakers apply changes to the regulations that eventually lead to a smoother process. Lastly, parents as a core part of children's progress could also gather knowledge to achieve a successful transition for their children.

## 1.4 Purpose and Research Questions

This study investigates the factors that affect the transition of students with SEND from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools. The study has two main purposes within the area of research. The first purpose is to investigate the teaching practices that are applied within the classrooms of rehabilitation center by the teachers to prepare students with SEND for transmitting to mainstream schools. The second purpose focuses on the parents and teachers as important stakeholders that contribute to the transition process. This is to identify the challenges faced by both teachers and parents when transmitting students with SEND to mainstream schools. Although international researchers have investigated knowledge about the transition, it is less common to find studies that discuss the UAE context from a wider perspective on the topic (Abdat, 2020). This study intends to provide additional data in the field of special educational needs and highlight a critical topic that could foster the vision of inclusion in the UAE. The study aims to reveal best teaching practices that could be applied in the early intervention classes within rehabilitation centers and avoid any impractical applications that could delay the process. Moreover, recognizing the obstacles that both parents and teachers deal with during the transition process might lead them to fail it.

### 1.4.1 Research Questions

The main aim of the study is to acquire knowledge about the factors that contribute to fostering or delaying the transition of students with SEND from several dimensions, which are teaching practices, teachers' challenges, and parents' perceptions. The following research question has been written to guide the researcher through the study's stages:

1. What are the teaching practices that teachers apply in a rehabilitation center to prepare students for transitions into inclusive education?

2. What are the barriers teachers face when preparing students with SEND to be included in mainstream schools?
3. What are the parents' perceptions of including their children in mainstream schools?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

There is a dearth of studies on the transition to inclusive education as the CRPD itself is a new policy that just celebrated its one-decade anniversary (UN, 2006). Therefore, many aspects of this topic have not been researched. Similar research has been conducted by Gaad and Abdat on the transition in early childhood intervention for students with SEND in the UAE. Results showed different perceptions from the parents of students with SEND on their transition (2022). This informative study covered the parents' view, but there is still a need to investigate the area of teaching practices and teachers' challenges. On the international level, Beamish, Bryer, and Klieve conducted research in Australia to socially validate the transition of children with autism to mainstream schools. Their research showed that all the teaching practices are highly important for the transition (2014).

Another study has been conducted in the United States by Early, Pianta, Taylor, and Cox about the link between the practices that teachers employ and the transition's success. The study revealed that engaging the children and family in accommodated learning opportunities impacts the success of the transition (2001). However, fewer researchers have covered the overall view on the factors that shape the transition experience by delivering a triangulated research that covers a wider range of disabilities where the results can provide a holistic understanding of the context. The teaching practices in rehabilitation centers are crucial to facilitate the transition of students with SEND. Practices like class size, timing, resources, and other daily details build the bridge for the children with SEND to survive the transition. Teachers, as the main facilitator of the transition, should be supported because their level of readiness indicates the success of the transition (Early et al., 2001). Lastly, parents influence their children's development, thus eliciting their thoughts and concerns significantly impacts the transition (Abdat, 2020). Hopefully, this study can add to the

literature and provide thoughtful insights to teachers and parents on how they can support students with SEND to achieve a successful transition.

## 1.6 Structure of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter one discussed the background of inclusion policy in the UAE, justified the rationale of the topic, statement of the problem, the research's purpose and questions, and the significance of the study. In chapter two, the literature demonstrated theoretical models that support transition and differentiation. It also debated previous studies' findings from different angles. The aim was to discuss the topic from several researchers' perceptions. Chapter three explains the methodologies and approaches used to collect data, besides ethics. Furthermore, it highlighted the pilot study, trustworthiness, and research challenges. It aimed to provide a brief account of the data collection methods and procedures. Chapter four explained the study findings and related them to the research questions in a thematic style. Finally, chapter five demonstrated the discussion, recommendations, and study limitations.

## Chapter Two

### 2.0 Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

The movement of status to another is called transition, in case of leaving a segregating setting like rehabilitation centers to inclusion in typical mainstream schools, which is also considered transition. The disabilities' severity, socioeconomic status, and support provided to the children determine whether they will move to inclusive settings or not. However, challenges can be overcome with proper early intervention and teaching practices along with team cooperation (including parents) in the rehabilitation centers, which eventually get the child to pass the transition phase and obtain the chance to study with typically-developed same-aged peers (Amoah & Charan, 2017). The transition has been defined theoretically by Bronfenbrenner in 1994 by introducing the concept of ecosystems and mesosystems; defining a close environment that creates direct interaction (e.g., home) as an ecosystem and the interaction between two ecosystems (e.g., school and home) as a mesosystem (Kamenopoulou, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner stressed the importance of the adult and child interaction in his Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition as a reason for fostering the child's development and transition to another phase (Fonseca, 2017). Shifting the development from one stage to another is also discussed by Vygotsky in his theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which he showed the importance of social interaction in the development of children (Fonseca, 2017). Since the development of children with SEND could require customized support according to their unique needs, in 1999 Tomlinson introduced the pedagogy of Differentiated Instruction. It is a pedagogy that promotes altering teaching practices based on each child's ability to make sure no one is left behind (Strogilos, 2018). Therefore, numerous pieces of the literature showed strategies to implement differentiation in the classroom, which includes all learning aspects such as planning, class management, assessments and so on (Alkahtani & Kheirallah, 2016).

Although, there is a lack of studies that show the impact of teaching practices on a child's transition it still directly impacts children's development, which eventually affects their transition process. The fact that inclusion itself is a fresh topic makes many teachers struggle to manage their professional development to be able to deliver a well-differentiated lesson. Therefore, many struggles prevent teachers from achieving effective differentiated teaching in their classrooms. It is important to consider teachers' obstacles to lower the probability of threats to children's development and create a sober learning environment where children with SEND can grow to secure their rights in inclusive settings (Barnes, 2019). As theories prove the importance of parents' roles and the value of school-home cooperation on the child's development, it is crucial to consider parents' perceptions of inclusion and transition. The literature identified many obstacles that parents face when deciding to move their children to an inclusive setting and one of them was the readiness of the school and teachers to host their children's special conditions (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

This is proving how vital it is to cooperate and involve parents in every single step their child goes through as part of development (Sharma, 2019). Overall, this chapter highlights findings from various literature on three main areas: differentiated teaching practices, teachers' challenges when teaching students with SEND, and parents' perceptions of and role in the transition and inclusive experience. It also states the main gaps in the literature and how the study will fill them.

## 2.2 Conceptual Framework

Students with SEND are identified as unique learners who require additional educational support to overcome their impairments (Cullen et al., 2020). Neurodevelopmental disorders are associated with malfunctions in the neurological system of the brain. Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities struggle with impairments like language deficiency, weak motor skills, concentration, memory, and behavioral issues. Both diagnosis and treatment of neurodevelopmental disorders are complicated as they require therapeutic and educational plans alongside psychiatric treatments (America's Children and Environment,

2015). Intellectual disabilities impact the child's ability to develop independence skills and meet the social standards of their same-aged peers. The severity of the intellectual disability ranges between four levels; mild, moderated, severe, and profound (Mathiassen et al, 2012). Inclusive education represents the equity that each child gets in a mainstream school despite his/her special condition or disability (Wang, 2009).

Segregation is the opposite act of inclusion; in the segregating settings, children are isolated because their developmental performance does not meet the social and academic standards. The segregating centers affect children with several impacts, such as labeling, isolation, and limited educational opportunities (Wang, 2009). The rehabilitation entities are recognized by practices that aim to improve the status of temporary or permanent impairments, such as developing mobility and cognition skills. Rehabilitation centers for students with SEND involve a coherent team, such as physicians, therapists, special needs teachers, nurses, and administrators (Amoah & Charan, 2017).

Early intervention refers to therapeutic and educational practices applied at early ages to help the children with SEND meet the requirement of mainstream admission (Zucker, 2010). The teaching practices applied in early intervention are defined as strategies that boost students' competencies to merge with social academic expectations by their aged-level. The teaching practices that target students with SEND are individualized based on each child's level and incapability (Han & Kemple, 2006). The teacher's challenges represent limitations that occur during the teaching/learning practices, which could threaten the educational outcomes. The lack of training, knowledge, skills, resources, and technologies are also considered teaching challenges and obstacles (Mutugi, 2018). Lastly, parents' perceptions demonstrate a considerable comprehensive perspective of the children with intense information about their needs and abilities (Alfolabi, 2014).

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework

### 2.3.1 The Bioecological Theory of Development

This is a theory that explains human development as a result of a complicated interaction between a person and the components of their environment. In the 1970s, Urie Bronfenbrenner developed this theory to explain human development concerning the surrounded environment (Kamenopoulou, 2016). A child develops an understanding of the world through interacting with parents, relatives, and teachers. This interaction might involve many variables that are summarized as:

- The process variables: included interaction between the child and other close contributors in his environment (e.g., child-parent and child-teachers).
- The person variables: revolve around the person's characteristics like gender, health, age and so on.
- The context variables: involve all the environments surrounding the child, such as schools and home.
- Time variables: associated with the impact of time on the development.

There are several levels of the systems that explain the interactions between them. The microsystem creates influence on the child based on the interaction from direct close people, such as teachers, parents, and relevant. The next level is the mesosystem, which demonstrates the interaction between separate microsystems, such as the communication between home and school (Fonseca, 2017). The theory emphasizes the power of the child-adult interaction to foster development, which leads to a successful transition from one stage to another. The power of the interaction becomes more meaningful with cooperation between variables and stable consistency over time; for example, parents' cooperation with the teacher to apply accommodated plans during the period will support the child in achieving the targeted milestones (Kamenopoulou, 2016). The Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition is a framework of practices and interactions within and between microsystems that influences the development and transition from one stage to another. In the example shown in figure 1, children are transmitting from preschool to kindergarten with the support of community/parents (from home) and teachers/peers (from school) (Fonseca, 2017).



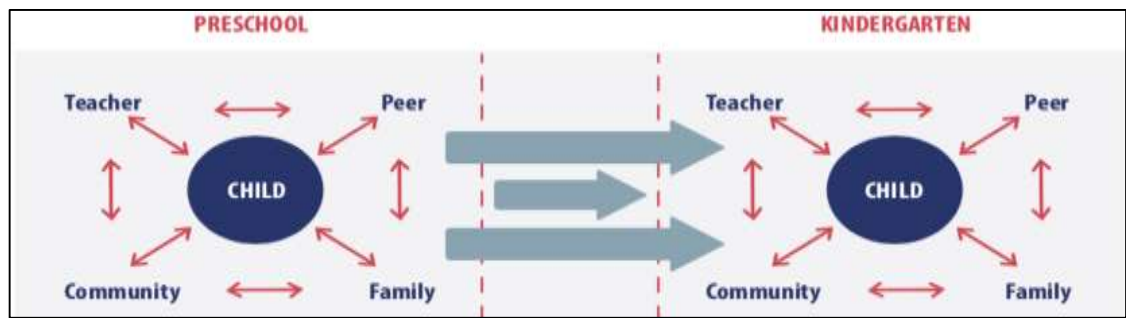


Figure 1- example of ecological and dynamic model of transition (Fonseca, 2017)

Similar to the transition to mainstream schools, teachers and parents should cooperate to consider all the child's strengths and areas of development to come up with a tailored plan of transition (Abdat, 2020). Furthermore, the theory focuses on the importance of teachers' awareness of the children's needs, which leads to the demand of considering teachers' challenges (Fonseca, 2017).

### 2.3.2 Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky's ZPD theory highlights the gap between what the child already knows as existing knowledge and the targeted learning objectives that he/she can achieve with appropriate support (Abbati, 2012). Vygotsky's theory concentrates on the importance of social learning to enrich children's knowledge. In the context of inclusive education, the ZPD targets the child's ability rather than his limitations and disorders. It assumes that social interaction with peers and adults could compensate for the impact of the disability on the child (Podolskij, 2012). The ZPD focuses on two teaching dimensions which are 'how to assess a child with a disability?' and 'how to deliver proper teaching strategies?' (Rodina, 2018). Therefore, the teaching practices applied to transform a child from the zone of knowledge to another are crucial alongside the diagnostic test. Such a theory stresses the importance of a customized learning experience for children with SEND (Abbati, 2012).

### 2.3.3 Differentiated Instructions

In 1999 Tomlinson introduced the pedagogy of differentiated instructions as responsive teaching, where teachers do not approach students as a group of homogeneous learners (Barnes, 2019). It is considered a supportive method for teaching students with SEND because it stresses the child's level of readiness and interest (Strogilos, 2018). The adaptation of learning presents four aspects which are content, process, environment, and products (see figure 2).

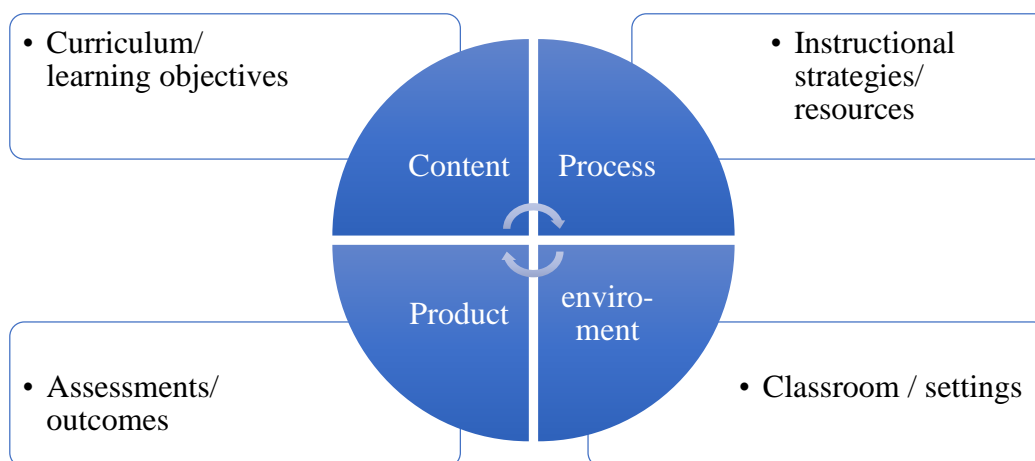


Figure 2- areas of differentiated instructions (Strogilos, 2018)

Firstly, differentiated content refers to adjusting learning objectives based on the child's level of readiness. Secondly, the process represents strategies that sequence learning, which could be based on children's interests. Thirdly, the environment includes settings, structure, and management. Lastly, differentiating the product by considering the given time, rubric, and presentation (Barnes, 2019).

## 2.4 Teaching Practices for Teaching Students with SEND

Each learner with SEND has unique characteristics and needs affected by his/ her impairments and other social/emotional factors. Whether it is a private classroom or an inclusive setting, children would still need differentiated approaches to learning. It is the teacher's responsibility to consider each student's limitations, abilities, and preferences (Lawlor & Hornyak, 2012). There are four main areas of students' needs: social interaction and communication, intellectuality and learning, sensory and mobility, and emotional

behavioral needs (Davis & Florian, 2004). To serve children's needs, there are fundamental teaching practices that should be adopted in the classroom which are:

- Curriculum adaptation
- Differentiated teaching methods
- Appropriate resources and materials (including technology)
- A one-to-one session for extra support

Although a special education class consists of only students with SEND their needs and abilities are heterogonous, which could be a chance for diverse learning activities (Ranjeeta, 2018).

#### 2.4.1 Individual Educational Plan (IEP)

The IEP is a differentiated developmental plan designed to support children with SEND because the typical mainstream curriculum does not serve their needs. The IEP holds information about the child's profile which includes: disability, allergy, medication, therapeutic services, and other necessary data (Lawlor & Hornyak, 2012). The IEP team involves stakeholders that work with the student such as class teachers, parents, and therapists (Alkahtani et al., 2016). During the planning phase, the team should discuss the child's competencies/limitations and agree on the aptitudes, special equipment, and external therapy when needed (Ranjeeta, 2018). The IEP should be approved by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and carried out by the teachers and parents. Regular evaluation and feedback on the child's progress should be reviewed by the SENCO for necessary interpretations (Alkahtani et al., 2016).

#### 2.4.2 Teaching Strategies

Implementing the IEP in class requires effective teaching strategies that ensure the growth and development of children with SEND. It is a board topic that involves implementation of several pedagogies, however, it is narrowed down to four main segments:

- Learning activities: Away from the traditional teaching style, a child constructs knowledge effectively when playing an active role to comprehend information and fulfilling the need of discovering the environment. Applying active learning strategies (e.g., role-playing) gets the child with SEND to develop social interaction and communication skills (Alkahtani et al., 2016).
- Class management: Many children with SEND present challenging behaviors that require the teacher to establish a method for eliminating negative attitudes. Approaches like positive reinforcement (getting a reward after a positive response), and negative behavioral elimination (redirecting behavior through taking something wanted or adding extra tasks) (Davis & Florian, 2004).
- Class routine: Many children with SEND struggle with adapting to change, thus establishing class routines help to reduce anxiety. Practices like the visual timetable, fixated settings, limited decoration, and class transitions could help the child feel safe exposing their feelings and thoughts (Hanover Research, 2018).
- Support learning styles: implementing diverse learning styles (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic and so on) has strong evidence on gripping the students' attention and ability to absorb information (Bogen et al., 2019).

### 2.4.3 Assessments

Assessments refer to evaluation which is a major part of teaching that aims to assess to which extent the child has achieved learning objectives. There are various types of assessments for different purposes, such as diagnostic tests, formative, and summative assessments (Lebeer et al., 2019). The diagnostic assessment is an evaluative tool to determine the students' strengths and weaknesses, it is used for planning to acquire new skills and knowledge (Esomonu & Eleje, 2020). Diagnostic assessment is used prior to designing an IEP to analyze students' responses and plan for proper learning objectives (Lebeer et al., 2019). In addition, formative assessment is a frequent in-process for evaluating students' progress. It helps the teacher to provide proper intervention to address misconceptions (Lane, 2018). The data collected using formative assessments could be

numerical scales or descriptive profiles, which contains a child's performance at a given point (Esomonu & Eleje, 2020). Furthermore, the summative assessment is well-known as ending a test used at the end of the learning period to measure students' performance. This is a tool that is used to evaluate what have learned and achieved from the IEP.

The summative assessment is critical to reflect on the efficiency of teaching methods and apply further enhancements (Ahmed et al., 2019). All assessments could be delivered in a different mode (verbal, written, and visual) depending on the child's needs and abilities (Lebeer et al., 2019).

