A Case Study Investigation of Special Needs Inclusion Policy Implementation in three Abu Dhabi Primary Schools In the UAE

By

JACQUI LOTTIN NFOR

MA in Education & Teaching

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

PHD IN SPECIAL & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

at

The British University in Dubai

July 2017

Thesis Supervisor

Professor Eman Gaad

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Abstract

In the UAE, education has been identified as top priority and the government has taken steps to promote inclusive education to protect the rights of persons with disability, using Law No 29 of 2006, pertaining to the ''Rights of Persons with Special Needs'' (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006). Based on this law, all young people are afforded equal rights and opportunities (Farouk 2008), which aligns with UNESCO's Salamanca Convention Framework for Action Statement (1994) to accommodate all children in mainstream schools, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, or emotional condition. This government policy was to fit in with the proponents of inclusive education which refers to all students, who ''irrespective of their strengths or weaknesses, will become part of the school community'' (Hassan 2008, p.8).

This research study adopts a qualitative approach that investigates the implementation of Abu Dhabi Education Council's (ADEC) special educational needs policy, with inclusion as the guiding platform for this policy. Employing a collective case study investigation, the study evaluates school and HQ staff applying their comprehension of the intricate idea of inclusive practices in school settings. This provides a rich and contextualized view of how these various stakeholders, including mainstream teachers, special needs teachers, principals, and students, perceive its implementation.

Research instruments to compile the data for triangulation (Stake 1995; Denzin 1984, 1989), employs qualitative methods that include observations, semi-structured interviews, as well as documentation analysis. The research guiding question is: 'To what extent is Abu Dhabi Education Council's Special Educational Needs Policy implemented in practice and what can be done to improve its implementation to support inclusive education in government primary schools in Abu Dhabi '. In order to effectively answer this question, this research focuses on four areas to evaluate policy impact, namely the curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service teacher professional development. These four key areas gives some weight to the study. The investigation targets the culture within five primary schools with reference to their inclusive policies and practices. Also central to the study analysis is employing The Index for Inclusion

which is a tool with a set of indicators developed by Booth & Ainscow (2011) to measure the above four areas.

Analysis from the themes which emanated from this study reveals that, Abu Dhabi Education Council's Special Educational Needs Policy is robust, with many positive characteristics that align with similar effective global education policies that support an inclusive learning culture across schools. However, there are still gaps between policy implementation and practice within schools, ranging from a lack of understanding of what the policy entails to effective knowledge of special educational needs practices, as well as continuing professional development. Furthermore, additional research is still needed to gather reliable data to support policy implementation as required by Federal Law on an inclusive educational system, not just within Abu Dhabi Education Council schools, but across schools in the UAE. Insights into the contexts are used to put forward research- based recommendations for future practice which will improve the effectiveness in implementing inclusive practices.

المُلخص

إن دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة تُعدّ من إحدى الدول التي حددت التعليم كأولويّة وطنية ومن ثم أخذت حكومة دولة الإمارات العربية على عاتقها مسؤولية تنمية وتطوير التعليم الدامج من أجل حماية حقوق الأفراد ذوي الإعاقة (أصحاب الهمم)، وذلك إستناداً إلى القانون رقم 29 لسنة 2006 الخاص بـ " حقوق الأفراد ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة" (أصحاب الهمم)- (وزارة الشؤون الإجتماعية 2006) واستناداً على ذلك القانون الإتحادي، الذي أتاح لكل الأفراد من الشباب كامل الفرص والحقوق بالتساوي فيما بينهم (فاروق 2008) منتهجاً بذلك الإطار الخاص بإعلان سلامانكا التابعة لمنظمة اليونيسكو الدولية لعام 1994 والذي ينص على إتاحة الفرص للتعليم في المدارس العامة لجميع الطلبة دون النظر للحالة الجسدية أو العقلية أو الإجتماعية أو الوجدانية الخاصة بهم.

تلك السياسة الحكومية كان ولابد لها من مناصرين لفكرة التعليم الدامج للعمل على جعل جميع الطلبة " بغض النظر عن مكامن القوة أو مكامن الضعف فيهم" جزءاً لا يتجزأ من المجتمع المدرسي" (حسن 2008، صـ 8).

إن هذه الدراسة البحثية تتبنى المنهج الكيّفي في البحث من خلال التحقق من آلية تطبيق مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم لسياسة ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة(أصحاب الهمم) بما في ذلك التعليم الدامج كمنصّة أساسية للإنطلاق نحو تطبيق تلك السياسة. الدراسة البحثية تمت من خلال دراسة حالة لعدد من المدارس وفرق القيادة بتلك المدارس ومدى التطبيق لسياسة ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة بناءً على الفهم النسبي لتلك المدارس لمفهوم التعليم الدامج وآلية تطبيقة في البيئة المدرسية. من خلال تلك الدراسة البحثية، نستطيع أن نتحصل على نظرة عامة لمفهوم كل الشركاء بمن فيهم المعلمين ومعلمي التربية الخاصة والمدراء والطلبة لآلية تطبيق التعليم الدامج.

أدوات البحث الثلاثية هي من تم إستخدامها في تلك الدراسة (Stake 1995; Denzin 1984, 1989)، من خلال تطبيق البحث الكيّفي في الدراسة مشتملاً على الجوانب الثلاث : المشاهدة، المقابلات الموجهة، فحص الوثائق والمستندات. السؤال الذي تدور حولة الدراسة في هذا البحث هو " إلى أى مدى يتم طبيق سياسة مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم الخاصة بذوي الإحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة وما الذي يمكن إتخاذة من إجراءات لتحسين عملية التطبيق بما يدّعم التعليم الدامج في مدارس المرحلة الإبتدائية في إمارة أبوظبي؟" ومن أجل الإجابة على هذا السؤال، تتمحوّر الدراسة البحثية حول أربعة محاور لتقييم أثر تلك السياسة وهم: المنهج الدراسي، الولوج، وسائل التقييم بالإضافة إلى عملية التدريب المهني للمعلمين العاملين بالمدارس وقد أفضى وجود العناصر الأربعة السابقة، بأن أصقل مصداقية تلك الدراسة البحثية.

إن عملية التحقق التي تمت من خلال تلك الدراسة تضمنت دراسة حالة لخمس مدارس في المرحلة التأسيسية ومدي نجاح سياسات التعليم الدامج والخاص المطبقة بتلك المدارس. إعتمدت الدراسة على نموذج التعليم الدامج(Booth & Ainscow (201) بما يتضمنة من معايير للتحق من تطبيق المحاور الأربعة الخاصة بالرسالة.