#### 2.4.4 Teaching Resources and Technology

Resources are a practical fun aspect of teaching for both children and teachers. Using textbooks only makes the learning abstract and dry and leads to disengagement (Okongo et al., 2015). Resources may differ for students with SEND because it involves assistive equipment like wheelchairs, Braille slates, sandpapers, and other special resources (Bogen et al., 2019). Besides the special tools, hands-on materials and facilities (e.g., manipulatives and playground) increase the efficiency and quality of teaching. The absence of teaching resources results in learning that is delivered in dry abstract manners (Hanover Research, 2018). Furthermore, technological aid supports students with SEND to evolve social and communication skills. Technology is one of the affordable and sustainable materials to teach literacy. Technology tools like iPad, audiotapes, smart boards, projectors, computers, etc promote literacy through engaging approaches that involve different stimuli, such as auditoria and visual games (Okongo et al., 2015).

#### 2.4.5 Classroom Environment

The physical environment is important for conducting better learning experiences; it affects students' level of engagement and ability to learn (icommunicate, 2015). The elements that contribute to enhancing the classroom environment for students with SEND include (Okongo et al., 2015):

- Furniture and settings: desks, chairs, and other physical equipment should be organized with sufficient space for flexible mobility.
- Organization: less exposed materials help the children to control their concentration span, especially students with SEND who struggle in keeping their focus on tasks.
- Class decoration: exaggerated decorating of the walls can be overwhelming for students with SEND, bright colors and pop-ups can disrupt their concentration.
- Sensory triggers: temperature, sounds, and lights level should be adjusted to avoid distraction because students with SEND might be sensitive to some sensory issues.

## 2.5 Supporting Teachers to Approach Students with SEND

Teachers' knowledge and experience determine the effectiveness of teaching. Literature has suggested that teachers who acknowledge various teaching strategies and utilize a wide range of resources are more capable of handling students' struggles and needs (Alkahtani et al., 2016). When teachers are trained and capable of applying differentiated instructions, they tend to use them more often to approach each child in the class (Bogen et al., 2020). Teaching students with SEND could result in teachers adopting inconsistent teaching routines due to the differences between students, although they could be diagnosed with the same disability.

This uncertainty could be handled by providing ongoing training to the staff; the absence of updated information influences the teaching's efficiency negatively (Tomlinson et al., 2003). A 2020 study conducted in seven public schools in New York aimed to investigate the impact of training on teachers' ability to apply differentiated strategies in the classroom. The study examined teachers' comfort levels with five strategies, which are developing a curriculum plan for each student, plan for daily lessons, ability to address various learning styles, differentiating instruction based on students' readiness, and enriching the learning environment with appropriate materials. The results showed that the teachers who received training in these five competencies are more confident to apply them in the classroom (Bogen et al., 2020). Teachers' training should be taken seriously by the leadership because untrained staff could cause issues like implementing limited instructional approaches,

difficulty to establish a proper classroom routine, and using traditional teaching methods that tend to be teacher-centered (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Teaching students with SEND involves other stakeholders in the process such as speech and occupational therapists, parents, SENCOs, and other specialists, which shows that teaching such students is a dynamic complicated process. A SEND teacher is required to communicate and coordinate with all the stakeholders to achieve positive results, therefore teachers need to be well trained because a knowledgeable teacher has a high level of self-efficacy (Alkahtani et al., 2016).

Training teachers do not only impact their practices in the classroom, it also affects the way they proceed with their students. Studies show that knowledgeable and experienced teachers tend to develop positive attitudes toward their students' abilities, while others empathized with their students and lower their expectations for what the students could do (Crispel & Kasperski, 2019). Furthermore, teaching students with SEND demands a variety of resources, equipment, and technology to maintain a high level of engagement and support their different learning styles. Entering a class without proper teaching materials indicates that the teacher is not supplied with enough resources such as textbooks, manipulatives, flashcards and other items. The literature revealed that teachers get demotivated when the class lacks advanced resources such as TVs and smart boards due to poor budgets (Alexander, 2014).

The classroom situation is different when it comes to hosting students with SEND because they need irregular furniture that supports their mobility and sensory needs, and lower the risk of injury and accidents. Fernandez clearly stated that classroom materials and resources represent an important component in the overall educational process (2014). The fact that the unavailability of resources impacts the teaching effectiveness leads to the idea that the socio-economic status of the school or center also determines the quality of teaching students with SEND (Alexander, 2014). Besides the teaching resources, a poor classroom environment could also cause a threat for students with SEND; for example, there are students with autism who are sensitive to high tones, thus the classroom should be

soundproof for better practices (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015). Studies identified that the resources are not the only thing teachers need in the classroom, many teachers reported the absence of shadow teachers, which results in the teachers being overloaded. They justified the need for trained shadow teachers by the high level of severity; they detected that some children have a severe or profound level of disability, which makes them more dependent on the teacher (Alexander, 2014). Mainly, removing the obstacles that teachers face when teaching students with SEND raises the level of motivation and narrows their concentration on the child's development rather than filling in the hiatus and consuming time and energy (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015).

## 2.6 Parents' Involvement and Perceptions

Achieving the progression of students with SEND relies on the partnership between the school/center and the caregivers which are usually the parents. The responsibility for the child's development is not only associated with educators, it is a mutual plan with parents as well. Parents have a lifelong commitment to their children, which makes their influence major on the children, unlike the teachers who impact the academic life only (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Studies on parental roles conducted by Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Janson, and Voorhis to investigate major factors that shape the parenting and determine its impact on the students revealed six factors as follows (2002):

1. Parenting: creating a safe environment and providing nutrition, health, and other daily services.
2. Communication: building bonds with school/ center through attending regular events, reporting issues, and maintaining communication through emails, calls, messages, meetings, amongst others.
3. Volunteering: attending school conferences/meetings and getting involved in classrooms visits with their children.
4. Learning at home: Exploring educational insights and reviewing lessons get the parents to know more about their children's needs.
5. Decision-making: contributing to making decisions that affect their children's social and educational life.



6. Cooperating with the community: Getting along with educators and communicating frequently with the administrators helps the parents approach their children effectively.

Studies advocated the need for family support to keep the development process consistent with students with SEND. Parents who build a strong relationship with their child's school/center influence the success of their children (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). However, expectations are not always in line with reality, many parents struggle with their schedules, finance, responsibilities, and other unpredictable circumstances. Parents' busy lives are not the only obstacle, their overwhelming concerns about their child with SEND affects their decisions as well. When it comes to deciding to move their child from a rehabilitation center to a mainstream school, parents struggle with concerns. They fear bullying, stigmatization, deprivation, and rejection toward their children with SEND (Sharma, 2019).

Although many studies recorded parents' excitement and optimization for moving their children to typical schools, they are still parents refuse due to factors like class size, their children's level of severity, and lack of confidence in their children's ability to fit in the school community (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Interesting results were found by Sharma in a recent study in Bangkok, which involved 71 parents to identify their attitudes toward inclusion. The general theme of their answers was a lack of confidence in teachers' abilities to meet their children's unique needs (Sharma, 2019). In 2020, another study delivered in the UAE by Abdat to investigate parents' perceptions on transmitting their children from early intervention centers to the mainstream school revealed thematic answers which fall under the categories of blurring and stressful process (Abdat, 2020). Those results lead to an important fact which is parents need to be guided and trained to support their children.

Literature suggested that schools/centers that build a strong relationship with parents achieved successful progress and smoother decision-making (Goodrow, 2016). Furthermore, literature and studies covered important areas like teaching practices that support differentiation in general, discussing teachers' struggles when teaching students

with SEND, and making helpful points about the parents' attitudes toward inclusion. However, there are gaps found in the literature, which are first, unlinking teaching practices to their impact on the transition process. Second, lacking data about teachers' struggles when transmitting their students from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools. Third, recommendations do not provide suggested plans to make the transition process achievable. It is expected that studies on transition are limited because the inclusion policy itself is recent, and especially in the context of the UAE, this topic is still an unapproached area (Abdat, 2020). Therefore, this study relates differentiated teaching practices to their impact on transition, provides thick descriptive data on teachers' struggles during preparation for the transition and enriches the existing data about parents' perception of transition and inclusion.

## Chapter Three

### 3.0 Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

Previous studies on the transition of students with SEND from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools are limited and mostly rely on quantitative or mixed-methods approaches. For example, research conducted by Abdat in the UAE using a mixed-method approach discussed parents' perceptions of transmitting their children to inclusive settings (2020). This topic is an infrequent area of research. Therefore, it is hard to identify the feelings of parents and teachers toward the transition of students with SEND as it is a kind of mysterious topic. This study is based on a qualitative approach that investigates the reality of transmitting students with SEND from rehabilitation centers to inclusive educational settings from different dimensions. The qualitative approach is grounded on constructivism, where people acquire their knowledge through experiencing and interacting with their surroundings (Rahman, 2017). It advocates the multi-realities, which in this case elicited from parents and teachers.

When implementing a qualitative approach, data become enriched with feelings and thoughts informed by descriptive reports that transfer the reality to the readers (Heale & Forbes, 2013). In this study, triangulation was implemented to provide aggregated trustworthy data. The methods used are semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, focus-group, and document analysis. The use of multi-methods ensured confidence in data and provided in-depth insights. The aim of this study is not to provide data that could be generalized to the population of UAE but to discuss a right-based topic and demonstrate the thoughts of parents and teachers who know better about the transition of students with SEND.

#### 3.2 Research Approach and Design

This section demonstrated several important aspects of this research, which are study design, paradigm, and rationale. The research is a qualitative-based study which means it

investigates meanings, perceptions, and different realities in the chosen context (Rahman, 2017). Using a qualitative method to answer the research questions is most appropriate because it helps to explore insights and different opinions about the situation of transition. The topic of 'transition' has been addressed previously by other researchers in the UAE. However, none of the studies were purely descriptive in terms of teachers' and parents' opinions, besides the reality of classroom teaching practices. The grounded qualitative method is most effective to provide information about life experiences, feelings, and opinions, away from statistics and numerical data that could lack emotions and insights (Haradhan, 2018). Therefore, the researcher intended to provide a holistic view of the transition from several angles, which involve much of the participant's opinions and feelings.

Although the qualitative method is the best to provide thick descriptive information about the context the results could be hard to generalize over large populations (Rahman, 2017). However, hiatus could be covered by using the triangulation method. This refers to the use of more than two approaches to answering the research questions. It increases the trustworthiness of data and provides comprehensive information (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The qualitative approach is grounded on the constructivist paradigm, which identifies reality as a process of human experiences accumulated through social construction (Grand et al., 2017). The constructivist paradigm denies the singularity of reality or knowledge because humans obtain meanings through continuous social interactions (Adom et al., 2016). Therefore, the qualitative method is the appropriate approach to answer the research questions and provide reality about the 'transition' topic as it is not frequently searched or studied by scholars. The study went through a series of stages to collect data starting from collecting official documents and conducting observations, focus-group, and interviews to analyzing the data (details explained in section 3.6).

### 3.3 Site Selection

The selection was based on the pool of federal centers that apply the national policy of empowering people with determination. The centers that belong to the MOCD are from the

following emirates: Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Um Al Quwain, and Ajman, while both Sharjah and Abu Dhabi are under the supervision of local authorities (MOCD, 2021) (See Table 1).

	Center location	No. of students
1	Dubai	59
2	Dubai	185
3	Ajman	110
4	Um Al Qiwain	81
5	Ras Al Khaimah	188
6	Fujairah	20
7	Fujairah	56

Table 1- the pool of site selection

The researcher used purposive sampling to select the location considering two criteria: first, a large number of students, second diverse disabilities (See Appendix 1), and third accessibility to the site. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects deliberately based on criteria that help the researcher answer the research questions (Bhardwaj, 2019). The chosen site is one of the centers in Dubai that is best to represent the other federal centers due to the diverse number of students with SEND that attend the facility. The researcher accessed the site as one of the faculty of the MOCD who knows much information about it. Before the data collection, the researcher communicated with the head of rehabilitation centers in the MOCD to request permission via email and included information about the research. The researcher has already developed trust with the department of rehabilitation centers in the MOCD through conducting previous studies, which eased the process.

### 3.4 Participants

The participants in the study were selected on two levels: 1) implementers (teachers), and 2) receptors (parents). The researcher had one criterion for choosing participants from amongst teachers, which was ‘any full-time classroom teacher’. The knowledge and experience were not considered because they do not associate with the research questions. There were no criteria to select the parents except for their willingness to take part in the study. The selection process started after submitting the letter of consent and receiving the acceptance from the administration (See Appendix 2).

The researcher had a meeting with the principal of the center to discuss the study and explain the aim, purposes, and research questions clearly to her. The researcher took notes during the meeting to make sure all the comments given by the principal were considered. The researcher also explained the criteria for selecting participants and was open to a decision made by her. She gave the researcher the freedom to choose from 51 employees in the center and made sure that the social worker would communicate with the parents to explain the study’s purpose and give a list of participants. Therefore, the researcher implemented convenience sampling to select the participants from the available pool.

Convenience sampling is a method to select participants who are ready at the time of the study and are willing to contribute (Etikan et al., 2015). Convenience sampling offers easy accessibility and saves time as the researcher can pick ready participants only (Stratton, 2021). It was most appropriate for this study because the researcher considered the parent's busy lifestyle and the full schedules of the teachers as well. The researcher avoided rushing or demanding any participants. Thus, convenience sampling worked well for the selection process. The total participants were 29 with 10 parents and 19 teachers ( See Table 2).

	Parents	Teachers	Observations
No.	10	15	4

Table 2- Number of participants

The participants were diverse with different genders, group-age, backgrounds, and nationalities.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics were adopted throughout the process of conducting the study; the researcher started by submitting the ethics code of conducting research to the British University in Dubai (BUID) to obtain a letter of consent and proceed with the data collection (See Appendix 2). The researcher considered the participants' preference for contribution and informed them that they could withdraw from the study without any pressure or demands from the researcher. It is the scholar's responsibility to take care of the participant's well-being and rights to maintain morals and respect throughout the process (Parveen & Showkat, 2017). The timetable for interviews, observations, and focus groups was created based on the participants' schedules and preferences.

The center (social workers) was responsible to associate with the parents and explain to them the study. Earlier the researcher prepared a text message with information about the study (purposes, questions, and so on) and gave it to the social workers to send to the parents. Furthermore, before proceeding with observations and focus groups, teachers received a text message with details of the study. All the participants were informed about the voluntary nature of the study as there was no payoff for participating. Furthermore, teachers were informed that the researcher does not represent a management or inspection role. All the names of participants are anonymous instead, the researcher used pseudonyms.

### 3.6 Data Collection Methods

The fieldwork involved data collection on a daily basis. The research instruments were designed immediately after receiving permission from the MOCD and the center's administration. The instruments (interview questions and observation sheet) were carefully structured based on the research questions and influenced by other published papers from UAE-based researchers (Abdat, 2020; Alborno, 2013) who conducted similar studies in the field of inclusion. During the period of data-gathering, the researcher conducted daily interviews, four daily lesson observations, and two focus groups meetings.

### 3.6.1 Non-participant Observations

The observations were used to answer the research question about teaching practices that support students with SEND in their inclusion process. Observation aims to collect data and proof of daily teaching practices in the classroom of the rehabilitation center. Non-participant observation is a method employed to study specific contexts, the interaction between participants, and increase the understanding of the environment without any interruption or presence of activities from the observer (Eld et al., 2020). It is frequently used in qualitative research because it helps the scholar identify experiences, impressions, and reality within the practical field (Cooper et al., 2004).

All the observations were live and none were recorded, therefore the researcher took notes and pictures when allowed to increase the confidentiality of the data. The researcher was sitting at the back of the classroom using a laptop to write evidence, comments, and impressions. The researcher used an observation sheet to guide the process, which was informed by other researchers who studied similar topics (Alborno, 2013; Chapman & King, 2006) (See Appendix 3). The researcher modified the observation sheet into six categories (See Appendix 4):

1. Planning for learning
2. Class management
3. Instructional strategies (student-centered)
4. Resources & technology
5. Assessments
6. Class environment

The researcher observed a total of four classes with four different teachers.

### 3.6.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The study also investigates parents' perceptions of transition from four aspects:

1. Preference: their willingness to choose rehabilitation centers or mainstream schools for their children with SEND.



2. Barriers: obstacles they face when transmitting the students to inclusive settings.
3. Concerns: thoughts and feelings about transition and inclusion in total.
4. Assumption and aptitudes on inclusion settings.

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative method, that allows the researcher to collect information based on pre-identified themes (Adams, 2015). Unlike structured interviews, it is a flexible approach with some prepared questions and unexpected conversations between the researcher and the participants to allow more informative data to emerge (Oxfam International, 2019). It was most appropriate to use semi-structured interviews to answer the research question as it allowed the researcher to pre-set topics.

The researcher prepared open-ended questions to give a wide range of answers and express feelings/emotions (Adams, 2015). The researcher wrote the interview questions by referring to a previous study conducted by an author who investigated parents' perspectives on transition in the UAE (Abdat, 2020). The researcher wrote the questions before collecting data and prepared prompts and probes to be ready to guide the conversation and not drift away from the main topic. The table below contains a sample of questions, while the full version is in Appendix 5.

What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?
If you have the choice would transfer you your child to a mainstream school and why?
Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?
What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?
Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?

Table 3- sample from the interview's questions

The interviews took place one parent at a time (a total of ten) through the online video call app 'Zoom' considering the parents' busy schedules. All meetings were recorded with pre-permission to be reviewed later. Each meeting took between 10 to 15 minutes.

### 3.6.3 Official Documents Analysis

The documents were collected to support the analysis of teaching practices in the classroom from two aspects: 1) assessments, and 2) planning for learning. Document analysis is a systematic process to acquire meanings, insights, and knowledge from stored documentation relevant to a specific situation (Bowen, 2009). It is an approach used along with other qualitative instruments as a triangulation and enhancement of trustworthiness (Armstrong, 2017). The researcher requested documents, such as IEPs, weekly/daily plans, and diagnostic/formative/summative assessments. The researcher scanned all the provided documents and stored the soft copies in a hard drive as confidential data.

### 3.6.4 Focus Group

The study investigated the challenges teachers face when preparing their students for inclusion during the transition phase. The researcher concentrated on three themes for the challenges: 1) a clear transition path/ plan (including a curriculum), 2) sufficient teacher training 3) resources/technology. The focus-group method is a qualitative instrument based on a group interview with selective participants who get involved in discussions to provide in-depth information (Freitas et al., 2020). The researcher acted as a facilitator during the interview choosing a topic and mentoring the discussion. One of the main advantages of a focus group is that the participants influence each other to brainstorm ideas and information (Morgan, 2013). The participants were all class teachers with full-time schedules with diverse age-group, backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge.

The researcher conducted two focus-group meetings, the first one gather seven students while the other eight. The researcher wrote the interview questions earlier by reviewing other studies that discussed teachers' challenges with inclusion (Alborno, 2013). All the questions were open-ended to allow the participants to express their feelings and emotions toward their issues and challenges. The researcher also prepared promotes and probes to guide and track the unexpected side discussions as well. The table below shows part of the question in each of them, while the full version is included in the Appendix 6.

If you have a student with a moderate mental disability. What is the first step you take to start the transition process? Who determines if the study should be moved to mainstream school?
Describe the steps that you put together and implemented to support your students to move to mainstream school?
Which IEP, curriculum, transition plan do you use to achieve successful transition and why?
What strategies do you incorporate to apply the transition plan?
What are your challenges with the IEP/ curriculum/ and transition plan?

Table 4- sample from the interview's questions

The interviews took place in the meeting room of the center at a time when all the participants were free and comfortable. The researcher recorded the meetings using the 'voice-memo' app on iPhone and saved them on a hard disk to ensure confidentiality. Notes were also taken to record important points and ideas during the interviews.

### 3.7 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a procedure that consists of attempts to test the validity and weakness of the research method instruments; it also helps the researcher to modify and correct the tools before the actual process takes place (DŹWIGOŁ, 2020). Applying a pilot study could benefit the researcher in different aspects, such as saving time, enhancing interview

questions, and increasing confidence (In, 2017). The pilot study was conducted in the same center with non-participants (a teacher and a parent). The researcher recorded the interviews for revision purposes. The participants were asked to give their opinions about clarity and relevance to the topic. For example, the teacher commented on few questions as it was not clear enough for her. Therefore, the researcher edited the questions to narrow down the purpose and made it clear. The pilot study was crucial to increasing the validity of the interview questions.

### 3.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was carried on through the study by implementing triangulation and a pilot study. The triangulation was used by applying four qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, non-participant observations, and a focus-group.

Triangulation is crucial to support evidence and present the data from different angles. Thus the reader could have the chance to evaluate the results (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The pilot study was implemented to decrease the errors in instruments and avoid hesitations that could affect the flow of interviews. Furthermore, the researcher referred to the participants to ensure that their answers were recorded and written as said and made changes when needed.

Therefore, trustworthiness plays an equal role in reliability and validity in naturalistic work such as qualitative studies. It provides a truthful perspective of the context and increases credibility (Stahl & King, 2020). Furthermore, one of the researcher's roles was to clarify all the study's objectives and make sure no participant was forced to carry on meetings or observations. She also clarified that her role was studying the context corresponding with research questions without any change or evaluating the current situation in the center.

### 3.9 Methodological Challenges

Several challenges occurred during the procedure of selection. First, the pool of federal rehabilitation centers was limited, considering the number of students in each center made it narrow to few choices. Second, some of the teachers felt uncomfortable opening up and

talking about their challenges at the beginning of the group interview, which went smoother a few minutes later. Third, some parents had limited information about inclusive inclusion as they enrolled their children with SEND in rehabilitation centers from the beginning thus they have not thought about other options.

### 3.10 Analysis of Data

After collecting data, the researcher started analyzing the data using a thematic analysis approach. This is a flexible method that organizes data to present thick descriptive information, thoughts, and emotions (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The process for data analysis included three stages: 1) reading/reviewing data, 2) identifying codes, and 3) producing themes. The research consisted of three questions, each one of them got separate themes to answer.

## Chapter Four

### 4.0 Findings

#### 4.1 Introduction

The collected data were organized and analyzed to answer the research questions. The data from observations were presented in an organized structure to provide details and insights into the teaching practices in the classrooms. The gathered data from parents' interviews and teachers' meetings were processed to identify common ideas and board themes.

Thematic analysis is a flexible strategy that is best for highlighting thoughts and experiences across participants' answers (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The findings of observations revealed a variety of practices used by different teachers in the classrooms. The practices reflected the unique nature of students with SEND and the impact of their needs on the adjustments. Teaching students with SEND requires the educators to provide reasonable and altered content and support, especially modifying their teaching strategies, including all other factors like the environment, management and so on. (Losert, 2010). However, results showed hiatuses in approaching each child individually and the flexibility of the curriculum to provide suitable learning objectives for both high and low-functioning students.

Teachers, as implementers, reflected on several challenges they face while taking the process of preparing their students for social/educational inclusion. Reducing the barriers increases the potential and self-efficacy of teachers and results positively in the students' development (Cook & Ogden, 2021). They reported challenges with lack of training, smart devices, teacher-assistants, flexible curriculums, and other things that impacted the teaching process of their students. Furthermore, parents had their own points of view on including their children in inclusive settings. Parents and caregivers are considered decision-makers with high-level effects on their children's lives. Their level of involvement, knowledge, and beliefs could shape their children's future socially and academically (Oranga et al., 2022). Parents expressed their feelings and thoughts about inclusion as a confusing complicated option and a positive future for their children if it is possible.

## 4.2 Teaching Practices to Prepare Students for Transition (research question 1)

The researcher attended four sessions with different teachers, and students ranged from four to five in each class. The researcher observed and took notes at the same time (Appendix 7-10). The observation sheet narrowed the focus from six angles that are: class environment, class management, instructional strategies, resources and technology, assessments, and planning for learning.

### 4.2.1 Class Environment

The class environment prepares and motivates the students with SEND for learning; a welcoming convenient setting enables their development (Chidindi, 2012). In the four classrooms, furniture was varied based on the students' characteristics (age, size, and severity level). The classrooms consisted of customized tables that suit their unique needs, some were fixed as individual settings and others as groups. In all classes, tables were not flexible to change the style of teaching (group/individual), which makes the settings predictable for the students but that could be also challenging when it comes to flexibility and creativity in the class (See figure 3, A & B ).

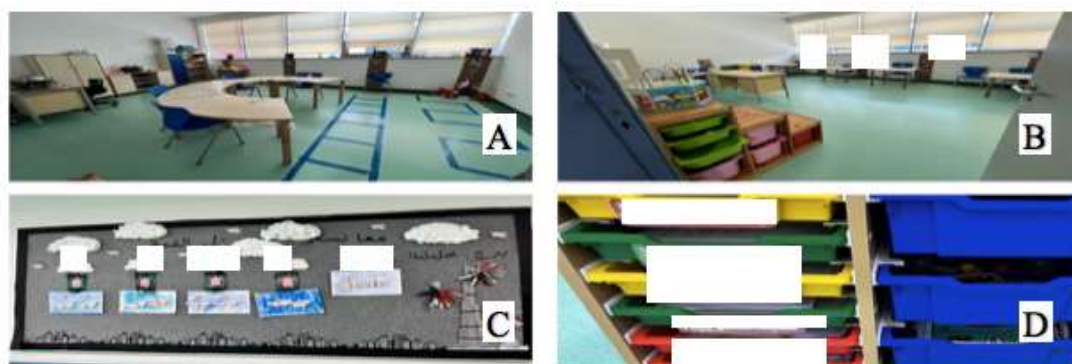


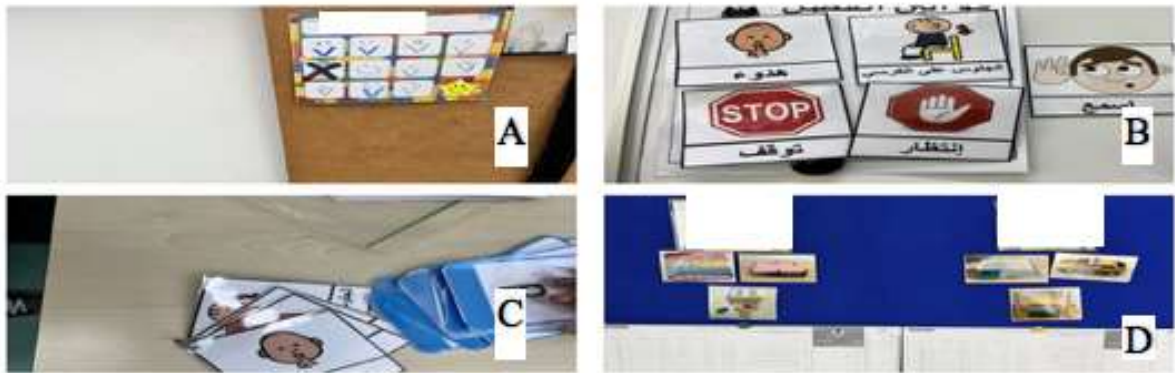
Figure 3- class environment

All the classrooms contained shelves and cabinets to organize special resources like toys, books, and other materials, also each student had a drawer to save his/her classwork in it. It is important to create an environment that is safe for students with SEND and reduce the

distraction around them (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) (See figure 3, D). All the students' work was presented on the display outside the classroom close to the door. Worksheets and pictures were up to date and decorations were showing the landmarks of the city as a theme for the whole department (See figure 3, C).

#### 4.2.2 Class Management

The classroom rules were displayed on all boards of the classrooms, and one of the teachers had them in flash cards to remind the (non-verbal) students of the rules while they were on task. The rules were displayed visually, but two teachers began their lessons by repeating rules verbally to students (See figure 4, C & B).



The rewarding systems were different in each class, they included strategies like earning points for gifts and reinforcements based on students' preferences (e.g., Ahmed likes cars) for students with lower cognitive abilities (See figure 4, A & D). The routines and timetables were presented as the visual schedule for each student, where they had all the classes and activities displayed as pictures (See figure 5, B). The negative behaviors were eliminated by three methods: taking-off points, adding unpreferred tasks and sitting in the (X) corner to reflect on their attitudes. Teachers used those methods when students presented unwanted behaviors like screaming and throwing things (See figure 5, A).



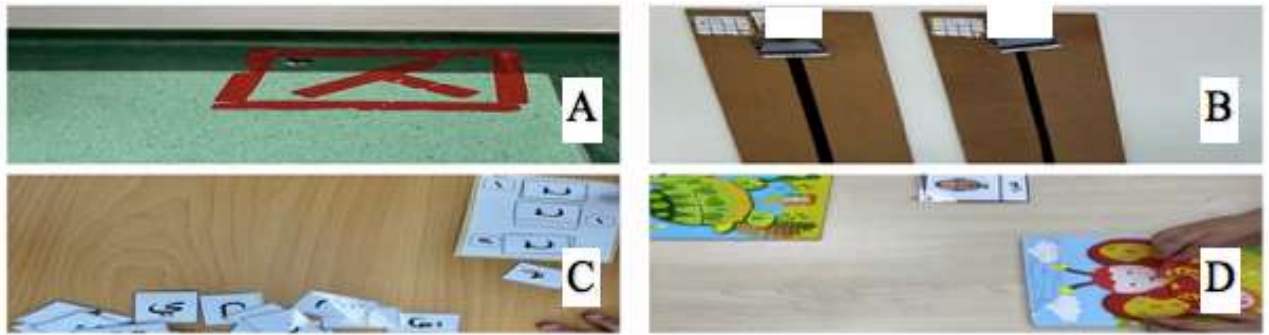


Figure 5- Class management

None of the teachers adapted the emotion charts or strategy, however, all the students were under the umbrella of speech delay. It is important to teach students with SEND to express their emotions through visual tools because it helps them grow social clues, such as understanding facial expression, body language, and vocal tones (Daou & Hady, 2016).

#### 4.2.3 Instructional Strategies

Three out of four sessions were delivered on a one-to-one basis, the teacher sat with one child while other students had tasks to do based on their learning objectives. Only one of the lessons was a group session; it was designed with phases, starting with introducing the topic (video, guessing game), followed by a hands-on activity, and ended by exist ticket (one question). In three out of four sessions, the teacher was sitting with one student only to teach him/her individually a new skill from the IEP while other students worked on familiar tasks as practice. The teachers were asked about their teaching methods during the focus-group meeting and more explanation in section (4.2). Only in one of the classes did the teacher have a teacher-assistant to follow up with other students while she was focusing on only one.

#### 4.2.4 Resources and Technology

The four classrooms were filled with resources like toys, flashcards, books, hands-on materials and so on. All the materials were made to suit the students' IEPs and most of them were sustainable (e.g., laminated) (See figure 6, C & D).

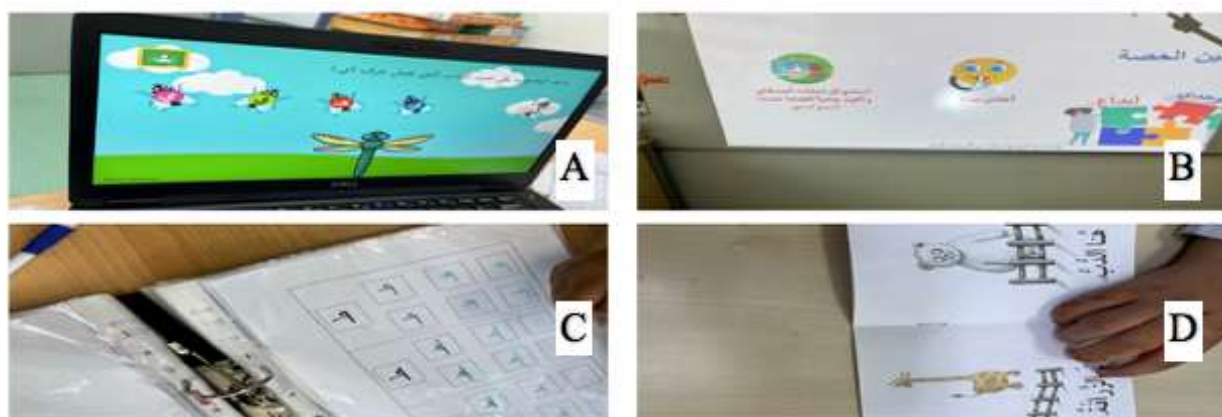


Figure 6- Resources and materials

Technology was incorporated in two classes only. In the first one, the teacher used her laptop to present an online game for one student only. There were no sufficient laptops for the students, however, they would be suitable for their levels because all of them were able to talk, read, and write (in Arabic) (See figure 6, A). The second class was conducted using a projector device, the content was organized in slides and displayed on the board. All the students had the chance to participate in online activities (See figure 6, B). It is important to teach students with SEND by incorporating technology because nowadays children from early ages get exposed to smart devices, therefore teaching them how to use them for communication and practice academic skills could boost their progression (Siyam, 2018).

#### 4.2.5 Assessments

The assessment evidence was collected from official documents and the samples were obtained from the teachers. However, for the formative assessment, all the teachers used the questioning method at the beginning of the session to determine students' understanding of the LOs. For the diagnostic assessments, all the teachers used the spreadsheet of their official curriculum ABLLS translated into Arabic (See Appendix 11). It is an assessment of basic language and learning skills (ABLLS) used to address the needs of children with speech and developmental delays (Doehring et al., 2008). Besides the curriculum, the teachers use a spreadsheet as a tool to figure out the next milestone for the student (See figure 7).

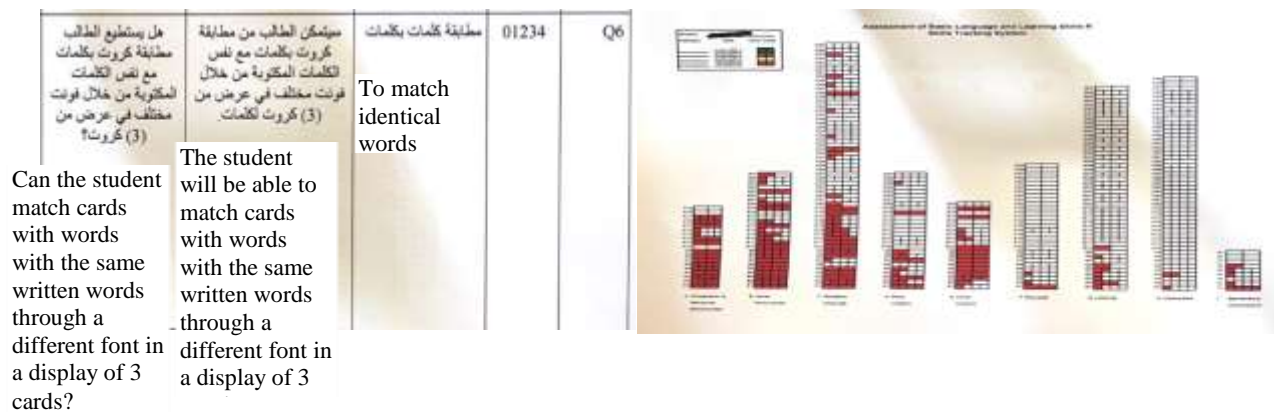


Figure 7- ABLLS curriculum and diagnostic test

Based on that assessment, the LOs are determined. The assessment tool does not provide a clear description of the student's social and emotional needs besides the developmental milestones. It just offers suggested LOs based on the child's performance in a given task. When teachers were asked about the summative assessment tool that they used to assess students' progress at the end of term, they reported that there are no official tools for post-assessments. The poor assessment system affects the learning quality and efficiency of the IEP.

#### 4.2.6 Planning for Learning

Based on the diagnostic assessment, teachers prepared the IEPs and had the goals displayed on the board (See appendix 11). In one of the observed sessions, the lesson contained learning objectives that were not following the IEPs of the students. It was an Islamic session about 'Allah', which means God in Arabic. The lesson was randomly added to the plan and elicited from the MOE Islamic curriculum. There was inconsistency in the source of LOs or curriculum, which also could affect the students' progress because of receiving inappropriate educational content to their level of disability. That lesson about 'Allah' was not suitable to teach children with a developmental disability as they struggle in processing abstract concepts.

### 4.3 Teachers' Challenges when Preparing Students with SEND for Inclusion (research question 2)

The researcher conducted two focus-group meetings with a total of fifteen teachers (the first one consisted of 8 and the second was 7) (See appendix 12 -13). The researcher started by introducing the topic and purposes of the study to make sure all the participants were prepared for the questions. The researcher took notes using a laptop and the conversations were recorded for review. The researcher asked the teachers to answer each question separately after discussing it to keep the meeting organized and avoid getting out of topic.

#### 4.3.1 Curriculum's Hiatus

The teachers reported difficulties when dealing with curriculums. They agreed that students with SEND have different characteristics and needs although they could be at the same age and diagnosed with the same disability. Therefore, they struggled with identifying learning objectives for high-functioning students as their official curriculum could be lower than their abilities “*...if the student already finished the ABLLS curriculum and then what is next, what curriculum will I teach him?*”. The same respondent noted that with quite severe cases the curriculum could exceed their abilities “*...don't give me options ... there are goals that are too big for severe students*”. Furthermore, most of the teachers faced the problem when preparing students to join schools as they should teach them similar LOs to the MOE's curriculum “*we used to use only an IEP then we added the MOE curriculum but again the banded external curriculums*”.

However, according to the new rules in the center, all the external curriculums were banded which left the teachers with an inflexible situation to fulfill the students' needs “*I take the learning objective from different curriculums but that was before now it is banded .... I don't have a good curriculum for inclusion preparation*”. Other teachers stated that schools have high academic standards which could not be possible to teach students with SEND “*I feel difficult to cover all areas of the goal I might miss out other things*”. Those learning objectives could overcomplicate the process because teachers had to teach students basic skills (e.g., social interaction) besides introducing them to the academic content “*I will teach the child the skills he needs... because I want him to be able to talk with other students and teachers in the school*”.