أظهرت نتائج الدراسة البحثية التي إنبثقت من تحليل البيانات بأن سياسة مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم الخاصة بذوي الإحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة(أصحاب الهمم) هى سياسة غنية بالمصادر وشاملة وبها العديد من الإجابيات من حيث المضمون وذالك مقارنة بالسايسات الخاصة بالتعليم الخاص والدامج على مستوى العالم في أنظمة التعليم القوية التي تطبق ثقافة التعليم الدامج بمدارسها.

إلا أنه، قد خلصت الدراسة أيضاً إلى وجود فجوة بين تطبيق السياسة وعملية الممارسة داخل المدارس بداية من قلة فهم لما تتضمنة السياسة من معلومات حول ممارسات التتعليم الخاص والدامج وإنتهاءً بعملية التطوير والتدريب الهني المستمر.

ولا نزال بحاجة لعديد من الأبحاث في هذا المجال من أجل الحصول على مزيد من المعلومات الموثوقة التي من شأنها أن تُعلي من تطبيق منظومة التعليم الخاص والدامج ليس فقط في إمارة أبوظبي ، بل في كافة إمارات الدولة. تختتم تلك الدراسة ببعض التوصيات التي سوف تفيد في آلية تطبيق أكثر فاعلية للتعّليم الدامج.

Dedication

To my son Randy, who taught me what it means living with and understanding disability in a very personal way and to forever appreciate the unique values that people with disabilities contribute to society.

I love you specially for making me a strong person.

Acknowledgements

This work has been made possible through the support and guidance of many people.

Firstly, I wish to offer my deepest and most sincere appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor Professor Eman Gaad. Her continuous words of encouragement, guidance, positive attitude and advice were endless. She was always there for me, a bright light when the tunnel was very dark. She always gave me such belief in me that I will always cherish. Her selfless, reassuring support was available to me, day or in the middle of the night. She is my mentor and her unflinching confidence in me resulted in me presenting my research topic at the 1st BUID Doctoral Conference at The British University in Dubai where I won 'Best Paper'. Winning this award gave me the assurance to embark on completing this thesis, one of the most challenging tasks I have had to face. Also, through her support, my confidence in writing increased in a hobby I enjoy. I was proud to be co-author for chapter 4 in a published book titled 'Womanhood, Values & Modernity, 2016. Professor Eman, thank you for your spirit of inspiration and enthusiasm with regards to this project. I look forward to continue our collaboration in the future work of academics and publishing.

I also like to express my thanks to all the lecturers at BUID who infused me with knowledge and enthusiasm. I appreciate the lecturers at the University of Glasgow who gave me the determination to see this work through. Also, I thank immensely Professor Therese Tchombe for her invaluable advice at different stages of this work on a topic we are both passionate about.

Furthermore, I wish to thank the thousands of students I have taught in classrooms in the UK and the UAE. I remember fondly the school leadership teams I have successfully coached, with whom I have built long lasting friendships and who have been part of the journey in helping me to grow professionally, in my career as an educator.
I am also indebted to the Special Needs Division at Abu Dhabi Education Council who facilitated the completion of this study, by giving me access into their schools, to work alongside staff and students, in spite of their own busy schedules.

Finally to my beloved family, who are my rock. My dear husband, my best friend, who did all the proof reading of every assignment, throughout my studies. Without him and his words of

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God bless you all, for making my dreams come true.

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List of Keywords

- Inclusion
- Inclusive education
- Four Staged Approach
- Index for Inclusion
- Professional Development
- Schools for All
- Cycle 1 Primary Schools
- Tamkeen Professional Development Project
- ADEC Project School

List of Abbreviations

UAE – United Arab Emirate

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

ADEC – Abu Dhabi Education Council

LST – Learning Support Team

SEN – Special Education Needs

MSA – Ministry of Social Affairs

MOE – Ministry of Education

KG - Kindergarten

C1-C3 – Cycle 1 to Cycle 3

IEP – Individual Education Plan

ALP – Advanced Learning Plan

AVP – Academic vice Principal

CM – Cluster Manager

EA – English Advisors

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 History of Education in the Arab World/Region

Similar to other parts of the world, education in the Arab world can be seen as a fundamental aspect of 21st century life. Nations in the region have over the past 45 years been allocating an average of 10% - 20% funds of their government expenditure to education, which is higher than some third world countries have done. Due to this decision, the Arab region has been able to improve education and equal opportunities for their citizens, which has led to remarkable ongoing changes. However, there is still much work to be done. Moreover, the lack of full awareness still permeates the Arab world in the development of inclusive procedures and practices.

Consequently, there are gaps in knowledge to understand the inclusion implementation process and practice for skill development amongst teachers. In-service teachers and pre-service initial education colleges are areas that need improvements to promote the knowledge and expertise of inclusive practices. Teacher training programs need to highlight the diversity of students as a necessary part of their teacher preparation programs and with a focus to specifically address teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse classrooms. For practices to improve, school staff have to improve their awareness and attitudes as well, in order to support learners who have varied learning needs.

The literature in the field supports the above with Mitchell (2010) asserting that a whole school approach, led by school leadership and all stakeholders, is necessary and needed for successful inclusive practices to be embedded in schools. Historically, children with disabilities were once ostracized in separate buildings or relegated to isolated corridors of the school. Inclusion in early childhood has shifted attention to the rights of young children to belong in the natural environment within their communities. Generally speaking, professionals in special education define the natural environment to be any surrounding in which children would be learning everyday skills, if they did not have a disability.

1.2 UAE Background

The United Arab Emirates is a small country of approximately eight million citizens that form part of the countries in the Arab Region, referred to as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations. The GCC was established in 1981. The GCC is the political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries, namely, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. Prior to exploring the emergence of inclusive education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), it is pivotal to understand the country's social, economic background and the UAE's education system. The UAE, as a young rich nation, has rapidly grown from a small country situated on the Arabian Gulf, into a modern metropolitan nation in the Arab region. The country is made up of seven emirates which are: Dubai, Abu Dhabi Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah, Umm Al Quwain, Fujairah, and Ajman.