#### 4.3.2 Compensate Inadequacy

Teachers were asked about textbooks and curriculums to teach students academic subjects (e.g., math). All the sources were not official; they all agreed that they had to search from external sources: *“I searched for books from people I know .... I was wondering in which grade level he will be?”*. They were also asked about the role of their SENCO, and they reported that they do not receive help in planning IEPs/curriculum except for regular follow-ups. One of the teachers expressed the need for a professional expert team *“I can’t find an expert teacher or SENCO who has more knowledge than me .... there is no competent person to refer to, I need feedback on my teaching”*.

All the teachers agreed on the importance of individualized teaching, and when they were asked about a shadow-teacher, only three had one. They compensated for the absence of shadow teachers by either group teaching when possible or giving students familiar tasks while they worked individually with one student on a new task *“it is really difficult, but I try to manage, I give them things to keep them busy while working with other students”*. Teachers also were asked about the resources and smart devices in their classrooms, they only have their personal laptops with one iPad, and they received a sharable room with one smartboard. They expressed their need to have smart devices in their classrooms for daily use *“I felt now technology is very important because during Covid-19 they learned a lot through online games”*. Furthermore, teachers were overwhelmed with providing resources; they said in the absence of materials they use basic tools in the classroom, and they were aware of the consequences on students’ learning *“... I use whatever available basic things”*. Additionally, they reported insufficient training because the workshops are conducted by other teachers and therapists in the center without official certificates or licenses *“only workshops and not all of them are beneficial for us...the workshops are from other teachers and specialists in the centers, no external people”*.

#### 4.3.3 Parents and Team Cooperation

Teachers were well aware of the role of parents and their impact on the child's development "*I would cooperate with his mother to develop his social and academic skills because as you know our work in the center alone is not enough*". Several teachers complained about parents' motivation to support their children "*some parents...I find it difficult to engage them they are hopeless about their children because they are disabled*". Furthermore, other teachers explained parents' perspectives on inclusion and that their preferences could limit them "*I discuss the mother's preference if she will put him in private school or government school*" and based on parents' decisions following procedures would take place. Teachers also struggled to identify decision-makers for moving students to mainstream schools. They expressed the difficulty of taking a decision and the need for team cooperation "*...to be honest, I don't have clear steps but logically I will communicate with a supervisor*". In contrast some teachers complained about parents rushing their children for inclusion, "*Some parents rush their children to go for schools although they are not ready for inclusion*". Teachers emphasized considering students' abilities and limitations.

#### 4.3.4 Disability and Level of Severity

Teachers had students with different disabilities (e.g., autism, down syndrome, and so on) within their classrooms; students had different cognitive levels. Consequently, most teachers highlighted the need of providing an individualized learning experience in their new schools "*...individual teaching is very important because students have different levels and sometimes it hurts them to comment on their work in front of other children*". Another challenge is students' independency level. The teachers said their students have the privilege of care and protection, which is unavailable in regular schools "*...I will recommend a shadow teacher because generally the students we have are not as independent as other students in the normal schools*". The complexity of disability was also determined as a barrier because the students' health conditions limit their capacity to learn "*...it might take time because of his disability also many students have more than disability*". Teachers also pointed out the student's intrinsic motivation to learn and the

negative impact of high expectations on them “...everything should be easy for them, so they are motivated to learn”.

#### 4.3.5 Disconnection between Rehabilitation Centers and Schools

The successful transition of students with SEND to inclusive schools is associated with the school's standards and administrative process. Teachers explained that each school has its requirements but government schools have high speech and communication standards “...it is really hard to fit the standards of the MOE, and even though they did not give us a plan or curriculum”. The fact that schools' curricula could differ from one to another causes a concern to teachers, “curriculum must be based on the school and IEP to make it better for the students”; they struggle with content that should teach to the students. With a lack of communication with schools, it is not possible to get information about their curriculum. The teachers also expressed their wishes to get gradual inclusion for their students “I prefer if the inclusion is on levels for example at the beginning the students go for some visits to be able to socialize with other teachers and students and based on the teachers' reflection...I will provide support for him...” which is also unavailable. Moreover, those teachers in the schools do not have enough information about the needs of the transferred student, “...teachers there must be ready and get to know him...” and because of the poor communication between teachers that could cause delay.

#### 4.4 Parents Perceptions of Including their Children in Mainstream Schools (research question 3)

The researcher met ten parents via Zoom to ask them questions about their thoughts/ideas of inclusion. The researcher took notes and recorded the meeting for review (See appendix 14- 23 ).

##### 4.4.1 Challenges of Schools' Enrollment

Many parents previously tried to enroll their children into private and public mainstream schools. They reported difficulty with the complicated transition process “the

*administration asked us to bring a letter from the ministry .... the letter of acceptance took time and was hard to get from the ministry, so I gave up*". The documents and permission letters were not the only barriers; some schools rejected to enroll the students without a shadow teacher "*I felt it too hard because they requested me to provide a shadow teacher, and I could not find a professional place that provides trusted shadow teacher*", which can be overwhelming for the parents. The parents' economic status could also limit their child's opportunities "*...I can't pay for the fees of the private schools, it is too expensive, more than 60,000 AED a year*"; many schools cost more to offer special education for the child. Furthermore, parents expressed their confusion regarding the decision making "*...the speech therapist suggested to me to put my child in a normal school. But I cannot choose, I prefer that the teachers suggest the inclusion*". Other parents preferred gradual inclusion "*...I wish they try even if it is for one week*", because they wanted to test their children's abilities to fit in the new schools.

#### 4.4.2 Gaps in Services between Rehabilitation Centers and Mainstream Schools

Parents were satisfied with the services provided by the rehabilitation center, as they believed that their children would not have them in a regular school, "*...he has therapies like occupational and speech therapy, but in schools, he will not get these therapies, so that will be difficult for him*". They feared losing the services, which could affect the children's development, and it was difficult for parents to compromise on them. They also were worried about the parental support and communication between them and teachers in the school, "*I felt that I needed support more than my child because I needed to learn how to deal with him*". It is less likely to receive parental training in mainstream schools.

The teachers' unreadiness was a major concern for the parents; a mother expressed her unpleasant experience with inclusion, "*the teacher did not pay any attention to him, he was always alone. The teachers were inexperienced; they did not know how to deal with my child*". Others struggled with trusting teachers' capacity to address their children needs. They justified their concerns with the difference between the number of students in the



center and the school's classrooms, *"she will never learn in a normal class with 30 or 25 students in one class"*. They believed that the gap between the center and school is huge.

#### 4.4.3 Safety and Expected Threats

Parents were expecting their children to face many risks in school. They feared that their children will be condescended to, *"...from my experience in the mall some children they stay away from my daughter even though she doesn't look ugly or scary"*. They blamed the society for not accepting people with disabilities, *"I wish they provide awareness for the students about children with disabilities so in the future there will be no bullying"*. Besides that, they considered abuse and bullying as expected situations for their children, *"I am too afraid from the sexual harassment or abuse he will not be able to tell me about it"*. They explained that their children have weak self-expression, and in the absence of a caregiver, other students could take advantage of them, *"he must know how to define himself because he used to suffer from other children taking his stuff and food"*. They had low trust in schools' safety and its impact on their children.

#### 4.4.4 Disability and Complicated Needs

All parents agreed that children's progression determines their decision for inclusion, *"...yes I will accept the inclusion in one case if I felt that my child was ready for inclusion...my child has limited abilities I don't want him to suffer"*. They stated that their children have weak social/speech and self-care skills (e.g., toileting) which made them delay the inclusion, *"...actually the disability of my child is hard to teach...I wished for something that she gets rid of the diaper and go to the toilet normally"*. Another complicated side of their disabilities was challenging behaviors like hyperactivity, impulsivity, and repetitive behaviors, *"...also she is not patient if the lesson is 30 minutes she will sit only 10 minutes then she will start to move or talk"*. The parents doubted the teachers' knowledge about their children's disability and its needs, *"he is autistic, and he can't join with normal kids that's the problem he is so different, it is difficult"*. Other parents were overwhelmed by the fact that their children were diagnosed with multiple disabilities (e.g., cerebral palsy and autism).

#### 4.4.5 Aspirations and Concerns about the Future

Parents expressed their concerns about their children's future and explained the consequences of keeping their children in rehabilitation centers, "...*they get affected by other disabled students and start imitating them, he will get worse*". They believed children's progress could stop at some point, because of the isolation. Furthermore, they worried about their adult life, "...*she will be 18 years soon, I am worried about her future I don't want her to be isolated or sitting in the home do nothing*". In contrast, they had positive thoughts about the future of inclusion because they believed their children could be integrated into the community, "...*I hope she will become part of the community maybe she will be able to work and be productive for herself and the community*". One of the parents expressed her feelings and worry when she said "*after 15 years my hope, my wish is if he will be improving a lot maybe he will be changed and become a normal boy (cried)*". The researcher had to stop the interview for her convenience, but obviously, their children's future is a cause of major anxiety.

After interviewing teachers and parents, the researcher got the feeling that inclusion is not considered as a possible option and started to wonder, what is the purpose of rehabilitation centers if it is not preparation for social/educational inclusion. She felt that when it comes to people with disabilities nobody wants to initiate change or take a big decision.

## Chapter five

### 5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

#### 5.1 Research Question One

The classroom environment has a significant impact on children's learning abilities. The four classrooms observed provided a safe, organized, and less destructive environment. All the decorations and classwork were put outside the classroom so they would not distract the students while they were learning. Students spend long periods in the classroom during the day, so it should promote calm, safety, and motivation (KHDA, 2019). However, the seats were set up for either group or individual learning styles, which may limit their learning opportunities. Individual learning, for example, could limit their social interactions (Davies & Henderson, 2017). Several strategies (e.g., visual timetable) were used to keep students aware of daily practice and teach them to be independent (McMullen, 2018). Although some students were classified as having severe disabilities, following routines and rules may not be enough to eliminate undesirable behaviors (e.g., tantrums). They must consider behavioral therapies to improve their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills (Bekirogullari, 2018). Furthermore, because of their intellectual limitations, teaching students with SEND could be challenging. Therefore, teachers relied on active learning (e.g., learning through play) because students needed to interact with objects to process abstract concepts (e.g., addition) (UNICEF, 2018).

During classes, teachers worked with one student individually while the other students worked on their tasks. However, many of the observed students required support from their teachers to reach their objectives, which highlights the need for one-on-one sessions. The fact that each child has a unique IEP demonstrates the importance of providing level-appropriate assistance with special communication and customized strategies (Morris, 2001). The classrooms were stocked with a variety of materials that support the IEPs of the students. Teachers used hands-on materials (such as geometrical shapes) as well as other basic materials, such as worksheets and colors, to achieve variety in learning methods. This positive implication has a significant impact on students' progress because lessons should

be practical by incorporating less complex texts to keep students motivated (McMullen, 2018). Even though the lessons did not have any technology that let the students explore visual and auditory content, only one lesson used slides and online games along with other activities. Nowadays, technology is available to all children, and they can access online content regardless of their abilities. Studies show that students with SEND get better at reading and writing when they use multimedia (like gamification). This shows how motivation affects their progress (Hersh, 2020). Furthermore, it was discovered through an analysis of official documents involving assessments, curriculum, and IEPs that the implementation of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments is inadequate. The spreadsheet-based diagnostic assessments provided no descriptive information about the child's needs. It was simply a tool for selecting a set of learning objectives from a limited set of available options. Before developing the IEP or beginning the learning, it is critical to conduct a proper diagnostic test to ensure that the content or skills are level-appropriate (KHDA, 2019).

Formative assessment was only done through questioning, which could not be applied to all students, especially those with severe nonverbal disabilities. Furthermore, the teachers lacked summative tools to assess students' progress. Summative assessments are necessary to summarize student development and teaching quality (Galevska & Pesic, 2018). Moreover, the students' IEPs included initial data, team members, therapeutic services, and learning objectives. The IEP ensures that all teaching practices are based on the student's level and are tailored to his or her specific needs (KHDA, 2019). However, it lacked the integration of national curriculum learning objectives, which could delay preparation for the transition to mainstream schools (Morris, 2001).

## 5.2 Research Question Two

Teaching students with special needs and disabilities necessitates more than traditional curricula, and to prepare them for the inclusive phase, students may require a wide range of social, self-care, and communication skills. Teachers reported *"I use the IEP and I still feel the goals we use are very limited comparing to regular school also we are not allowed to*

*bring other curriculums so I feel confused*". National curricula that are regularly taught in the mainstream emphasize higher-level thinking skills, which could exceed the students' abilities. Although behavioral therapy alone is insufficient to compete with school standards, teachers reported limitations in the learning objectives and curricula they use when planning lessons. They struggled with access to other curricula as well as flexibility in terms of permission to use outside sources. Studies have demonstrated the positive influence of curriculum flexibility on teachers' self-efficacy and its effects on children's social and intellectual development (Lübke et al., 2021). UNESCO emphasized the importance of curriculum flexibility in meeting the needs of students with SEND (UNESCO, 2017). However, a wide range of options may challenge teachers when developing students' IEPs; being critical and selective for level-appropriate learning objectives necessitates knowledge and experience. They said *"When I plan for the students I do not get enough time to choose the right learning objectives for them"*. Teachers expressed their concerns about selecting appropriate learning objectives because they were overwhelmed by a large number of lessons in the mainstream curriculum. Except for some board discussions, they did not receive proper guidance from the SENCO when planning, causing them to either overestimate or underestimate the children's abilities. They said, *"the kind of support other teachers received, not me, is when they told the SENCO that they don't have a curriculum for preparing the students for school. The SENCO said list the lessons and subject"*. The SENCO's responsibilities included guiding teachers through the implementation of IEPs, managing stakeholder communication, and advocating for the rights of students with SEND (Tissot, 2013). Furthermore, one of the difficulties was the management of resources, particularly technology and SMART devices.

All of the teachers mentioned the lack of presentation tools such as SMART boards. They said, *"to be honest the resources we receive I do not feel like they are enough because they do not suit the level of the students"*. Few teachers provide their own devices for their students to provide engaging content. However, technology and regular class resources should be available as assistive tools to support students' learning. Although some researchers questioned the role of SMART devices in student progression, the results

revealed that they significantly impacted students' motivation (Munje & Jita, 2020). Even though teachers did not have access to the SMART devices, they were well aware of the online resources that contained all of the available interactive games and content.

Some teachers justified their demand for the use of technology by mentioning the improvement of their students during the online-teaching in pandemic (Covid-19). They said, "...websites I use links for reinforcements like stars but after offline and end of covid-19 I stopped online resources". Many students who struggled with reading and writing performed better in interactive learning because they were able to concentrate for a longer time (Ahmed, 2018). Moreover, teaching and learning are constantly updated, and teacher professional development has a significant impact on students' learning (Sharma & Salend, 2016). The teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their training. They reported "*I don't like to be trained by random people I want to receive from professional trainers and authorized centers*". They emphasized the importance of external professional trainers as well as authorized and licensed workshops, to increase their knowledge and trustworthiness. According to UNESCO, adequate learning for students with SEND cannot be achieved without knowledgeable, trained, and empowered teachers (UNESCO, 2020). When students are under the supervision of a qualified teacher, they can advance in a variety of ways, including social and academic performance (Sharma & Salend, 2016). Besides that, the transition from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools (whether private or public) would be unattainable without the collaboration of all stakeholders, including teachers.

All the teachers were confident in their relationship with their students and how well they knew them, but their main concern was the new teachers' ability to meet the needs of the students. Many students at the center have spent years with the same teachers, so moving them to new settings that differ in size, number of students, and curriculum could be stressful. Teachers reported that they were unable to discuss the goals, cases, and needs of students with other teachers from MOE. The explained, "*we do it gradually so he can be motivated because the emotional side of the child is very important for his progress*". They demanded a gradual inclusion, which was also a requirement of the parents; multiple visits

to the new school could prepare the student emotionally and cognitively for the new journey. As the parents mentioned that *“I want to try first because I feel like my daughter will be able to learn, she is smart”*. Communication between teachers is important for a rewarding learning experience; it should include keeping everyone up-to-date on students’ needs and progress (Jakhanwal & Sinha, 2021).

### 5.3 Research Question Three

Parents described the inclusion procedure as a difficult decision. Due to the necessity of early intervention, a significant number of students in the rehabilitation center had already transferred from mainstream schools. They said, *“At the beginning I registered him in regular school it was nursery then they suggested to take him to speech therapy and when the doctors saw him...they told me he has autism and then the school told me to put him in a private center”*. Even though the intervention began immediately, there was no follow-up from the school to assess progress. Returning to mainstream schools is not as simple as leaving them. Each school has its own diagnostic test and set of standards to meet, which may include strong communication skills or adequate academic achievement in math or science. Parents are hesitant to move their children to inclusive education because of the instability. They see it as a blurring of options that is hard to understand. They reported *“...the administration was helpful and welcoming but I felt it too hard because they requested me to provide a shadow teacher and I could not find”*. The research was carried out in Irish schools to identify the challenges facing inclusion and to outline the administrative response to the acceptance criteria. They classified the children’s abilities as either weak or strong. It pressured them to immediately request psychological and language evaluation tests (Travers et al., 2010).

Overcomplicating the process demonstrates educators’ unwillingness to make a more informed decision about a student’s inclusion. Growing educators’ professional development in the area of assessment could lead to a less complicated transition with a well-defined path (Santos et al., 2017). Another demotivating factor for parents was the gap in therapeutic services between rehabilitation centers and mainstream schools. They

described therapy as a benefit their children have received since joining the center, “...*he has therapies like occupational and speech therapy but in schools he will not get these therapies so it will be difficult for him*”. Speech, occupational, and physical therapy are examples of therapies. These are one-on-one services that help students with SEND overcome sensory, linguistic, and physical barriers. Schools should be prepared for therapeutic practices (for example, external clinics) by maintaining communication to achieve skill generalization, removing barriers, and incorporating recommended assistive tools (Kentucky Department of Education, 2021). To bridge the gap between rehabilitation services and mainstream schools, stakeholders must communicate consistently throughout the process. Furthermore, parents agreed that the center’s parental support helped them manage their children’s behaviors and achieve more milestones with them. They said, “*I learnt how to deal with my child in home with all the advices from the teachers I feel more confident*”. They did not want to lose the kind of training and support they had by going to mainstream schools, where parent training is less likely. According to studies, parents’ emotional struggles to cope with a family member with a disability may cause them to react to him/her with embarrassment, insecurity, anxiety, and grief (Bariroh, 2018). As a result, it is critical to include parents in IEP meetings and feedback by committing to all possible support (e.g., advice) at home (Whiting, 2012). Parents were aware of their children’s vulnerability and expressed a desire to protect them by avoiding socialization with other typically developed students in mainstream schools. They listed numerous possibilities for bullying and harassment, leading them to distrust educators and the school environment. They explained, “*many, other children might laugh at him or they will ignore him and he will be alone with no friends*”.

Bullying has a devastating effect on the emotional and physical well-being of all students, including those with SEND; they may be targeted because of their poor communication and social skills. It is the responsibility of the school to promote tolerance and acceptance among students and to implement explicit rules to prevent abuse and bullying (Jamaluddin et al., 2019). Furthermore, parents described their children as having a high level of dependency (e.g., an inability to reach a location alone), which causes them to be concerned



about their children's day-to-day school practices. Students with SEND may need extra help, especially when they are younger, but this barrier can be overcome with the help of parents, teachers, and other students (Whiting, 2012).

#### 5.4 Limitations of the Study

The researcher works at the same organization where the study was conducted. When data is collected from another employee in the workplace, participants could be hesitant to open up and share their genuine answers and opinions. To avoid any personal connections between the researcher and the participants, the researcher conducted the study (focus-group meetings) in different departments. Another challenge was concealing the identities of the participants due to the limited number of centers in Dubai. This challenge was partially addressed by avoiding sampling methods that could contain participant information and characteristics, which could be used to determine their identities. Moreover, none of the observations were recorded because the participants refused to offer permission. The researcher was required to take notes during the session. Errors could be avoided by recording the session and reviewing it later. Furthermore, due to the busy schedules of the parents, all semi-structured sessions were conducted via a video call application (Zoom). The online meetings did not show parents' body language or facial expressions, which made it harder to understand how they felt. Furthermore, to keep the focus group meetings organized and avoid side discussions, the researcher requested that each question be discussed in the group and reflected on individually. However, this could have reduced the level of interaction between participants. Furthermore, one of the difficulties the researcher faced was the search for similar literature on the transition of students with SEND from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools. There has not been much research done on this aspect of inclusion. The limited research provided data on parents' perceptions of transition and best practices for developing students' abilities. There was a research gap, with a lack of data on teachers' difficulties with students' transitions. Lastly, each research question covered an important part of the transition of students with SEND to mainstream schools, which should be studied and researched separately in-depth to cover all of the factors that contribute to change.

## 5.5 Recommendations

Based on observations and participant perspectives on transferring SEND students to mainstream schools. The researcher provided recommendations that could foster the growth of students and remove barriers to their inclusion. First, teachers should be provided with a clear transition plan (including curriculums) that includes flexibility in IEP planning. The flexibility should make it possible for teachers to make progress with their students in terms of both academic and social skills. The SENCO at the center should act as a mentor and guide during the process of planning for learning so that hesitant plans are avoided. Additionally, the SENCO is responsible for connecting all of the stakeholders so that they can work collaboratively to achieve the plan through consistent feedback and meetings. Second, the teachers should get regular, certified training on the new teaching practices to support the students with SEND to grow and learn. Furthermore, they should be supplied with the required resources for implementing successful IEPs. Third, establishing a form of communication between MOCD and MOE teachers to carry on all discussions about the children's progress and needs should take place, bridging the gap between the two different environments. Partial inclusion, either in specific subjects (for example, physical education) or for a shorter time, should be attempted to socially and emotionally prepare the students with SEND for their new schools. Fourth, promoting tolerance in inclusive schools by having "awareness champions" and "protection from abuse" policies should be enacted. This will lower the risk for vulnerable students and make the school a safe, welcoming place. Fifth, inclusive schools should encourage parental involvement and training to assist families of students with SEND in developing better in-home practices and strategies for dealing with their children. This will help families to manage their anxiety toward the new changes in their children's lives. To prevent relapses and further the students' development, they must continue to receive all of the therapeutic services that they began in external clinics with all the support and communication from the school.

## 5.5 Conclusion

All students, regardless of background or needs, have the right to learn and receive a proper education. Following the adoption of the UNCRPD, students with SEND have enrolled in inclusive settings to receive the same educational and social experiences as their same-aged peers (Alborno, 2013). Even though it was an option for some students with SEND, there are still others who are being held back in separate classrooms (Abdat, 2020). The purpose of this study was to look into various perspectives on the transition of students with SEND from rehabilitation centers to mainstream schools. This research concludes that the teaching practices that are used as preparation for inclusion have a significant impact on the growth and readiness of students to transmit into inclusive settings. Along with taking into account all of the challenges that teachers face when implementing the practices. Making it possible for teachers to get professional development and up-to-date teaching methods could help students grow and thrive. Finally, parental support is critical to ensuring a smooth transition for their children. Eliminating their worries and providing them with needed support allows them to reflect on their children's development. This study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the less-discussed aspect of inclusion and hopefully allow for more positive decisions to be made.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Site selection (Data of Federal centers)

Center Name	الإجمالي Total			التشخيص الزائد ADHD		تأخر نمطي Developmental delay		متعدد الإعاقة Multi - Disability		الإعاقة البصرية Visual Disability		الإعاقة الجسدية Physical Disability		الإعاقة السمعية Hearing Disability		التوحد Autism		الإعاقة الذهنية Intellectual			
	الإجمالي Total	إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male	أخرى Others		متلازمة داون Down Syndrome	
																		إناث Female	ذكور Male	إناث Female	ذكور Male
Early Intervention Center	59	18	41	0	0	9	19	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	17	0	0	5	4
Dubai Welfare & Rehabilitation Center for Pro	185	75	110	1	0	0	0	20	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	40	21	30	23	14
Ajman Welfare & Rehabilitation Center for Pro	110	45	65	0	0	1	0	11	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	24	33	9	10
Muhagel	20	10	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	4	4	6
Uin Al Qusain Autism Center	81	19	62	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	62	0	0	0	0
Ras Al Khaimah Welfare & Rehabilitation Cente	188	54	134	0	0	8	25	10	18	0	0	0	0	0	7	3	21	16	26	17	36
Doha Al Fujairah Welfare & Rehabilitation Cen	108	43	65	0	0	0	0	9	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	24	9	9	10	16
Al Fujairah Early Intervention Center	20	12	8	0	0	4	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	2	3	1	0
Al Fujairah Welfare & Rehabilitation Center	56	22	34	0	0	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	14	10	17	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>88</b>

## Appendix 2: Letter of consent



13 May 2022

### Ministry of Community Development

This is to certify that Ms. Ayesha Alshamsi, of ID number 20003095, is a registered student in Master of Education in Special and Inclusive Education programme at The British University in Dubai since April 2021.

Ms. Alshamsi is currently working on her thesis titled "The Transition of Students with Special Needs from Rehabilitation Centres to Mainstream Schools". She is required to gather data through interviews, observations, focus group and official documents.

Ms. Alshamsi needs affiliating herself professionally in your organization. Your assistance in engaging her in research projects is hereby requested. Any support provided to her in this regard will be highly appreciated.

This letter is issued upon Ms. Alshamsi's request.

Yours sincerely,

**Mira Hamzeh**  
Head of Admissions, Student Services & Communications  
The British University in Dubai



## Appendix 3: original observation sheet



**TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS**

NSDC TOOL

PAGE 8  
 Page 1  
 of a 2-page tool

**THE DIFFERENTIATED CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM**

Coaches can use the following form to help teachers understand the many areas in which they can adapt their instruction to meet students' unique differences. Although this is set up as an observation form, a coach can also encourage teachers to use the characteristics to reflect on their practice.

Check the appropriate box next to each item. Use the comment box to provide ideas for improvement in specific areas. If the form is completed during multiple observations, use tally marks. Review the results with the teacher as soon as possible to identify specific areas for improvement and to praise strengths.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level/Subject Area: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Evidence of Implementation			COMMENTS
	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	LITTLE OR NO	
<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>				
Presents an inviting, relaxed environment for learning.				
Provides comfortable desks and work areas.				
Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.				
Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.				
Is arranged for teacher and student movement during work sessions.				
Provides work areas for individual needs, including knowledge/ability levels.				
Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.				
<b>TEACHER BEHAVIORS</b>				
Work with total groups, individuals, and small groups.				
Monitor individuals and small groups.				
Use a variety of ongoing assessment tools such as checklists, surveys, and anecdotal records.				
Apply assessment information to guide instruction.				
Address academic, emotional, social, and physical student needs.				
Provide time for students to actively process information.				
Give specific feedback to individuals and/or small groups.				
<b>STUDENT ENGAGEMENT</b>				
Exhibits on-task behavior while working alone.				
Works effectively in small groups.				
Works on their individual knowledge or ability levels.				
Uses materials/resources on the student's own level of success.				
Feels respected and emotionally safe.				
Uses self-discipline.				

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**TEACHERS TEACHING TEACHERS**

NSDC TOOL

PAGE 9  
 Page 2  
 of a 2-page tool

**HOW TO BE A CATALYST FOR DIFFERENTIATION**

The following acronym provides a way to view the key components of differentiated instruction. Staff developers can personalize this list by allowing time for grade-level teams or interest groups to develop an acronym that describes their differentiated classroom.

**D E F I N E T E A C H E R**

- D**etermine the standards to be taught.
- E**ngage students with strong assessment tools before, during, and after learning.
- F**ormulate plans that link the targeted standards with individual needs.
- D**esign effective strategies and activities to teach the information.
- E**ngage students in activities that employ their interests and the ways they learn.
- R**elate learning to the students' worlds.
- E**ncourage risk taking with wise choices.
- N**urture the social and emotional aspects of the students.
- T**arget the learners' needs with flexible grouping designs.
- I**gnite each student's desire to learn.
- A**djust assignments to match the learner's abilities, knowledge levels, and interests.
- T**ailor lessons with student-focused activities.
- E**ntice and ignite lifelong learners.

	Evidence of Implementation			COMMENTS
	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	LITTLE OR NO	
<b>MATERIALS/RESOURCES</b>				
Include a variety of reading levels that are related to the subject or topic.				
Are accessible to students.				
Support the standards and topic.				
Are age-appropriate.				
Are up-to-date.				
Are available in an adequate number for the class size.				
Include appropriate reference sources and materials.				
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES</b>				
Use a variety of assessment tools before, during, and after learning.				
Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities to teach standards.				
Meet the diverse needs of learners.				
Engage students in various flexible grouping designs.				
Use centers and/or stations for individual and small group instruction.				
Engage students with projects and/or problem-solving activities.				
Present students with choices in learning activities.				

Source: "11 practical ways to guide teachers toward differentiation," by Carolyn Chapman and Ron King, NSDC, Fall 2005.

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#### Appendix 4: Edited observation sheet

Criteria	Y/N	Evidences
Class environment		
Presents a welcoming, relaxed environment for learning.		
Provides comfortable desks and work areas.		
Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.		
Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.		
Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.		
Class management		
Strategies to keep students on-task.		
Reinforcing positive behaviors		
Eliminating disruptive behaviors		
Class rules and routines		
Strategies to enable students express their emotions		
Instructional strategies (student-centered)		
Use a variety of activates before, during, and after learning.		
Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities that are students-centered		
Meet the diverse needs of learners.		
Engage students in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic tasks		
Resources and technology		
Include a variety of hands-on materials that are related to the subject or topic.		
Resources support the standards and topic.		
Incorporate technology in the lesson delivery		
Are available in an adequate number for the class size.		
Assessments		

Variety of strategies to assess students' learning during the class (formative assessment)		
Types and tools of diagnostic test (documents)		
Types and tools of summative test (documents)		
Planning for learning		
The lesson is associated with the IEP of the running term		
Activities are linked to learning objectives		
The activities in class are linked to the daily plans		

## Appendix 5

### Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?
2. If you have the choice would transfer you your child to a mainstream school and why?
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?
5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?
6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?
7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?
8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?
9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?
10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?
11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?
12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?
13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?
14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?



## Appendix 6

### Focus Group

1. If you have a student with a moderate mental disability. What is the first step you take to start the transition process? Who determines if the study should be moved to mainstream school?
2. Describe the steps that you put together and implemented to support your students to move to mainstream school?
3. Which IEP, curriculum, transition plan do you use to achieve successful transition and why?
4. What strategies do you incorporate to apply the transition plan?
5. What are your challenges with the IEP/ curriculum/ and transition plan?
6. What is the support you receive from the SENCO to ensure the success of the plan? Describe the procedure?
7. Describe how you include parents and support staff in the transition plan and process?
8. What resources would you integrate into the IEP that support students' development?
9. How regularly do you receive new resources associated with the IEP? Do you have a textbook and hands-on resources? List the type of resources you have
10. In the absence of appropriate resources, how do you conduct your lessons? And how do the children react to the lesson?
11. What technology do you use to teach the students with SEND? How does it support their development?
12. How do you get access to online gaming, blackboard, and quizzes? Did you receive training on using these platforms?
13. What Smart devices do you have in your classroom? And how do you integrate them into the lessons?
14. Do you receive any kind of support from a teacher assistant? How does she/he help the student during the class?

15. In the absence of the teacher assistant, how do you manage to approach all the students and fulfill their needs?
16. What type of training do you receive regularly? Do you receive any specific training about preparing students with SEND for transmitting to mainstream schools?
17. How often do you attend workshops about updated strategies?
18. What areas would you like to receive training on?
19. How do you think training should be (licenses, workshops, with post-exam)?

## Appendix 7: Observation One

Criteria	Y/N	Evidences
Class environment		
Presents a welcoming, relaxed environment for learning.	Yes	Yes the students were relaxed comfortable due to the enough space between the tables and chairs
Provides comfortable desks and work areas.	Yes	All the desks are suitable for the height of the students
Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.	Yes	The students had drawer to put their favorite toys on
Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.	No	The tables are separate because the teacher preferred to give each students private time
Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.	Yes	The teacher present and update the students' work
Class management		
Strategies to keep students on-task.	Yes	Reward system as sticks how ever collect more get a toy for time to play
Reinforcing positive behaviors	Yes	Reward system the student get one stick or star every time answer the question correctly. Even the teacher reinforced the students who worked independently on the learning goals.
Eliminating disruptive behaviors	Yes	The sticks helped the child to control his impulsivity
Class rules and routines	Yes	The class was consisted of 4 students and the teacher reviewed the class rules like sitting quietly waiting for the turn as the rules are displayed on the board.
Strategies to enable students express their emotions	No	-
Instructional strategies (student-centered)		

Use a variety of activates before, during, and after learning.	Yes	The teacher started with reviewing Arabic words with vowels. The teacher started asking him if he has some examples and he listed some of them like (3 vowels)
Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities that are students-centered	Yes	Yes all the students were engaged because each student has a one activity that support his level but she was focusing
Meet the diverse needs of learners.	Yes	The teacher gives each student private time during the session
Engage students in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic tasks	Yes	The teacher used all hands on activities and materials beside the white board
Resources and technology		
Include a variety of hands-on materials that are related to the subject or topic.	Yes	White board, marker, flash cards.
Resources support the standards and topic.	yes	Flash cards and marker
Incorporate technology in the lesson delivery	no	-
Are available in an adequate number for the class size.	yes	Each student has enough resources
Assessments		
Variety of strategies to assess students' learning during the class (formative assessment)	No	Starting with questioning to remember previous lessons such as ( tell me some words that has 'a' vowel)
Types and tools of diagnostic test (documents)	Yes	In the official document
Types and tools of summative test (documents)	No	A worksheet for dictation but there is no official summative assessment at the end of the term
Planning for learning		
The lessen is associated with the IEP of the running term	Yes	The teacher listed the learning objectives on the board for the whole term
Activities are linked to learning objectives	Yes	All the flash cards are related to the lesson and vowels

The activities in class are linked to the daily plans	Yes	However the teacher doesn't have a daily plan only weekly form.
---	-----	---

# Appendix 8: Observation Two

Criteria	Y/N	Evidences
Class environment		
Presents a welcoming, relaxed environment for learning.	Yes	The class is organized each student has enough space with separate table and all the furniture are suitable for their size
Provides comfortable desks and work areas.	yes	Yes all the students and teachers had enough space to move and do the activities
Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.	yes	All the resources are stored based on type and materials and each student has a drawer for his work
Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.	no	No the tables are not designed for grouping they are always in individual mood
Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.	Yes	There is a display showing the students work
Class management		
Strategies to keep students on-task.	Yes	The class has three shadow teachers and they helped to manage the students' behaviors during the tasks
Reinforcing positive behaviors	Yes	The teacher reinforced the students after each trial in correctly. Each student has list of reinforcements they get after achieving long goal
Eliminating disruptive behaviors	Yes	The teacher has a corner for bad behaviors to let student their and think about their behaviors
Class rules and routines	Yes	On the board the class rules are present it and the teacher begin by explain it. Each student has separate visual cards to to review the rules during the class
Strategies to enable students express their emotions	No	

Instructional strategies (student-centered)		
Use a variety of activates before, during, and after learning.	No	The teacher just begin with exercise after introducing the class rules and make sure the student is ready
Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities that are students-centered	Yes	All the materials were hands on and students were engaged during the class the teacher focused individually on one by one
Meet the diverse needs of learners.	Yes	The class was consisted of 1 teacher and three shadow teachers
Engage students in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic tasks	Yes	the activities were diverse were they had to walk match picture sing songs
Resources and technology		
Include a variety of hands-on materials that are related to the subject or topic.	Yes	Many resources were available
Resources support the standards and topic.	Yes	All the resources
Incorporate technology in the lesson delivery	No	The lesson had no technology
Are available in an adequate number for the class size.	Yes	All the students had enough flash cards and toys and materials
Assessments		
Variety of strategies to assess students' learning during the class (formative assessment)	Yes	Used the questioning and previous task only
Types and tools of diagnostic test (documents)	Yes	Each students has diagnostic test and lest of goals on the board of the class
Types and tools of summative test (documents)	No	There is no summative tool or exam to assess progress at the end of the semester
Planning for learning		
The lessen is associated with the IEP of the running term	Yes	All the goals are linked to the IEP of the students
Activities are linked to learning objectives	Yes	The the materials used based on the IEP
The activities in class are linked to the daily plans	Yes	

### Appendix 9: Observation Three

Criteria	Y/N	Evidences
Class environment		
Presents a welcoming, relaxed environment for learning.	Yes	The displays are consisted of the teaching resources and materials of the lessons students are learning
Provides comfortable desks and work areas.	Yes	Each students has separate desk and enough space each student has furniture based on his size
Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.	No	The class has no are for playing or reading
Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.	No	The table doesn't have flexibility to move
Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.	Yes	The teacher updates the students work the work is recent
Class management		
Strategies to keep students on-task.	Yes	All the tasks are differentiated based on their learning objectives and abilities
Reinforcing positive behaviors	Yes	Verbal reinforcement and reward system
Eliminating disruptive behaviors	Yes	The teacher started with reviewing the class rules that are displayed in English and Arabic. And all the students had task to do which made them busy and focused
Class rules and routines	Yes	The rules are clear and displayed on the board
Strategies to enable students express their emotions	No	The students level is high they could talk and request help
Instructional strategies (student-centered)		
Use a variety of activates before, during, and after learning.	Yes	Each student has different task tools that support his learning objective during the class



Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities that are students-centered	Yes	All the activities kept the student working on the task the teacher provided feedback
Meet the diverse needs of learners.	Yes	All the activities are differentiated
Engage students in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic tasks	Yes	The teacher used a laptop to display the online games and visual content for each student separately according to his level
Resources and technology		
Include a variety of hands-on materials that are related to the subject or topic.	Yes	The students had stories, flashcards, markers, colors
Resources support the standards and topic.	Yes	The class has cabinet filled with materials and tool
Incorporate technology in the lesson delivery	No	-
Are available in an adequate number for the class size.	No	-
Assessments		
Variety of strategies to assess students' learning during the class (formative assessment)	Yes	The teacher questioned the students and gave simple task to assess their understanding at the beginning of the class
Types and tools of diagnostic test (documents)	Yes	At the beginning of semester
Types and tools of summative test (documents)	No	No evidences of exams
Planning for learning		
The lesson is associated with the IEP of the running term	Yes	All the learning objectives of the students were linked to their IEPs
Activities are linked to learning objectives	Yes	The activities are on the purpose of the IEP and learning objectives
The activities in class are linked to the daily plans	Yes	The teacher has the goals on the display and all the tasks are linked to them

Appendix 10: Observation Four

Criteria	Y/N	Evidences
Class environment		
Presents a welcoming, relaxed environment for learning.	Yes	Students practices are presented and the environment safe and basic
Provides comfortable desks and work areas.	No	The lesson was group session and the tables were not flexible to adjustable
Contains individual, designated personal spaces for extra books and other items.	Yes	The regular class in the center has settings
Is designed for quick and easy groupings of tables and chairs.	No	-
Reflects current content or skills through student displays and artifacts.	Yes	In the display board students work are displayed and updated
Class management		
Strategies to keep students on-task.	Yes	The teacher reviewed class rules ( being quit I listen to to other students while talking)
Reinforcing positive behaviors	Yes	Clapping verbal reinforcement
Eliminating disruptive behaviors	Yes	If the student miss behave he will go to corner
Class rules and routines	yes	The students used
Strategies to enable students express their emotions	No	-
Instructional strategies (student-centered)		
Use a variety of activates before, during, and after learning.	Yes	The teacher started with guessing the topic
Use a variety of instructional strategies and activities that are students-centered	Yes	Technology used video and pictures and sounds and worksheets and colors
Meet the diverse needs of learners.	Yes	The lesson was differentiated based on different interest and many activities
Engage students in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic tasks	Yes	All the students are engaged because of the diverse types of activities
Resources and technology		

Include a variety of hands-on materials that are related to the subject or topic.	Yes	Many materials and items
Resources support the standards and topic.	Yes	PowerPoint projector worksheets materials like papers and colors
Incorporate technology in the lesson delivery	Yes	Present slides and videos and interactive games
Are available in an adequate number for the class size.	Yes	Yes all the students had worksheets
Assessments		
Variety of strategies to assess students' learning during the class (formative assessment)	Yes	Questioning only
Types and tools of diagnostic test (documents)	No	-
Types and tools of summative test (documents)	No	-
Planning for learning		
The lesson is associated with the IEP of the running term	No	The lesson was extracurricular to teach them Islam
Activities are linked to learning objectives	Yes	Variety of activities linked to the lesson
The activities in class are linked to the daily plans	Yes	All the activities are reported in the lesson planning for the whole week

# Appendix 11: IEP Sample



الاسم:	[Redacted]	العنوان:	الإمارات العربية المتحدة - دبي
تاريخ الميلاد:	2015-07-10	فترة التقرير:	٣٠ أغسطس ٢٠٢٠ - ٣٠ سبتمبر ٢٠٢٠
التشخيص:	اضطراب طيف التوحد	تاريخ إصدار التقرير:	٣٠ سبتمبر ٢٠٢٠ ٠٨:٤٢ م
تاريخ بداية الخدمة:	٣٠ أغسطس ٢٠٢٠ ٠٤:٣٣ م	بواسطة:	[Redacted]

المعلومات الأولية:

طالب من ذوي التوحد (متوسط الإعاقة) مجتهد و يحب الدروس الأكاديمية التي تتضمن الأرقام و الحروف والكلمات.

الخدمات:

الطالب يتلقى حصص تربية فردية و جلسات علاج وظيفي و حصص أنشطة للموسيقى و الأعمال البدنية و الرياضة.

فريق العمل:

[Redacted]

المنهج: توحد 8- الفصل الدراسي الأول 2020-2021 < الجانب: الاستجابة للمعززات > الهدف الطويل: A1  
أن يأخذ الطالب المعزز حينما يعرض عليه

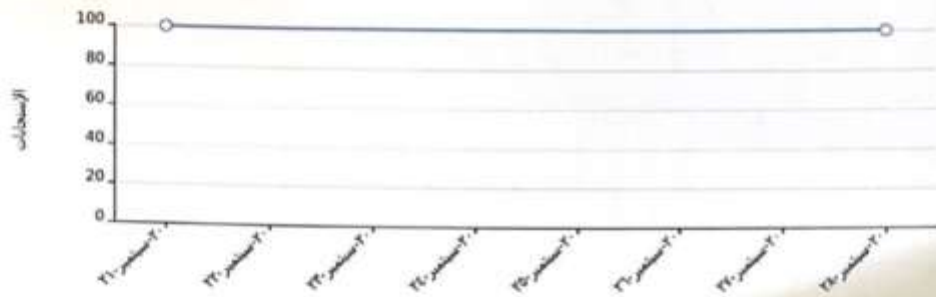
الهدف القصير: أن يأخذ الطالب المعزز حينما يعرض عليه (2) يأخذه في كل مرة خلال (3) نواحي.

التاريخ: ٣٠ أغسطس ٢٠٢٠ م - ٨:٣٣

الحالة: مغلق في ٢٨ سبتمبر ٢٠٢٠ م ١٣:٥٩

قرار النتائج:

الرسم البياني:



الملاحظات:

تم تدريب الطالب على أخذ معزز عندما يتم عرضه عليه (مثال: الأدوات التي يحتمل مثل الألوان).

المنهج: توجد 8- الفصل الدراسي الأول 2020-2021 -> الجانب: الاستجابة للمعززات -> الهدف الطويل: A4  
أن يأخذ الطالب شئ مألوف عندما يعرض عليه

[illegible]

**A. Geographic A**

**B. Visual**

**C. Geographic**

**D. Motor**

**E. Visual**

**F. Geographic**

**G. Learning**

**H. Interactive**

**I. Bioinformatics**

**Legend:**

- African (red)
- European (green)
- East Asian (blue)
- South Asian (orange)
- Admixed American (purple)

الصور المتبادلة لها. 1= يمكنه مطابقة على الأول كلمتين مع الصور المتبادلة لها.	قائمة (أ) فإن الطالب يستطيع وضع الكلمة مع الصور المطابقة (وطلاء).	هل يستطيع الطالب مطابقة كروت بكلمات مع نفس الكلمات المكونة من عرض من مختلف في عرض من (3) كروت؟	سيتمكن الطالب من مطابقة كروت بكلمات مع نفس الكلمات المكونة من خلال قوت مختلف في عرض من (3) كروت لكلمات.	مطابقة كلمات بكلمات	01234	Q6	
4= خط مختلف في حرف واحد فقط في كلمات غير متبادلة. 3= نفس الخط مع اختلاف حرف واحد. 2= نفس الخط مع حرفين مختلفين في كلمات غير متبادلة. 1= نفس الخط مع (3) أو أكثر حروف مختلفين في كلمات غير متبادلة.	حينما يعطي الطالب كارتا مدونا عليه كلمة "وطوطا" ويعرض عليه مجموعة من ثلاث كروت على المنضدة (وطوطا، قطة، قبة) فإن الطالب سيضع الكارت مع الكلمة التي تطابقها (وطوطا).	هل يستطيع الطالب تسمية الحروف المكونة للكلمة باندا من اليمين للشمال؟	سيتمكن الطالب من تسمية حروف وكلمات باندا من اليمن للشمال.	تسمية الحروف في كلمات باندا من اليمين للشمال	012	Q7	
2= يمكنه الإشارة إلى وتسمية حروف كلمات تتكون من خمسة حروف من اليمين لليمن دون مساعدة. 1= يمكنه الإشارة إلى وتسمية حروف كلمات	حينما تعرض كلمة "كلب" فإن الطالب سرد كل منها على حدة (ك، ل، ب).						

Appendix 12:  
Focus Group 1  
Planning for transition

**If you have a student with a moderate mental disability. What is the first step you take to start the transition process? Who determines if the study should be moved to mainstream school?**

Hind: the first thing I would do is evaluating their skills and knowledge to identify their needs and areas of development. I would also focus on their social skills because it is the most important skill for inclusion. After that I will assess the academic skills which they will be learning in the schools like math and science. So based on the assessment I will teach the child the skills he needs like social and speech skills because I want him to be able to talk with other students and teachers in the school.

Hind: from what I understood until now, the teacher is the one who decide if the child should be in normal school or not because I know the students' levels and needs and based on that I can suggest their next step

Nora: I feel like I will see the first thing I will do I will check the schools' standards of accepting a child and based on that I will provide support to my children. I believe that I am the one who can tell if the student can go or not because they are like my children I know them well

Alia: I will start with assessments I will check communication skills, behaviors, dependency, basic skills that make him independent like requesting needs after that I will check his speech, then academic skills basic one math reading and writing

Azza: I will begin by assessing his skills especially the dependency skills like toileting, eating alone, and basic communication also I will look for the basic academic skills like phonics and counting if has basic ability I will begin with preparing the IEP to apply

Reem: the first thing I will look for the problems he has and if he needs therapy before academic skills and if he is independent enough or I need to work on these skills first. The teacher has to choose if the student can go to normal schools then the administration and the ministry of education if they accept him.

Asma: I will look at his diagnosis results and assess him also I will talk to the team of specialists if he is able for inclusion. Not one person, the whole team like speech, occupational therapists and of course the psychologist as well.

Ahmed: the inclusion process is not that easy we have to prepare the parents and the student also the environment must be preparing for the child also the teacher has to be ready to teach the student and serve his needs. The working team must determine if the students ready to go to normal schools with the parents

**Describe the steps that you put together and implemented to support your students to move to mainstream school?**

Hind: the first thing I would do is cooperating with his mother to develop his social and academic skills because as you know our work in the center alone is not enough to support the child specially with the social skills, the support must be from both the teacher and parent. Also the support from the center like choose the right learning goals and after I feel that the child is ready I will communicate with the administration to tell them that this child should be included in regular school and I will wait for their response.



Azza: I am trying to teach them a similar goal to the curriculum that teachers teach in the regular class because I want her to be ready I also try to teach her basic behaviors that will reduce the bullying chances in the school I want her to learn communication skills. I also teach her rules that they will need in the regular schools like asking politely

Alya: to be honest I don't have clear steps but logically I will communicate with supervisor and I will prepare his documents as proofs

Nora: I will first check the school curriculum and I will see if I teach him lesson from these book how he will react and based on his level I will put the learning objectives

Reem: I will integrate the technology and curriculum the teachers use in the normal schools for example I will start from KG curriculum because you know or students are late comparing with other students and even if he passed all the exams I will recommend a shadow teacher because in general the students we have are not as independent as other students in the normal schools.

Asma: the first thing I will look for the curriculum and in which grade he will be in Then I will look for the learning goals and try to make him able to go to school. I prefer if the inclusion is on levels for example at the beginning the students go for some visit to be able to socialize with other teachers and students and based on the teachers' reflection from the school I will provide social support for him here in the class.

Ahmed: I never had students ready for inclusion I always have severe cases but I think I have to teach the student the good behaviors, and pre-academic skills.

**Which IEP, curriculum, transition plan does you use to achieve successful transition and why?**

Hind: because all my students are with autism I have to finish the basic social and developmental skills in their plans from Ables curriculum. To be honest I did not have any child who was about inclusion phase but from what I saw from other teachers, they said that their students are already achieved the basic skills like social interaction. After that they decide what to teacher students based on the school's curriculum and subjects that he will be studying there and it depends on the age and grade level.

Asma: There is nothing specific because each student is different we do our best and we look for the results and if the student need more we provide more support. No there is no specific IEP or curriculum that suit all the students and ensure their inclusion because students with disabilities are really different from each other.

Nora: the IEP is the best because the ministry curriculum will not be exactly on his level. The curriculum text book makes me really confused I will focus on what exactly but the IEP is specific

Alya: because I teach students with autism I use APA therapy and I teach them communication skills

Ahmed: there must be an IEP because to be honest the curriculum is not enough and it does not provide enough skills that suit the children level.

Azza: I use the IEP and I still feel the goals we use are very limited comparing to regular school also we are not allowed to bring other curriculums so I feel confused

Reem: of course the IEP is very important because applying it will help the student to learn more skills like independency and generalization

**What strategies do you incorporate to apply the transition plan?**

I feel that the lessons must be taught with variety of strategies not only learning by playing or videos and pictures. Sometimes I use PowerPoint and another day I use activities where they can move in the class to help them keep the information in their memory. And from what I know it is not only our centers it is even in the schools they use different strategies depend on the subject and lesson. And if we use variety of strategies here when the students will go to the school they will be ready because they saw different strategies before.

Asma: I believe the students with disability can be improved if they get real life experience in social life because when they are only in the class they do not get enough chance to learn. And of course everything all the activities and trips.

Nora: learning through playing is really good specially for teaching them from young age because you know when they are playing they don't feel like pressure especially my students have many disabilities

Azza: I like to use learning by play at early age because I feel that they are enjoying while learning.

Alya: I rely heavily on the concrete objects and multisensory and technology and worksheets I want him to learn how to follow the rules and act regularly so if he goes to regular class he fits in it

Reem: I believe in VAK theory (visual auditory kinesthetic) because I have to teach students what they like and prefer not what I choose if I give the students worksheets only it will help them as integrating songs with movements. Also I believe in STEAM when I integrate math and science and technology my teaching becomes more like what teachers teach in normal schools.

Ahmed: the direct learning is the most important I do not believe in the online learning, for young learners I believe that learning by playing is very good to prepare them and teach them new skills. Even the technology and it will help the child in the school.

**What are your challenges with the IEP/ curriculum/ and transition plan?**

For example now some learning objectives... like if the student already finished the ABLES curriculum and then what is next what curriculum I will teach him ? there is no clear plan I have to search for learning objectives that suits his level, this is what we face right now. There is nothing, no curriculum for the students who will go to inclusion. Me as a teacher is the only responsible about all the subjects that will be taught in the school, searching for the materials and goals and everything. This is very difficult for the teacher because for example if she wants to teach science she has look for a book as well. There is no plan or steps to follow.

Alya: I can't find an expert teacher or SENCO who has more knowledge than me we all have same educational background I like there is no competent person to refer to, I need feedback on my teaching

Nora: I feel like the curriculum we have don't give me options on more goals that fit my students, there are goals are too big for severe students

Azza: when I struggle with IEP it is because of the students' abilities and disability level (example memory period)

Asma: When I plan for the students I do not get enough time to choose the right learning objectives for them even in the class I do not have enough time to give them one to one sessions. Some students can learn easily than other so I want more time to support the others.

Reem: the learning objectives we plan are very basic comparing to the curriculums of the students in normal schools and we do not have flexibility.

Ahmed: sometimes the IEP is not suitable to the student and the curriculum does not provide options linked to the specific needs and disabilities. Even the resources sometimes are not enough.

**What is the support you receive from the SENCO to ensure the success of the plan?**

**Describe the procedure?**

Kind of support other teachers received not me is when they told the SENCO that they don't have a curriculum for preparing the students for school. The SENCO said list the lessons and subject you want to teach and we will send an email to the administration and they will list the learning objective to the current curriculum. Because when the learning objectives listed in the website it will be easier for the teachers to insert it the IEPs. That was the only thing as support.

Alya: at the beginning when I came to work I had introducing workshops but now I refer to the online search to find information

Nora: discussions, and she communicate with the parents

Azza: yes when I ask they answer me and help me

Asma: for me every time I ask about anything they support me and they give me advices. But still we do not have clarity about the curriculums specially for the students who are able to inclusion. It made it harder.

Ahmed: yes we have the training and the SENCO direct us with the learning objectives and planning

**Describe how you include parents and support staff in the transition plan and process?**

Most of the time the communication between the parents and us is because the parent is willing to communicate. Some parents rush their children to go for schools although they are not ready for inclusion. And sometimes it is they opposite, the teacher is the one communicate with parents to tell them that their child has strong skills and he has to go to school. Then the teacher starts to tell what skills the mother has to work on.

Alya: I take their approval I discuss skills and their concerns about some skills they want their children to learn

Reem: every time I plan I communicate with the parents if they are find with goals and they will be able to apply it also in the home if they agree I continue. Also, weekly we provide comments and reports about what achieved in the class. Also during the online learning we were communicating with them every day.

Nora: for example I communicate with speech therapist to tell me how can I train my student to request and she helped me a lot and with parents I told the mothers to let their children start wash their hands regularly and they are more aware now.

Azza: this is very important because I really focus on speech skills when I want my students to be included in the school so I communicate with speech therapist a lot and we recommend solutions and activities to be applied in home with the parents

Asma: I always look for parent's support because achievements can be better if the cooperate with me without their help the students' progress will not be fast. Now I cannot force parent some of them told me that they do not want any home works and others are the opposite.

Ahmed: the specialists support the students with skills like speech and imitation and other very basic skills that we cannot afford in the class.

### **Resources/ TECH**

#### **What resources would you integrate into the IEP that support students' development?**

Walla we try to to use different things like worksheets, flash cards, not only worksheet and enough. Sometimes we put for the videos and PowerPoints that have interactive games so the child can answer the questions not only video in front of him.

Reem: for me I always use the projector because my students love technology so I present to the PowerPoint and online games. Also I use hands on materials.

Alya: I like TECH resources

Nora: everything I can use I will use to give my students more opportunities.

Azza: I use toys like animals and models it makes them excited also the story they like it

Asma: I like sustainable resources I do not like worksheet unless I teach them writing. I like different ideas ... I just balance.

Ahmed: hands on materials things that the students can touch and feel because many skills are abstract and I can't teach them these skills without real things in front of them.

#### **How regularly do you receive new resources associated with the IEP? Do you have a textbook and hands-on resources? List the type of resources you have**

Hind: To be honest the center doesn't provide anything, everything is from us (... laughed). When I joined work we had few books but after that the teachers started to look for books and resources from outside like libraries or from their sons who are in the schools. But the center provides textbooks no I never see that. It is always us.