In exploring the social and economic background of the UAE, researchers such as Bradshaw, Tennant and Lydiatt (2004), and Gaad (2004a) claim that the country has an extended history of

local lifestyles, prior to the arrival of a large population of expatriate residents from several countries worldwide.

The UAE's economy is driven by oil, gas and lately tourism, from where its riches have transformed the country into a modern cosmopolitan and liberal nation. Islam is the main religion and Islamic values can be seen permeating through its society and communities, as well as through its educational system. The education system is relatively new, rising from the nomadic traditions of home school, primarily focused on studying readings from the Holy Quran. More so, Bradshaw et al (2004) assert that there were few formal schools in the country by 1952; this was the time when public schools officially started. A government authority was created to overseer a curriculum with subjects beyond religious studies, which was introduced into the education system. These emerging government schools had their curriculum models largely based on similar ones from nearby Arab nations of Kuwait and Jordan (Gonzalez et al. 2008).

In the late 1960s and 1970s, with the formation of a UAE Federal State, a compulsory education system was introduced and this evolved into separate schools for males and females, on the basis of Islamic teachings and traditions; nonetheless with the curriculum still largely borrowed from Kuwait. Eventually, in 1985, a UAE national curriculum was adopted by the Ministry of Education (Gardner 1995; Gonzalez et al. 2008; Ridge 2009). Furthermore, within the seven Emirates, the responsibility for both the public and private education systems was given to the UAE Ministry of Education (MOE) after the Declaration of the Federation of the Seven Emirates in 1971(Gaad, Arif & Scott 2006) by the UAE government

In the UAE, the government authorities responsible for education are led by different government bodies in its seven Emirates. Alongside the UAE Ministry of Education who assume a broader role over education in the country, Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) is the government regulatory and operational entity that oversees education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, in both the private and public sectors. In the Emirate of Dubai, The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) is the educational quality assurance and regulatory authority of the Government of Dubai, United Arab Emirates. These three authorities have run awareness workshops, professional development training sessions to existing staff to discuss and share this very important aspect of education for all. The current situation today mirrors similar education systems across other countries worldwide.

The structure of the education system in both the public and private sectors depicts a system of two years in kindergarten, and five years at the primary level (referred to as Cycle One) which is from Grade 1 to Grade 5. Additionally, seven years are spent in secondary education at Cycle Two, which is from Grades 6-9 and Cycle Three from Grades 10-12 consecutively. Admission is free for all nationals in public schools. This study focuses at the primary level - Cycle One within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

As previously mentioned across the seven emirates, students in all public and private schools are taught in gender specific grades from Grade 5 onwards. Consequently, female teachers are appointed for all girls' schools and male teachers for all boys' school (Bradshaw, Lydiatt & Tennant 2004). Currently, due to the major educational reform now taking place in the country and particularly in Abu Dhabi, feminized schools now exist where female educators have been appointed for many boys' schools at the primary level.

Consequently, a different government educational body operates within each emirate to ensure that a high quality educational provision is maintained across the schools. In the Emirate of Abu Dhabi which is the focus of this study, Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) is the governing body or educational authority in the management and administration of the schools. The Ministry of Education regulates and operates schools in the other emirates. In addition, the Ministry of Education shoulders a broader set of responsibilities, for example, build new schools, and provide curricular materials in Arabic and Islamic Studies (Bradshaw, Lydiatt & Tennant 2004).

As an overview and with regards to special education for students with various disabilities, the educational system has evolved tremendously, with considerable transformation and transition in the last forty six years. There are a large percentage of people with disabilities in the UAE of approximately 10% of the total population (Bradshaw et al, 2004). This figure is similar to global trends. Historically, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) catered for the services for people with disabilities. Special education is the provision of extra services, support, programs, for students who have educational needs that are different from and additional to those provided in mainstream education. This includes education for students with disabilities as well as for gifted and talented students. This is aimed at ensuring that all individuals are given the best opportunities to reach their maximum potential.

Over the years, the inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities has been a topical issue in the Middle East Region, and this will be reviewed in Chapter 2- Literature Review section. Notwithstanding, several determinants have hampered the decision of policy makers to implement full inclusion. These factors include: beliefs and values that prevail within the society,

teacher attitudes and readiness as well as parental attitude towards disability inclusion (Gaad 2004b). The attitude of teachers is of primary significance in discussions on inclusion due to the fact that their 'day to day interaction with students would contribute to or lessen the success of inclusive practices' (Gaad 2004b, p. 27).

A brief introduction to the UAE joining the inclusive education arena was based on the outcomes from the Salamanca Convention, organized by United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in Spain in 1994. During this conference, the focus on educating all children in mainstream classrooms was met with very strong support by the delegates. The conference adopted the Salamanca Statement on 'Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action'. The Salamanca Statement called for a policy shift which would require all schools in the regular school system to become inclusive schools and serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs. It emphasized that the education of children with disabilities and learning difficulties could not advance in isolation, but must form part of an overall educational strategy which would call for major reform of the regular school. This approach was seen as a crucial step towards advancing the commitment to Education for All. This meant that all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions will receive an effective education to meet their diverse needs. A demand was made for education systems and program design to take account of this wide diversity. Mainstream schools must now provide an appropriate child-centered teaching and learning environment that can accommodate these special educational needs. The Statement concludes with the following:

> Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective
> means of combating discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming communities, building
> an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover they provide

an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost- effectiveness of the entire education system.

In the UAE, education has been identified as a top priority and the government has taken steps to promote inclusive education to protect the rights of persons with disability, using Federal Law No 29 of 2006, pertaining to the ''Rights of Persons with Special Needs'' (Ministry of Social Affairs 2006), hence formally recognizing the rights of people with disabilities. The Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities later ratified this into law (Gaad 2011). The law guarantees the right to equitable educational opportunities to all school students (Farouk 2008), hence aligning with UNESCO's Salamanca Convention Framework for Action Statement (1994) which accommodates all children in mainstream schools, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, or emotional condition. The Ministry of Education (MOE), on the back of this Law of 2006, pioneered the official launch of the General Rules for the Provision of Special Education Services using the theme 'School For All' in May 2010 within its Framework. This Framework identified a set of criteria to expound on ten special education categories and the role of schools and school personnel to provide services to this target group. The government affirms that inclusive education implies that all students, 'irrespective of their strengths or weaknesses, will become part of the school community' (Hassan 2008, p.8).

Gaad (2004a) reports that in a growing economy such as that of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the field of education has experienced dramatic changes in the last decade – especially the area of special education (Gaad 2004a).The UAE government has displayed a long-running commitment to promoting equality for those who have special needs, especially with regard to the provision of fair education opportunities. Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 was designed to protect the rights of individuals with a disability and encourages the inclusion and integration of these individuals into society. This provision of special education programs and services in the

UAE since 1979 has developed gradually and extended to acknowledge a wider variety of categories of special education available to students, in order to promote inclusive education or equal access to educational opportunities.

In 2011, within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the Education Council (ADEC) that oversees public schools as mentioned before highlighted the 'School for All' theme by adopting the 1994 Salamanca Statement and the United Nation's Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006). UN Convention, (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

The consequences of the UAE adopting the United Nations Convention of 2006 to meet international standards imposed on them a duty of compliance to the provisions of this Convention, which is 'embedded in the debate on social justice and equality, for persons with disabilities' (Lindsay 2007, p.2). This approach is also rooted in Islamic law and the cultural heritage of the UAE with regards to Islamic teachings which state that people with disabilities have rights and it is the duty of the community to take care of their needs. In accordance with this UN Convention and the Salamanca Convention Statement vision, ADEC believes that both students with disabilities and those who are gifted or talented must be given the opportunity to achieve and exceed the learning expectations established for all students, and be able to participate in mainstream education as much as possible. This view has slowly led to the abolishment of segregated special schools in favor of these students joining mainstream schools and be afforded with appropriate support from the Learning Support Team (LST). The Ministry of Education and ADEC 'School For All' Framework Statement provided clear guidelines, which ensured that changes could be made at school management level, effective

training of school staff and providing a flexible and adaptable curriculum as well as provide a robust support service for service users. The central role of parents and the community are emphasized within the Framework. The fundamental basis of the Framework was to emphasize equal rights and equal opportunity within an inclusive education system. Article 24 of the Statement asserts that policy makers should ensure:

(a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;

(b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;

In order to consolidate their drive towards inclusive education, ADEC launched a guidebook 'Special Education Policy and Procedures Handbook', which had backing from the aforementioned Federal Law 14/2009 (Appendix 1), an amendment of Law No. 29, 2006 (Gaad 2011). This Federal Law No 29 stood as the official recognition of the rights of people with disabilities and regulated their economic, social, health and educational rights as full citizens. Abu Dhabi Education Council's Special Educational Needs (SEN) Policy boosted the Ministry of Education's 'Schools for All' Paper (2010) – (Appendix 2) as a paradigm for stakeholders to inclusion. This strengthened the commitment of the government to involve students with disability in ordinary schools within Abu Dhabi Emirate (Abu Dhabi Government 2008), hence every public school administered by ADEC is obliged to abide by the policy statements in promoting an inclusive culture within their school. Within the context of this study, special education and inclusion have the same meaning of providing all students with meaningful,

relevant learning opportunities and experiences. The categories of special educational needs are explored further in Chapter Two of the literature review section.

The Handbook emphasizes as a priority, the placement of students with disabilities in an inclusive education environment. This means that education and instruction within schools and particularly at the primary level are delivered in an age-appropriate mainstream class, within an environment that supports both the teacher and the student. Differentiation as an instruction strategy allows the students with disabilities, as well as gifted or talented students, to learn alongside each other in the same classroom, and preferably in small group tasks and activities. Due to the fact that some students need more time to prepare for transition into mainstream classes, ADEC further advise that each student's ability has to be considered in order for them to adapt and to thrive within an inclusive environment. There is an expectation for all the students to take an active part in all the school activities and culture within each school.

Furthermore, within the Handbook, ADEC also focuses on a support and partnership approach to inclusion. The responsibility for all students is shared amongst all educational staff of the school and the school leadership. ADEC also encourages close collaboration between school staff and parents of students with disabilities, so that both parties are viewed as valuable partners who should work together to best cater for their children's' needs. Inclusive Education means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers, and support staff. In addition to supporting the needs of students with disabilities within mainstream classrooms, several facilities for rehabilitation, therapy and

counseling began operating in Abu Dhabi and across the UAE as a package, with the hope to be able to integrate these students into a formal mainstream education pathway (Gaad 2011). In 1980, the Ministry of Education (MOE) conducted a survey to identify the number of students with mild to moderate disabilities, mainly from learning difficulties and speech and language disorders (Abdat 2010; Gaad 2001).

Several steps have been taken to encourage and advance an effective special education system, beginning with the early identification and intervention from kindergarten into primary levels (Bradshaw et al. 2004). By 1990, there was a move towards a less restrictive environment in government primary schools by establishing special resource rooms for students with disabilities. These resource rooms would be used on a short term withdrawal basis for small groups of students, who will then be able to spend the bigger chunk of their day in a mainstream classroom with their peers. Below is Figure 1, depicting the 'Hierarchy for Inclusive Learning Environments' from the UAE Ministry of Education, Special Education Department, which is adopted by ADEC. This diagram explains the approach that the UAE government adopted as part of 'School For All' –General Rules for the Provision of Special Education programs and Services for Public and Private Schools across the country:

Figure 1. Hierarchy for Inclusive Education Learning Environments.
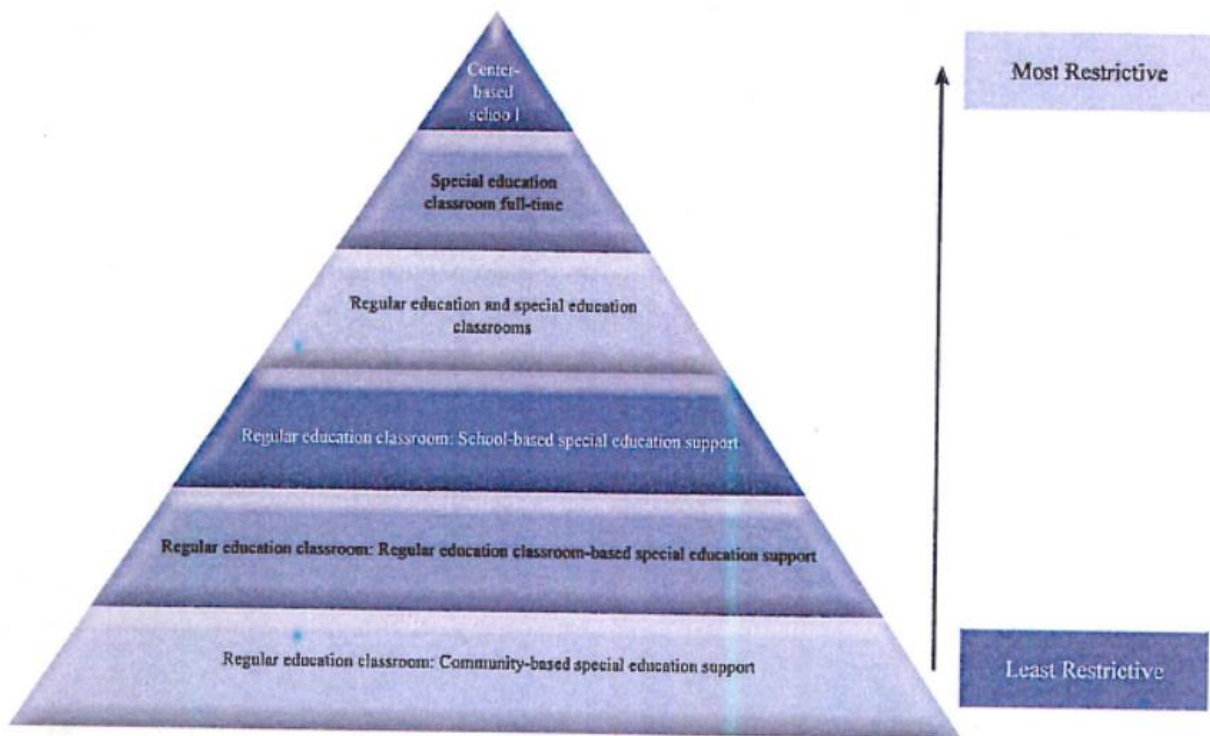
Fig 1 (UAE Ministry of Education, School For All, 2010 p. 25)

Presently, the main focus on special education services in Dubai and Abu Dhabi public schools specifically is on an early intervention system. The approach being implemented is that of a

referral system where the class teacher refers students who fail to make progress to the Learning Support Team (LST). A health professional will assess a child's developmental level in cases where parents seek a formal evaluation, for an accurate diagnosis. This early intervention is carried out from kindergarten or primary years by the special education professional team at the school, called the LST, which is made up of the educational psychologist and/or speech-language pathologist, special education teacher and the social worker. Identified students are then assigned either to a special class or to resource rooms where the enrollment does not exceed more than ten students, so that they can access a personalized, individual remedial program. Qualified special education teachers who are all fluent Arabic speakers take on these students (Hassan 2008). Psychologists can also refer these students to be registered in regular classrooms (Gaad 2004b). In public schools, these psychologists support the student's social and emotional needs. Gaad (2004b) found that, although cases were being seen where students with mild and moderate disabilities were being referred into mainstream classes, those with severe disabilities were not being offered the same option. Due to this obstacle with the severely disabled, parents have to take the onus to fetch for appropriate programs and services. The result of this frustration is that the parents of these children with severe disabilities make the choice to keep their children at home (Gaad 2004b); or in some other cases, students who fail to thrive following the remedial intervention plan are referred to other special education facilities or centers outside of the mainstream school.

New assessments to identify students with special education needs that are culturally and contextually relevant in the region are currently being developed and implemented as well as being reviewed. Different reasons exist that may lead to a student being deemed to be a slow-learner, however, lack of a diagnosis, incorrect diagnosis or plain assumptions that a student

has a disability, can hamper appropriate remediation. Similarly, failing to identify students with

disabilities can withhold them from receiving an education that best aligns to their individual

needs. For these reasons, ADEC considers it important in its SEN policy to provide a

comprehensive academic support services for any student who experiences learning difficulties

in general education. Following on from the early intervention, special programs are planned,

implemented and monitored using all the available resources to ensure that students with

special needs receive an Individual Education Plan (Appendix 3-IEP) and the gifted and talented

students receive an Advance Learning Plan (ALP) in order to enhance and maximize their

strengths and needs.

However, there are still lapses in the system and students with more severe disabilities,

including those with intellectual disabilities, receive minimal support or non-existent services

are open to them. This inclination, however, is a positive step forward towards the creation of an

inclusive system of education. Although these steps have been challenging and not an easy

process, ADEC having a clear long term vision and moving in the right direction with its SEN

policy, provides students with disabilities with the right tools and resources to maximize their

potential. This vision and ongoing work is confirmed by the statement below from the 'School

For All' document as follows:

> These guidelines for the provision of special education in the UAE
> have been prepared to serve as a common framework for the work in progress
> that educators and other professionals, parents and individuals
> with special needs in the UAE must undertake to ensure that we strive to achieve best practices"
> in the process of inclusion.

The philosophy behind this is for educators to demonstrate a commitment to teach all students

by providing them with a safe and supportive environment to develop to their maximum potential

based on their individual strengths and challenges. This philosophy is transformed into the

vision of providing educational programs to students with special needs in all UAE schools. These programs reflect international best practice that prepares students to be valuable, productive members and leaders in future within their society. Providing the appropriate services acts as the primary step toward student inclusion, and is designed to eliminate unnecessary referrals to special education by providing teaching methods to teachers to promote inclusion. Also, when a student is identified as having a disability through the completion of a rigorous evaluation, educational services are made available based on individual needs. The Learning Support Team (LST) in each school is able to provide a continuum of services in order to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities, minimizing and effectively abolishing the previous practice of segregated classrooms for students with disabilities, in order to incorporate them into mainstream classes. This concise overview depicts the evolution of special education in the UAE and the significant and ongoing changes that are taking place as the country and Abu Dhabi Education Council, through its special educational needs (SEN) policy, endeavors to adhere to the UN Convention, Salamanca Statement and UAE Law No 29 of 2006 and the Ministry of Education 'School for All' Paper, pertaining to meeting the rights of people with disabilities within an inclusive setting.

This research is a qualitative study, investigating the implementation of the aforementioned ADEC SEN Policy and the educational provisions it provides in three government primary schools across Abu Dhabi Emirate. The four areas to evaluate policy impact are: curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service teacher professional development, which give some weight to the study. The investigation targets the schools' culture with reference to its inclusive policies and practices. The Index for inclusion (Appendix 4) developed by Booth and Ainscow (2011) with its set of indicators to ensure a flexible approach is employed as a tool to measure

the above four areas. Earlier studies from Gaad (2004a) and Alborno and Gaad (2012) showed that UAE teachers lacked the skills to teach in inclusive classrooms. Gaad and Alborno (2014, pp. 232) earlier study introduced the 'School For All Initiative' using the 'Index for Inclusion' as 'a framework for investigating inclusive provision in the UAE, was the first of its kind in reviewing inclusive practices in this country. This research, therefore, follows on from theirs and other existing study to necessitate a way of exploring the impact of SEN policy implementation in its fifth year of existence, using the same 'Index for Inclusion' as the instrument.