Alya: the devices I received iPad months ago

Nora: I really loved the sensory rooms and magic carpet I visit it regularly with my students

Azza: we have the magic carpet (as projector for online games) and we have sensory room

Ahmed: weekly we have workshops and other teachers suggest websites and ideas they did in their classes we learn from each other.

Reem: to be honest the resources we receive I do not feel like they are enough because they do not suit the level of the students many of them are too basic to support academic goals. And if the teacher needs devices we have to provide like the projector I brought it is my personal effort

Asma: We had resources in the past but we don't have expectations to receive more we just use what we have now. We only have textbooks for grade one and two.

#### **In the absence of appropriate resources, how do you conduct your lessons? And how do the children react to the lesson?**

Any lesson I will teach I start with reading about and searching or if I was the class and I do not have tools the simplest way to do it is to take them to the room where we have the smart board and play a video about the lesson or online games. But I depend on preparation with simple tools like balls and other things.

Nora: of course if I have enough resources the students will be more engaged but I try I use what I have

Azza: in our department we don't face this problem a lot because we always share things between classes and we compensate but if the resources are not enough or good the lesson will be weak.

Alya: I will try my best to find anything I have and use it and the students will not be engaged

Ahmed: without these materials the lesson will be very weak because child do not understand the concept without real things.

Reem: the students will not understand and they will feel lost about the lesson and it will not benefit them at all.

Asma: I always search in library, online, I use my sons' books from their schools. My students always look for more resources and I told the parents that send your children to regular schools because I am not specialist in subjects like math and science.

**What technology do you use to teach the students with SEND? How does it support their development?**

Ahmed: I use online games and power point

Hind: I use online games and website the most.

Reem : I use iPad Laptop, Projector. These devices are very helpful because the student learn while play so they learn faster than traditional style.

Alya: iPad alternative communication devices

Nora: projector

Azza: I use many games apps and online quizzes and the projector to present lessons

Asma: I like to use the PowerPoint and videos as beginning to engage the students and entertain them after that I use worksheets or other resources .

**How do you get access to online gaming, blackboard, and quizzes? Did you receive training on using these platforms?**

Hind: all the online websites we use we pay for it and we searched for it also. We had no suggestions from anybody.

Azza: yes when I first joined the work other teachers taught me about the websites and she gave me many ideas.

Nora: yes some of them teacher taught me about and I all search alone

Alya: I have many subscriptions

Reem: training yes I benefit from the weekly workshop and other teachers' experiences and suggestions they have from their searching.

Ahmed: I use the list of links and games teacher put in the Teams this year I was relaxed because I have everything .

Asma: Currently, I pay for the subscriptions and I don't refer to the admins. Yes I had a lot workshops about websites but I learn by my own.

Hind: no never only one time we receive training for the PowerPoint and it was not helpful it was so basic and it was only one time. We discovered everything.

**What Smart devices do you have in your classroom? And how do you integrate them into the lessons?**

Hind: we have no smart devices in the class. Only the laptop. We don't have a projector only one smart board for all the classes in separate room. I wish we had one in each class.

Asma: I use only my laptop and the Smart board in the other room.

Alya: Only iPad

Nora : Laptop iPad and Projector I brought my own

Azza: iPad and laptop the personal devices and if I want something I go to another room.

Ahmed: I only have the laptop

Reem: projector, laptop and Ipad and Smart board from the other room. I use website and apps.

**Do you receive any kind of support from a teacher assistant? How does she/he help the student during the class?**

Hind: yes I have a teacher assistant when she comes every day I explain to her what we are going to teach. She supports me a lot when I want to give a one to one session with a student. She pays attention and teach the other students. She helps me to focus when I have a too active student she manages his behaviors.

Alya: no I don't have one

Reem: no I don't have a shadow teacher.

Nora: I don't have

Azza: I don't have

Asma: I used to have one but now no, and she was so helpful she used to review all the learning objectives for the students and one of them learnt how to write because of her always support for him. Because of the short staff I do not have one. It is very challenging to support all the students together

**In the absence of the teacher assistant, how do you manage to approach all the students and fulfill their needs?**

Hind: sometimes she leaves and I really find it difficult because some of the students they really have challenging behaviors. And if I don't have option I stop giving one to one sessions.

Nora: I try to give the student thing to get the busy while working with one student

Azza: if the learning goal is the same for all the students in the class I work as a group but if the goals are different I give the students task they already know until I finish the individual lesson with one and I change

Alya: I use the strength points in each student to give him a task he could do alone while working with others

Ahmed: no I don't have a shadow teacher and I managed the class by changing the seating of the class to group settings. I have four students and if I want to work with one individually I give the other students things to practice even if the already know it because I need to focus on the rest of the class.

Asma: I find it difficult to provide individual support and feedback for all of them at the same time.

Reem: I keep the students busy with tasks they already learnt before so I can focus with one student and teach him new skills.

### **Training**

#### **What type of training do you receive regularly? Do you receive any specific training about preparing students with SEND for transmitting to mainstream schools?**

Hind: only workshops and not all of them beneficial for us we did not learn from it. No I never received any workshop about inclusion I have no idea about that. Even the workshops are from other teachers and specialist in the centers no external people.

Azza: I never received any type of training on moving students to inclusion but I search and try to learn alone.

Alya: I never had a training about inclusion just workshops

Nora: I never know anything or workshop about inclusion

Asma: currently we don't have real training only workshops from other teachers in the center but no external places. All the workshops are simple.

Reem: if I want to learn about the inclusion or any strategies I just go and search online I don't wait.

Ahmed: no I did not receive serious training for inclusion only the workshops from other teachers and I search online to attend alone.

#### **How often do you attend workshops about updated strategies?**

Hind: The last time they gave me a workshop.... This year we did not receive any thing.

Asma: we did not receive any thing from long time.

Azza: that last one from six month I took alone after work

Reem: weekly we have the workshops which might be about education or other topics related to therapy like speech to enrich or knowledge.

Alya: it is irregular

Nora: there are just workshops and because we are new they enrolled us in behavior course

Ahmed: I cannot remember the last time I received.

#### **What areas would you like to receive training on?**

Hind: now after talking about inclusion I would like to learn about it We never received anything about it.

Alya: topics on communication and behaviors managements

Nora: cerebral palsy and how to teach them

Azza: I want to learn about behavior management

Reem: I want to learn about the classroom management and how design the class environment to suit the students' needs

Ahmed: because the children are growing up and they are not being send to schools I want to learn practical things to teach them like gardening.

Asma: I would like to visit other rehabilitation centers to see their teaching and what they provide to the students to know what can I add or if I do well .

#### **How do you think training should be (licenses, workshops, with post-exam)?**

Hind: it depends... I would prefer to get a license to be professional.

Azza: I would prefer a license because people will feel that I am professional

Asma: I don't like to be trained from random people I want to receive from professional trainers and authorized centers.

Nora: I feel like it should be practical

Alya: licenses and practical training

Reem: I feel like the workshops we have are enough but maybe more of them.

Ahmed: I prefer license because I can get certificate and be professional.



Appendix 13:  
Focus Group 2

**If you have a student with a moderate mental disability. What is the first step you take to start the transition process? Who determines if the study should be moved to mainstream school?**

Hamda: prepare the child for the new school we can let him visit the new school to know the new environment

Hanan: I will try to take of all the bad behaviors and also I will teach him how to wash his hands eat alone go toilet and self-care because for school that is very important, me and the administration

Nada: step by step we teach him how to be alone it might take time because of his disability also many students they have more than disability

Ameera: I used the curriculum of ministry of education long time ago it was possible and I used it to prepare the students. I taught them math science everything but with sign language but it was different in the way I deliver the information. The teacher must say if the student should be included or not then the administration

Asma: diagnosis and I see if she will go to private school or public and then I start preparing them

Hanan:

Roda: assessment for his skills and abilities and plan for new skills and we do it gradually so he can be motivated because the emotional side of the child is very important for his progress

Jamila: sure I will speak with administration to test his abilities

Laila: assessment many types and I look for the diagnosis test and most of the time it is old from 4 to 5 years so I depend on my estimation and my experience. I had students came from the school because of the poor speech skills even though his thinking skills were fine but because the mother is non-Arab he didn't develop language.

**Describe the steps that you put together and implemented to support your students to move to mainstream school?**

Ameera: it depends on the type of the disability he suffers from we assess him then we put the plan

Hanan: the same he must be independent

Roda: get the student to learn in bigger groups of students so he feel like in real school, work on the social interaction, dependency skills like washing hands toileting organizing his things because there is no nanny there also we must work on the social skills increase the communication skills. And if possible he visit the school it should be attempts and gradual not suddenly and even the teachers there must be ready and get to know him

Hamda: he should go to toilet follow the rules sit quietly in the classroom without achieving these things how he will go to school he should stay with us until he learn them

Nada: teach the child behaviors you know how most of them behave they are difficult to control

Hanan:

Asma: I will prepare them for classroom routine and I will make her independent

Laila: I already included one student and I have one more now but it is really hard to fit the standards of MOE and even though they did not give plan or curriculum to follow I search from people I know about curriculum and book that I can use for him I was wonder in which grade level he will be so I referred to grade books. I wanted to know he is mental age and level so I can work based on that. It took me many trails with the administrations to get a chair for him

Jamila: more learning objectives, I will be faster with him give him more time I will communicate with parent to achieve more

Which IEP, curriculum, transition plan do you use to achieve successful transition and why?

Jamila: we used to use only IEP then we added the MOE curriculum but again the banded external curriculums.

Asma: curriculum must be based on the school and IEP to make it better for the students

Hanan: everything together but I like teaching them individually because each student is different they can't understand same lesson

Hamda: whatever suits the child not everything we can teach him but we can take little from the curriculum and teach him

Nada: everything is important but individual teaching is very important because students have different level and sometimes it hurts them to comment on their work in front of other children

Roda: IEP should be for social interaction and any skills linked to his disability but the MOE curriculum will prepare him more to fit their standards there

Laila: for me I focus on the curriculum of the new school he will go to, I discuss the mother' preference if she will put him in private school or government school and I request some book from their like math science English and Arabic. Also I prepare them for being independent because in schools there are no nanny

Ameera: Everything together it can't be one thing

**What strategies do you incorporate to apply the transition plan?**

Ameera: I believe all strategies must be applied but the problem is the how smart is the child and type of the disability and even if I want to help him for the inclusion it is not easy some of the students only know the sign language and there in the school who know that no body

Hanan: everything together I like to use them all

Nada: I think we have to review more reading and writing before school

Hamda: everthing should be included because you know he will go to school and see everthing there.

Roda: modelling the child must learn to imitate so he can interact with groups and we increase his emotional support through reinforcement

Asma: my students are young and I always use learning by playing it is really good for engaging them they feel motivated

Laila: learning by playing was really good for differentiating because using senses helped them to memorize and remember

Jamila: I felt now technology is very very important because during Covid-19 they learnt a lot through games

**What are your challenges with the IEP/ curriculum/ and transition plan?**

I find the plan is easier than curriculum because I make it the ready-made curriculum I can't change anything many things and skills don't suit the children's level

Jamila: the only problem I have when I teach them speech and reading their abilities very weak and they take long time

Roda: I need more time for individual teaching because he takes more time to learn new skills

Hanan: for me it is the assessment from the school especially if it is government school the private one you just pay money and go

Nada: everything should be easy for them so they are motivated to learn so sometimes the goals are too difficult

Hamda: when we are forced to teach goals are not suitable for the level of the child or the child is not interested in them

Asma: it depends on the goal some goals are too big like writing I feel difficult to cover all areas of the goal I might miss out other things

Laila: I didn't use the curriculum from the center because it was lower than his abilities so I took permission to bring my own assessment tool which was personal effort. Then I take the learning objective from different curriculums but that was before Now it is banded to use any curriculum un approved so I don't have good curriculum for inclusion preparation

**What is the support you receive from the SENCO to ensure the success of the plan?**

**Describe the procedure?**

Asma: training for ABA therapy she registered me

Roda: follow up regularly

Nada: discussions

Hanan: communication if I want to help or question they allow me

Hamda: follow up and communication with parents

Ameera: follow up with her and if we need to change something we discuss

Laila: communication with parents

Jamila: she used to communicate with schools before and that was very important to support the process teachers there they don't know anything about our students and then the

teacher used to follow up and support those teachers also the students must have private time and they need special needs teachers

**Describe how you include parents and support staff in the transition plan and process?**

Ameera: I communicate with them to see what are things the child need more like going to toilet

Nada: talking is not enough but they have to come and see how the teachers teach so they can do the same in the home

Hanan: we cooperate to change the behaviors

Hamda: for the therapists sometimes we apply their advice in the class

Asma: some parents are really caring and they say what they want their children to learn and other I find difficulty to engage them they are hopeless about their children because they are disabled.

Roda: the whole family should know about and support their child it can be only on us because half of the day he is there in home also the parent have to find schools that suit their child

Laila: I communicate to see if she has issues prevent the child from going to school is does she want the child to learn specific goals and if she is afraid because he tried the school and came back here again or she just gave up of inclusion or maybe she likes the center.

Jamila: I always communicate with speech therapist to apply same goals

**What resources would you integrate into the IEP that support students' development?**

Ameera: the lesson must contain music pictures games technology and every thing to support them.

Laila: I use device that might see in the school like the smart board and worksheets, home works

Hanan: learning tools websites

Roda: online resources fun and academic

Hamda: learning tools and now the iPad kids they like it

Roda: websites and also senses things very important

Jamila: hands on things they can touch and feel

Asma: I like to use many things depends on the students' interests

**How regularly do you receive new resources associated with the IEP? Do you have a textbook and hands-on resources? List the type of resources you have**

Ameera: I can't remember now what whatever missing I make it myself

Laila: before they used to provide me textbooks but now it is banded

Asma: we all share things I mean the teachers we cooperate we put all the links and ideas in Teams so we can access it any time

Roda: provide a curriculum called ABLLES

Hanan: we have the resources room and we borrow from it and share between us

Hamda: yes they provide rooms with resources like projector we visit some times

Jamila: I buy alone and I search from MOE teachers resources

**In the absence of appropriate resources, how do you conduct your lessons? And how do the children react to the lesson?**

Ameera: I will make it by myself it is very important like for deaf students they need to touch and feel everything to learn it is very important to have many resources

Laila: I never faced that because I plan well before I enter the class

Hanan: I buy them or make them

Asma: I use basic things and I make it with them, I feel the students enjoy making resources with me

Nada: we make it alone, if I don't have I use whatever available basic things

Roda: we make and search alone, the child with no resources he lose his attention

Jamila: I will use the simple things I have even the marker and board. But without it they will miss many information and knowledge

**What technology do you use to teach the students with SEND? How does it support their development?**

Ameera: I use all the available by searching

Laila: online games

Hamda: websites, device like this

Hanan: I use the rooms they provide us for the smartboard and projector

Jamila: websites I use links for reinforcements like stars but after offline and end of covid-19 I stopped online resources

**How do you get access to online gaming, blackboard, and quizzes? Did you receive training on using these platforms?**

Ameera: we search and other teacher share ideas

Laila: it was personal effort

Hanan: searching and teachers share their ideas and what they discover

Asma: I learnt from university and in the work now I was searching alone

Jamila: workshops from other teachers

Roda: no I search a lone

**What Smart devices do you have in your classroom? And how do you integrate them into the lessons?**

Ameera: I only have the laptop and iPad

Jamila: Projector from the center and talking assistive tools ( like buttons) and iPad and laptop

Nada: yes other teacher help us

Hanan: laptop and iPad only I use them individually not for all students only who can do it

Asma: laptop only

Roda: Ipad and laptop

Laila: now they took them all ( laughing ) but before I had smartboard

**Do you receive any kind of support from a teacher assistant? How does she/he help the student during the class?**

Ameera: no I don't have

Laila: no I don't have one

Hanan: yes I have a nanny she helps me

Nada and Hamda: I don't have but only we have the nanny from the home

Asma: no I don't have

Roda: I don't have

Jamila: yes I have she works with other students when I work individually with one student and she follow up on their work

**In the absence of the teacher assistant, how do you manage to approach all the students and fulfill their needs?**

Ameera: I teach one by one and I give the other students toys or things keep them busy

Hanan: I give them something to keep them busy

Roda: (laugh) it is really difficult but I try to manage I give them things to keep them busy while working with other students

Asma: group sessions if possible or I give toys or task to students while I teach one to one

Laila: I teach one student while others work on their task

Hamda: I give them something to keep him focused while I work one-to-one

Jamila: I will give them activities they can do while I work with others

**What type of training do you receive regularly? Do you receive any specific training about preparing students with SEND for transmitting to mainstream schools?**

Ameera: because I worked from 30 years I had a lot even outside the country like Bahrain and Syria many workshops. There was no workshop for preparation for inclusion

Roda: nothing about transition

Hamda: workshops

Hanan: no I didn't learn anything inclusion I only receive workshops

Asma: I never learnt about inclusion I ask the SENCO

Laila: no workshops about inclusion just from my experience and search

Jamila: no workshops about inclusion but we used to give teachers in MOE training but that was before.

**How often do you attend workshops about updated strategies?**

Ameera: yes many

Laila: I look for that online and I do it alone

**What areas would you like to receive training on?**

Ameera: ( laughed) I am leaving

Jamila: no I don't think about it

Roda: pics and floor time

Hanan: I want to visit centers to see their practices and compare



Asma: now I think inclusion and I don't know what my students need for this transition so now I feel it is important topic

Laila: diagnosis I want to learn about it

Nada: technology

Hamda: vocational training for students

**How do you think training should be (licenses, workshops, with post-exam)?**

Ameera: workshops more important in Covid- 19 period we took many work shops

Jamila: it must be face to face not online

Laila: it should be practical based on research, and license will be good for my development

Hanan: licenses very important it should be official and authorized

Roda: workshops with certificates or license so people can trust me and my abilities

Asma: workshops and cooperation between teachers we need to discuss

Nada: workshops are good

Appendix 14: interview 1  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
To be honest at the beginning I wanted my child to go for inclusion but one of the employees told me to put him in the rehabilitation center because it is better. And now I do not feel there are disadvantages about the center and the advantages are many but I noticed that the speech now is better than before also his behaviors now better I can control bad behaviors in the home.
2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
Of course I want him to be included because from the beginning I was about to put him in a regular school and inclusion. I prefer regular schools because he will learn more subjects and he will be treated like normal child with no special needs. I want him also to learn like his sisters and brothers and get more learning opportunities.
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
Yes we tried before and the administration asked us to bring a letter from the ministry I felt like the don't want to take the responsibility of my child. And the letter of acceptance took time and hard to get from the ministry so I gave up.
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
I want my child to learn speech skills because he is weak with that.
5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?  
I do not know because I never tried putting him in regular school but I think his thinking skills will be better in the school
6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?

The plan they gave me was helpful because I learnt how to deal with my child in home with all the advices from the teachers I feel more confident about dealing with him. I never discussed the inclusion with any teacher or staff of the center.