A qualitative, collective case study investigation was therefore utilized to evaluate school staff applying their comprehension of the intricate idea of inclusive practices in their school settings. This was done through a thorough evaluation of three primary schools in the three regions of Abu Dhabi Emirate, namely Abu Dhabi City, Al Ain and the Western Region. Research instruments to amass the data for triangulation (Denzin 1984; Stake 1995), employs qualitative methods, including observations, semi-structured interviews, as well as document analysis. (Creswell 2009; Glesne 2006) support this approach. Glesne (2006, p.4) states that, 'to make their interpretations, qualitative researchers need to gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants and subjective meanings of their experiences'. The researcher is an active participant who will attempt to understand and critically analyze the cooperation and interactions between the students, teachers and administrators within their natural settings through visiting the three primary schools in the study.

The diagram below (Figure 2) illustrates the structure of the study as described above;

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┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│      UAE Ministry Of Education   │
│           'School For All'       │
│          Framework Paper         │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ ADEC SEN Policy Handbook- Impact Evaluation on Inclusive   │
│ Practices                                                  │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌───────────────────────────┐
│ Curriculum │  │ Accessibility│  │  Assessment  │  │ Teacher In-Service        │
└────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  │ Professional Development   │
                                        │            └───────────────────────────┘
                                        ▼
                        ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                        │         Index for Inclusion        │
                        │   4 indicators of inclusive        │
                        │   cultures, inclusive policies,    │
                        │   inclusive practices              │
                        │       (Booth & Ainscow 2011)       │
                        └──────────────────────────────────┘
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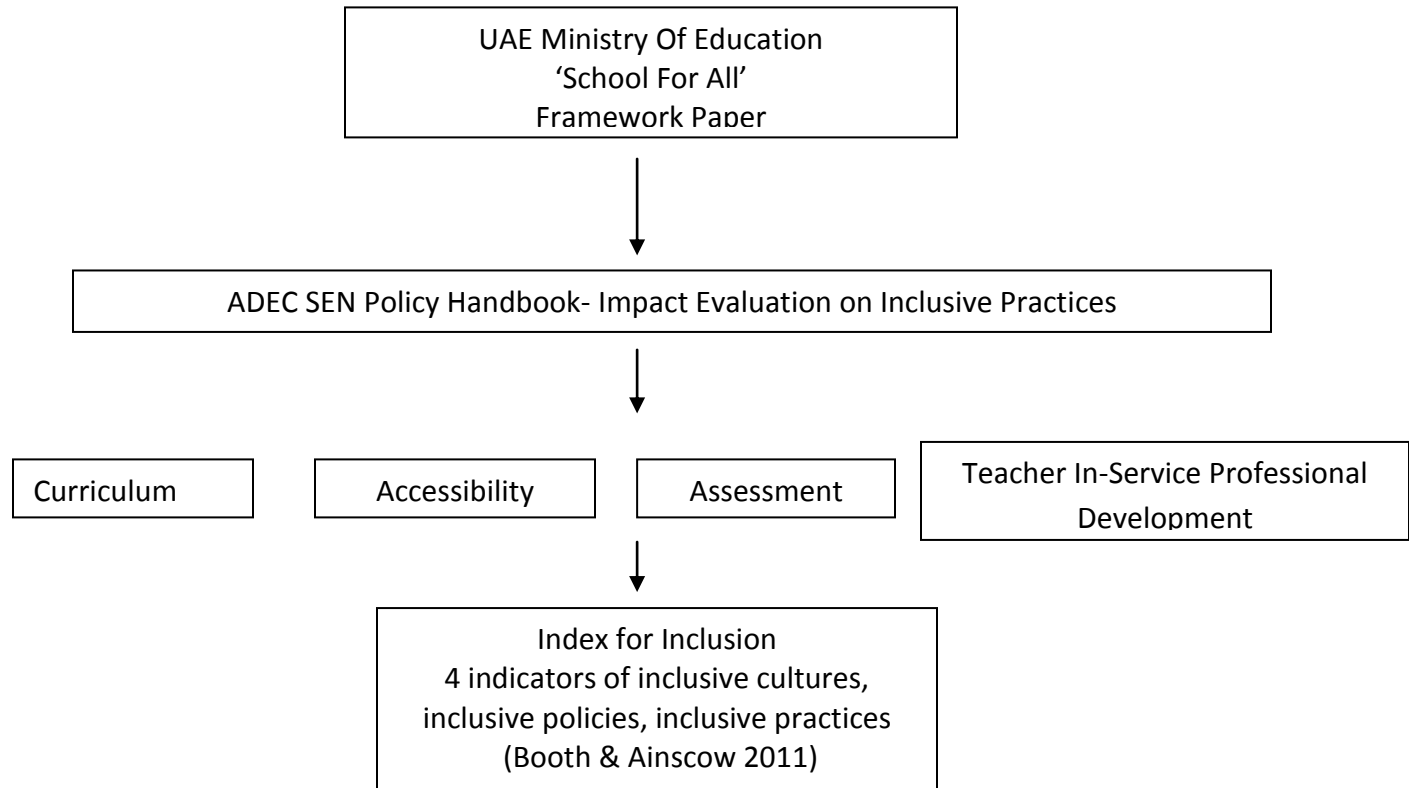
Figure 2- Structure of the study

1.3 Purpose and Rationale

The research aims to assess the schools' execution of ADEC's SEN Policy in its fifth year in developing inclusive practices across Abu Dhabi schools. Through this evaluation, the study's main aims are to:

(a) Explore effective application of policy in schools that promote inclusion.

(b) Examine the extent to which the policy's implementation supports students with disability to have rights to be educated in mainstream.

(c) Describe the experience of teachers, students, parents and administrators in their attempt to implement the policy.

(d) Evaluate the impact of policy on the practice and the effect of inclusion on the school culture and community.

(e) Critically attend to any gaps in the school procedures, processes and practices that require tackling at the levels of the school and ADEC respectively.

Keeping in focus the five main aims of the study mentioned above, the main question guiding this qualitative study is:

> To what extent is ADEC's SEN Policy implemented in practice and what can be done to improve its implementation to support inclusive education in government primary schools in Abu Dhabi.

During the data collection phase, it became necessary to break down the main research guiding question above into two sub research questions:

1) How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion?

2) What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

In order to focus on the above research questions, study aims and purpose, qualitative methods of collecting data from observations, semi-structured interviews, (Kvale & Brickman 2009), and document analysis (Glesne 2006) in a natural setting (Creswell 2009) are conducted.

Gaad (2011) asserts that in gauging the positive results of inclusion, such studies need to view the students' shared experiences at school. Porter (2008) imparted a comparative stance that practicing inclusion is not a one time job, but requires relentless and ongoing endeavor by the school, a never ending process (Booth & Ainscow 2011) to screen and monitor progress as well as evaluate outcomes to inform planning and future practice. There is an urgent need to explore and investigate this policy so as to advance the limited relevant studies on special education in the UAE. Discussions with teachers and social workers on their responsibilities and the impact of their involvement on students, emphasizes the reasons this research concentrates on the four areas specified before.

Several research methods have existed in inclusive studies, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques to add to the body of literature. A qualitative approach from the hermeneutic traditions is however used most frequently. This study adopts this approach to validate the research design and evaluate the implementation of inclusive practices. A quantitative methodology is not appropriate to utilize in the light of the fact that such a methodology will give data from dissecting factual information, instead of real life circumstances in a natural setting. Obtaining in-depth data for analysis can only be derived through employing qualitative instruments of observations and interviews. Creswell (2009, p.182) advocates this by affirming that 'qualitative research occurs in a natural environment' which permits the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants in the study and win their trust. The researcher therefore, beginning with an assessment of the current practices in the schools, can go deeper

to get a feel for the educational setting. This approach takes into account, direct interaction between the researcher and participants, which is fundamental to acquiring the best, most precise results to mirror the reality of existing practices in an inclusive setting.

1.4   Significance and Research Problem

Although inclusion has progressively become the centre of worldwide discussions in special education, there exists insufficient authentic data on inclusion in the UAE, preceding the emergence of the Law with respect to the entitlement of people with moderate disabilities (Alahbabi 2009). This study is subsequently significant and critical in expanding the continuous discourse to close the gap in inclusion studies (Gaad 2011). The study seeks to reflect the views of stakeholders and school personnel on their implementation of the 'School for All' initiative, thereby presenting much needed unpublished study of the local context. This is because the views of teachers, leadership, social workers, psychologists, parents and students are crucial within the process of implementing an inclusive policy. Their views are collected through qualitative tools of observations, semi-structured interviews and relevant document collection. Previous research from Frederickson & Cline (2002) suggests that for any inclusive reform to be effective, the contributions from teachers, students, parents and administrators cannot be overlooked. The results from this study therefore explore current practices and inform on future recommendations to develop a robust inclusive system.

This research contributes theory to the following three areas in:

1. Offering a different model for an inclusive school.

2. The use of innovative structures in school management.

3. The changes brought about by valuing the education of disabled students.

The research problem became apparent when this researcher ascertained that the policy procedures and practices in schools were not taking place, which gives this exploration a focal point. This research problem stacks up against the vast body of evidence stating that social skills in children with disabilities show a marked improvement when in an inclusive settings. In addition it should be acknowledged that inclusion not only benefits the children with disabilities, but also their non-disabled counterparts as well. When placed in inclusive settings, young children are more accepting of children with disabilities (Allen & Schwartz 2001).

However, inclusion represents more than just placing children in the classroom with typical peers. Inclusion becomes successful mostly when the professionals who are given the responsibilities to cater to learners' educational needs implement developmentally appropriate practices. These practices should be in accordance with their age, societal as well as cultural expectations, in order to be deemed as effective inclusive practices.

1.5   Limitations and Anticipated Challenges

This case study methodology has its constraints and broader ramifications. Firstly, its scope is confined to three schools in Abu Dhabi Emirate, with the chosen participant sample found in the three schools. Consequently, the results of this study are examined within the scope of this small sample size using the 'Index for Inclusion' to present the findings in terms of the Index's three key school dimensions of cultures, policies, and practices within the four key areas of the curriculum, accessibility, assessment and teacher in-service training. Nevertheless, the aims of

this study are not to make generalizations from the findings, but use the results to enhance practices and eliminate obstacles that impede inclusion. The study therefore provides insights into the possible challenges to the implementation of the 'Index for Inclusion' in schools in the UAE.Secondly, timings may have some limitations because observations and interviews were done across three different school sites, this being a multiple case study. Although a substantial part of the study was dedicated to the data collection, schools are busy environments with full calendars all year so scheduling appointments for school staff to conduct interviews or do observations presented some delays.

Lastly, the 'School for All' Initiative recognized ten categories of disabilities, including specific learning, visual, hearing and speech disorders, autism, emotional, behavioral, intellectual, physical disabilities, as well as gifted and talented. This research concentrates just on the nine classifications that adversely affect a child's academic performance and the opportunities afforded to students in meeting their needs, not the gifted and talented category. Likewise, the setting is in primary schools, and the data collected spans the five years since the policy was introduced.

The Ministries of Education and Social Affairs oversee special education in the UAE (Gaad 2010), so data collection stages may prove challenging due to obstacles at the ministerial level. Secondly, access into the schools is pending permissions being granted by ADEC which may be delayed. The absence of clear school policies and procedures can be a hindrance to the learning of children with disabilities so the willingness to accommodate all students is seen as a threat. Lastly, this researcher acting as a participant observer as well as having a background in SEN can develop bias from the close presence sustained in the study.

1.6 Organization of Chapters

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One briefly describes an overview and background of the economic life and the UAE education system from its neighboring Arabic roots within the Gulf states to the evolution of special education and inclusion. The rationale for this is to contextualize the study within a frame, to give justification to explore the study goals within this unique setting, and answer the research questions, in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of the special education policy in ADEC schools in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the UAE. The study is significant because it is the first of its kind in evaluating existing policy implementation and engage with the topical issue of inclusion. Chapter one ends with acknowledging the limitations of the study in only three primary schools across Abu Dhabi Emirate, and time ramifications on the data collection process.