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

I wish if they provide for my child a shadow teacher because if I will put him in schools they will not pay attention to my child so I need a shadow teacher a professional one.

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

I want them to teach me how to deal with my child's behaviors also how to communicate with my child I need to talk to him

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

The speech skills are very weak he must say sentence before inclusion and the thinking skills are good so far

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

Yes many, other children might laugh on him or they will ignore him and be alone with no friends.

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

The teachers and staff do not pay attention to the needs of students with disabilities because I knew one child with a shadow teacher who treated him bad but n body noticed that. The teaching style is above his level I wish they can start from the zero with him

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

They will include him in sports and arts but I do not know if they will be able to teach him other subjects like science and math because they need to start from the beginning

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

He will be more independent and will be able to write and read inshallah

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

I don't know I am not sure

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

I think he will use the computer and technology and will be able to talk more

Appendix 15:  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
For the advantages I feel it helped my child to learn new skills and be more social not like before when he was only in the home not going any school. I cannot find many disadvantages I am satisfied. My child was in the school before but I brought him to the center because the teacher did not pay any attention to him he was always alone. The teachers were not experienced they did not know how to deal with my child they did not know what to do about his needs and disability. That is why I put him rehabilitation center because the staff have enough experience about how to deal with children with autism and other disabilities.
2. If you have the choice would transfer you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
Yes I will accept the inclusion in one case if I felt that my child ready for inclusion and the school is also ready and teachers know how to deal with the child. But if they are not able to support my child no I don't want.
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
Yes I tried I put him with his siblings. And the communication was with the teachers not administrations, when I talked to the teachers they used to say he is fine and everything is good but his brothers told me that nobody plays with him and he is always alone nobody pay attention to him. Also the other children bullied him because they did not understand his case so I took my child from the school.
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
For me the most important thing is that the child can ask for his needs, also can communication so he can understand the lesson with his friends in the class. And he must know how to defined himself because he used to suffer from other children taking his stuff and food.

5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?

He will benefit from social life he will be able to deal with other students and children not like the small environment in the center or home. Also, many other things like being independent.

6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?

I never discuss inclusion with administration but the speech therapist suggested for me to put my child in normal school. But I can not choose I prefer that the teachers suggest the inclusion. About the plans I receive many training and workshops every month about how to deal with our children and I attend them all it helped me a lot.

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

I think I want them to teach my child to be more independent

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

The child himself it depends on his level and ability to learn if he is learning fast he will be able to go to the regular schools faster

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

the normal students will not accept children with disabilities I wish they provide awareness for the students about children with disabilities so in the future there will be no bullying

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

Inclusion is good and it teaches the child to be independent and allow him to learn many ideas and information but the other students will not be able to accept students with disabilities

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

I have no idea because it depends on the teachers training and knowledge they must be ready and it is really important they have to learn about the disabilities

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

In the future he will not be introvert and will be more independent and social.

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

16. The behaviours of the child will be better and he will be independent

Appendix 16:  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
The reason is my need because I felt that I needed support more than my child because I needed to learn how to deal with him, everything was new to me and I did not have this support from schools. And alhamdulillah with the support from the teacher and specialists less stress now on me, here in the center everybody is cooperating with me. I do not feel the center is bad it is very safe environment and it provide more services for my child not like the normal schools. Also, one of the reason I brought him here because I can't pay for the fees of the private schools it is too expansive more than 60000 in a year
2. If you have the choice would transfer you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
Yes I want if I felt that my child will receive support in the school as you do in the center why not. But there is no government school that provide these services, the teachers are not trained enough.
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
Yes I tried before, the administration was helpful and welcoming but I felt it too hard because they requested me to provide a shadow teacher and I could not find a professional place that provide trusted shadow teacher. And when I post and advertisings in the newspaper , the teachers requested too much payment and allowance and I know she will leave my son and go back to her country
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
The communication with people directly, when he talk in home it is fine because we now how to talk with him but other people no they do not. I am too afraid from the sexual harassment or abuse he will not be able to tell me about it. I can not trust his skills



5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?

To be honest I have no idea

6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?

The IEP is only for the child but the online learning made me know how to teach my child it made me close to him. I was close to the teacher and she taught me many skills on how to treat him better. But there is no clear training for us.

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

I want the teachers to follow up after the inclusion or they will forget about him.

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

No I don't receive any training for me.

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

From the center I feel the problem from the school and the environment I always stress about how the teacher will be able to support my child There is no special classrooms that suit their levels and abilities I want special needs teacher not teachers who do not know about autism or other disabilities.

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

The building and tools will not be safe for my child like the labs will be risking for my child. Also the bullying from other students, he also will learn bad habits because he do not know more about the social life

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

It is good but as I said I do not think the teachers are experienced to deal with my child

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

I do not think they will pay attention to him a lot because the class is too crowded

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

The certificate after graduating from high school

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

The social skills could be more because of the bigger number of the students this might be new for him

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

I wish he will learn from the regular curriculum as much as he can so hw will be following a specific a grade not random like the center.

Appendix 17:  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
I felt this center will benefit my daughter I heard a lot that special centers will take care of the students. I want my daughter to improve because if she sits in home she will not learn anything but if she interacts with other students of determination she will learn from them. Also, the teachers in the special centers know a lot they have experience about disabilities they know hoe teach them I feel my daughter is in safe hands. The positive point is the communication, the teachers tell me everything about her, what she learns or behaviors almost every day. I do not find any negative points abou special centers I am comfortable with it.
2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
No I don't want to include her because her case is not able to be with other children she can't understand or think like others, she needs special teachers focus on her. However, she is innocent and I believe that she will never harm other children in the school but she will never learn in normal class with 30 or 25 students in one class.
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
No I never tried that before because she doesn't know how to express or say this student hits me and I will not blame the teachers in the school because they have many of students how they will focus on her only ? I wish she continues in this center
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
The speech I want her to tell what she wants to express like other children I want her to say where she goes or eat or play.
5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?  
She will learn other skills like writing and also different subjects

6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?

I learnt a lot from the workshops for the mothers they taught me how to help my child in home, because now I can support the teachers also.

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

I want at the beginning the teacher who taught my daughter in the center to visit the school and talk to the new teacher because she knows everything about her so the new teacher continues same teaching not different.

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

All the workshops were good it taught me how to take care of my daughter

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

Speech is very important she must know how to express herself. Also her thinking is very simple also she is not patient if the lesson is 30 minutes she will sit only 10 minutes then she will start move or talk but in the center is better

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

The children will not understand her the society is until now do not have idea about disabled child. I face this problem a lot with other children when they see my daughter in shops or clinic, the children don't want to play or talk to her because they are afraid because they see her is not able to talk. also, the children will hit her.

Some parents teach their children about disabled people and encourage them to play with them but some other parents no they don't or even stop the children from playing with disabled children. And it hurts me because I feel my daughter is not loved and she is forsaken.

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

Yes I heard before about students go to schools and inshallah one day she goes there inshallah

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

I think in activities like art and sports and music it is easy because she will be happy and it is easy for her to understand, also all students with determination love these activities but for the real subjects it will be hard on the normal teachers to teach curriculum to our special children

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

Inshallah she will be able to be part of the community maybe she will be able to work and productive for herself and the community

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

She will learn about the outside world

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

To be honest I wish she can learn more sports and get trophies because she like sports.

Appendix 18:  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
Because I have another daughter in the same center so I have experience about the centers and all the teacher and staff are really understanding everybody in the center I can trust. Everything they have in the center is good because the teachers are specialized in disable people also the building and environment is safe also the devices and everything they have. And there are no negative things because even the bus rider is helpful and cooperate with me.
2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
Yes as an trying yes I want to try I want to see my daughter how will react there in the school. She will accept the new environment and other children will accept her too. Yes I think about it a lot I wish they try even if it is for one week
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
No I never tried before
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
Hamdullah here in the center they taught her everything and now she even knows how to open the IPad and Laptop but the only thing she doesn't know how to write words but other simple things she already knows
5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?  
She is smart yes she doesn't know how to write but when the teacher explain to her things she understand and memories. She will benefit from the school because she will see people without disability not like the center she will see different community
6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?

We get workshops and many things and the teacher gives me tasks to take pictures for my daughter while doing activities in home we feel connected this is weekly. No I never discussed the inclusion before

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

If they decide that my daughter can do to normal school, I don't know for sure but I wish they give her a try for one week to see how she will act how the children act with her how the teachers will accept her I want to know we don't know how the schools are

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

The delay is because of the type of the disability and level of disability, yes they are all disabled but they are not all the same now my daughter has multiple disabilities and maybe the school do not want her

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

I don't think there will be risks on my child but the other students will feel weird about her

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

Yes I heard about students included in the schools and I heard it is good

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

I want to try first because I feel like my daughter will be able to learn she is smart

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

She will see different teachers different students more big community. She will be independent and she will find jobs she will be able to share people life

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

She will learn read and write from different subjects there she will have more opportunities

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

She will have more social life and she will be independent and if she live with ither normal people she will not be shy or hide from people.



Appendix 19:  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
Because the centers are more specialized in the disabilities and they know how to deal with them. The positive things that the center will take care of my children they know what he needs what will make him better all the skills he needs
2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
No I do not want him to go to normal schools because my child has limited abilities I don't want him to suffer. I had the option to put him in normal school but I preferred to wait one year to get in a center because I know in the center my child will improve they will know how to deal with him unlike the normal schools. How the teacher will be able to manage the students when they are over 20 students in a class?! Not like special center there are only five students in each class so the teacher will pay attention to my child. Again it depends on the level of the disability not all the kids are the same
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
Yes I registered him in the pre KG it was ok but I used to pay 8000 dirhams monthly over the regular school fees. It was too much on me and his father, they cost more on disabled child not like the normal one. So I feel better to enter him in special center government or private because I know my son is improving not like the school
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
The social skills are very important and this is very difficult for autistic child because this is their disability . it is important without these skills how he will interact with children ? that's why I don't want him to go to normal school
5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?

New friends he will discover the world

6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?

They give me each semester each 3 months a plan for new skills and what is the development. No I never discussed inclusion

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

It is not about the center it is about the school my son will go to what do they have the center is fine but what about the school do the teachers know how to deal with him are they going to treat him and teach him like the center How my son will be in the school

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

The therapists like speech and behavior therapist always talk to me about solutions I can apply in the home specially during the corona period the communication was every day and continuous I always had support from them

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

The school ability to support my child and the level of disability because even if the teacher is teaching my son he might be still unable to learn because of his thinking level. Yes and the schools are still can't include autism they don't know anything about them

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

Bullying, I heard from my friends our kids don't know what is bullying but it affects their emotions and feelings.

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

There are some cases were successful and some children still needs support because of their disability

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

Yes in the activities like sports and music and fun activity will be very good for them because children who have disability find it easy and fun they will love it not like lessons and subjects

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

He will learn in the future how to deal with people, he will see how the life and deal with people not disabled

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

Socially he will learn communication with people in the real world

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

He will learn more subjects because in the center he learns writing and reading only but in the school he will find everything and all subjects.

Appendix 20:  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?

The doctor who diagnosed the disability suggested that to improve the case and avoid issue in the future. I don't have any negative feelings even the small number in the class is advantage because the teacher can focus. But the in the school classroom maybe can helps him to feel the real world.

2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?

No I don't want to include because the disability doesn't allow them to be with normal students and the teachers there how they will focus on my child while the class crowded with 30 students? Also I noticed there some children who are afraid from disabled students from my experience in the mall some children they stay away my daughter don't look ugly or scary.

3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?

No I never wanted to go for normal schools because my child disability is severe

4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?

Actually the disability of my child is hard to teach so I don't know if she will ever be able to go to normal school. But if I wished for something that she gets rid of the diaper and go to toilet normally. I would support their inclusion only If she shares some activities not all day and subjects. To be honest I never thought about your question I feel like it is new idea I enrolled my children 2008 and 2011 in which grade there will be now ?! I am worried about one of the children because I have three of them one of them she will be 18 years soon I am worried about her future I don't want her to be isolated or sitting in the home do nothing so I wished if she was in regular school and have clear future now

5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?

She will see more people not only disabled students her social interactions will be better.

6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?

I have each term new plan for the skills she will learn like coloring and new behaviors positive behaviors and other independent skills like washing hands and the teachers communicate with us and update us with the progress. Also they provide us with workshops and lectures I find helpful last one was about sexual harassment it was good because I have three children with disability

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

I never thought about it but if that happens they must go through small steps it can't be suddenly into new environment this will cause negative issues on my children. To be honest I have phobia about my daughters get into regular schools because they will be with normal students and you have no idea how they will treat my children how their parents raised them are they kind or dangerous on my children. I want safety for my children.

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

Yes they provided a lot of workshops but because of my job I didn't attend all of them but when I needed them they always answer me. Most the advice about the communication and how can I help them express their needs

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

Her intellectual disability and level of disability is too strong. Also there are some people and children don't like children with disability however my kids don't look ugly or bad and other children they feel pity about my children I hate that they say oh no they don't understand they are stupid and other insulting talk. Also, my child is non verbal and she is not able to say who hits her or treated her badly

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

Number one is harassment with all types sexual and verbal and abuse also especially that they have intellectual and verbal disability also the bullying.

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

What I know it was successful for non-intellectual disability like deaf but I feel that it harms their emotions and feelings because they will feel that they are less than their classmates. Different abilities will make them feel bad about themselves and how about the teacher is he ready to teach them ?! I am not sure I think they suffer from bullying also.

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

I would like if the inclusion will be for activities like music and art and sport it will be fun and easy form them unlike the other classes it will help their feelings it will be better because they will see bigger world

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

Communication maybe she will learn some new skills maybe she ..her thinking will get better

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

Communication and thinking she will also be be more independent

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

Academic no she will not learn because her disability is severe but social communication will be better

Appendix 21:  
Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
Because she needs early intervention when she was born with down syndrome I search and I asked people they recommend rehabilitation centers. Advantages the specialists and teachers are qualified to deal with our children but the negative points are when the child is case suitable for inclusion but they get affected by other disabled students and start imitate them he will get worse
2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
It depends if my child is ready I think the teacher should judge and I think I need a shadow teacher
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
No I never tried
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
She will learn but maybe slowly I feel the schools are not ready the children will not benefit they readch to level and the progress stops
5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?  
Yes I want her to communicate better, more speech therapy and I want her to go to toilet
6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?  
No I don't
7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?  
No I trust them if she is ready for inclusion I think they will tell me

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

Yes I attend all the workshops they provided and they taught me how to deal with my child it was good

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

My daughter abilities

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

Abuse and bullying

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

It is still not good many schools don't want to accept and the schools who accept they want shadow teachers and the teacher will not pay attention to my child she just focuses on the other students and leave him on the shadow

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

I feel the normal activities are easier than subjects and complicated lessons my child will enjoy sports and art

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

She will be more social and the more students get included the community will change they will start accept them no one will look down on them, they will not be ignored in separate centers

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

She will learn simple skills and be independent

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

Be more social and confident with other normal students



## Appendix 22:

### Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
Because she is autistic and she is difficult to deal with and the area I live in there is no school will accept her. The private class less students are in so it is better for my daughter the teacher will be able to focus on her but the for negative things I feel bad my daughter doesn't have many friends.
2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
Yes I will like but if she changes her behaviors my daughter always say I want to go with ' Hind .. Ahmed ... (name of the siblings ) school I want like their books. I feel she understands the difference
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
Yes I tried but the tested her then because my friends suggested that it will be better for her to get therapy in the center
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
She will learn more subjects reading and writing will be better.
5. Based on your child's abilities, What is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?  
I want her to learn language and basic math and reading and writing
6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?  
The plans for each semester have simple math like addition reading words like this.  
I never discussed inclusion but the teacher told me she is good but I am worried about her feelings
7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?  
They follow up with her in the new school

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

They taught me to be patient and be realistic about my daughter's disability I accepted her behaviors. I controlled myself also.

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

My daughter abilities and the curriculum of normal schools is difficult any I live in area don't have many school for inclusion

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

She might hit other children she gets angry easily

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

It is good changing because in the centers they are isolated

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

If they make easy curriculum for them yes because her thinking ability is weak.

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

Be more social and see other new people who are not disabled

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

She will have life she will be like her siblings

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?

She loves activities like events and music and art this will be easy for her.

## Appendix: 23

### Semi-structured interviews

1. What made you decide to enroll your child in a rehabilitation center? What are the advantage and disadvantages of letting your child study in a private classroom?  
At the beginning I registered him in regular school it was nursery then they suggested to take him to speech therapy and when the doctors saw him the neurologist and psychiatric told me he is autism and then the school told me to put him in a private center. He has therapies like occupational and speech therapy but in schools he will not get these therapies so it will be difficult for him. For the disadvantage I wish he learn with other kids the normal kids. I always feel something bad for him ( the mother got teary) wherever I take him for example if he learn swimming he is alone he can't join with others.
2. If you have the choice would transfer, you your child to a mainstream school and why?  
If he is improving yes if he can speak of course he need to know the normal environment
3. Have you tried to enroll your child in a school, what was your experience with the administration?  
They registered him at the beginning but after the assessment he was not answering and no eye contact so they asked me to go to hospital
4. What the skills would you like your child to learn before being included?  
The most important thing speech and helping himself, social communication and basic academic skills
5. Based on your child's abilities, what is he/she going to benefit from studying in mainstream schools?  
Maybe he will improve more social skills this is my wish
6. What kind of plans do you receive from the center? Have discussed transition with the faculty? What impression have you got from the discussion?  
Regular plans for teaching my son, I never talked to anyone about inclusion. I wish he is improving

7. What kind of support do you want to get from the center to move your child for inclusion?

Yes a shadow teacher and speech and occupational therapy I want him to reduce the humming sound ( noises)

8. What kind of parental training do you receive that enables you to support your child's performance?

No

9. Other than that what factors delay the inclusion of your child?

Because he is autistic and he can't join with normal kids that's the problem he is so different it is very difficult

10. What are the threats your child might face when studying with other typically-developed children?

That the difficulty maybe the other kids will not understand him maybe they will bully him. When I think about that I feel like emotional (the mother cried) I am sorry

11. What do you think of the inclusion experience in general in UAE mainstream schools? Would the teaching style fit your child's ability?

Most of time I heard other kids bully them that is why I am scared for my son I am really worried about for his future maybe it will be difficult (cried) I don't know how it will be

12. To what extent the teachers in mainstream schools will be able to integrate your child into daily activities?

I am not sure because I don't know I am not sure to be honest

13. What would your child benefit in the long term from inclusion?

Inshallah after 15 years my hope my wish if he will be improving a lot maybe he will be changed and become a normal. (The mother cried once again and the researcher stopped)

14. In what area inclusion would empower your child?

15. What are the social and academic skills your child will learn in an inclusive setting?