Chapter Two focuses on an extensive review of literature that will add weight to the study, including global inclusive educational debates, a succinct review of the theories of inclusion with specific focus on the social model of inclusion, previous research on inclusion in the UAE, other Gulf States and from the western countries. The history on inclusive studies provides relevance to the study as a topic of current debate in educational circles. Also, the instrument to measure the data collected, The Index for Inclusion', a self evaluative tool, is adapted to an Abu Dhabi context, and explains how to gauge the impact of inclusion and provide clarity to the findings in order to support recommendations made. Chapter Three explores the research design and approach, in order to align and justify with common approaches used in inclusive studies worldwide that provides a rich portrayal of the phenomenon under study. The process of data collection using the three qualitative data collection tools of observations, semi-structured interviews and document collection and analysis are clearly described, to justify a case study

research design choice, as well as variety and balance in participants' and site selection. A pilot study to fine tune the data collection instruments was conducted with the purpose of ensuring the effectiveness of the instruments. Also worthy to give close attention to in this chapter, were ethical considerations that were adhered to throughout the study, as well as the trustworthiness and role of the researcher. Chapter three ends with an analysis of the data, as well as using a content analysis on the documents collected, guided by the theoretical framework. This ensures triangulation of the data and categorization of common themes found.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the findings, following extensive data collection, which identifies any concerns about Abu Dhabi schools' ability to offer a differentiated, inclusive education. Finally, Chapter Five completes the study with a conclusion and recommendation, based from the findings that acknowledge current practices and provide recommendations on how to improve staff capacity to support the intricate needs of students within an inclusion classroom. The final thought offers suggestions on future action research pathways on inclusive education that will be of benefit to schools within Abu Dhabi and the UAE, thereby extending the existing research in the field of inclusive education.

Inclusive practices should be embedded into ADEC's teaching approaches. Also, it is important to recognize the centrality of the family to foster an inclusive approach, especially during the development of Individual Education Plans, as well as keeping communication lines open always between the child and home. Families know their child best, so any early intervention plans should be done in close collaboration with the family, for mutual sharing of information and knowledge. Additionally, student and parental voice must be taken into consideration in any policy discourse on special and inclusive education

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Inclusive Education Debates

The review of literature is three fold:

a) Review existing literature on the continuous debates globally and in the UAE on inclusive education (Collins 2003; Frederickson & Cline 2002; Hornby 1999; Kinsella & Senior 2008; Lipsky & Gartner 1996; Norwich 2010; Warnock et al. 2010; Wright 2010).

b) Describe two models or paradigms; namely the medical model and the social model, which have dominated inclusive debates to form the theoretical frameworks upon which previous studies have been carried out. The social model of disability (Oliver 1996) as a framework for presenting the debates in this study is explored in depth.

c) Conduct a review of an internationally recognized assessment tool called the Index for Inclusion created by Booth and Ainscow (2011), in order to identify inclusive practices and establish how this instrument has influenced and affected the history of inclusion in the UAE, following its adoption into federal law.

2.1   Global Inclusive Education Debates

A review of existing literature on the ongoing contentious debate on inclusive education was conducted because it is fundamental to relate the literature to this study, so as to capture and comprehend the introduction of inclusive education in the UAE. The debates have been contentious because including and accepting children with disabilities into schools is a struggle across many countries worldwide. However, many nations are now obliged to include these

inclusive debates into their national agendas, such that policies to promote inclusion can be developed. In order to contextualize this historical background that currently emphasizes SEN practices in mainstream schools, the history of special education is traced, as well as the theories and numerous ideologies that have influenced it.

Earlier records about educating children with disabilities have been claimed by Frederickson & Cline (2002) in the 1800s where children were taught in segregated classrooms within special schools. At that time, a disability was viewed as a flaw, making the person different, which led to them needing a different system of education. Consequently, special schools grew in stature in the 20th century and in instances where the disability was very severe, the child was deemed unfit for any kind of education. The prevalent thinking at that time, evolving around the medical model of disability, is discussed later in this chapter. In 1948, there came into force the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 26, which guaranteed that free, compulsory education for all, was the main catalyst towards the move for education for all, and people with disabilities had the right to access educational opportunities similar to able bodied children (Frederickson & Cline 2002). This was a significant development from the prevailing segregated view and practices that were in existence. This Universal Declaration was made compulsory at the primary levels, with technical and professional education made generally available and higher education equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Article 2 affirmed that 'everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind'.

Other declarations that advocated for inclusion as the primary strategy to tackle the diversity among children and meet their diverse needs, based purely on their human rights, now followed the 1948 Declaration. These include The United Nation's Convention Against Discrimination in

Education (1960). The Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) was the first treaty that was

instituted specifically to uphold the rights of children in its various articles as seen below:

Articles 1 and 3 of the Convention state that:

> All rights apply to every human being under the age of 18 years, and prohibits discrimination
> on a number of grounds including that of disability.
> Article 3: Leave no child behind, each girl and boy is born free and equal in dignity and
> rights; therefore all forms of discrimination affecting children must end.

Article 20 stated that discrimination in all forms gives rise to a continuous cycle of social and

economic exclusion and compromises children's ability to develop to their full potential.

Furthermore, Article 21 affirms clearly that all measures will be taken to ensure the full and

equal enjoyment of all human rights and freedoms, including equal access to health, education,

and recreational services, by children with disabilities and children with special needs; to ensure

the recognition of their dignity; to promote their self-reliance; and to facilitate their active

participation in the community. As well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities in 2006, which also advocated for an inclusive educational system at all levels; the

social and economic needs of the child with disability will be met in a general education system

(UNESCO 2009; Wright 2010).

The extensive, continuous international calls demanding a response to an inclusive system of

educating all children in mainstream school settings is found in several key conferences

including the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education, Access & Quality,

commonly dubbed the Salamanca Convention, which took place in Spain (1994); Dakar World

Education Forum, Senegal (2000); and declarations including UNESCO Declaration of Human

Rights (2006). Globally, several laws have been issued across different countries in the world,

especially Western nations, to maximize the participation of students with disabilities in mainstream schools (Salend 2005).

In 1994, delegates from 92 nations and 25 worldwide organizations assembled in Salamanca, Spain for the UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education, Access & Quality. During this pivotal assembly, 'inclusion' as a statement of agreement was adopted as the standard. The framework for action called for a policy shift which required that 'all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions, should be accommodated in mainstream schools' (UNESCO 1994, p.6). The Statement purported that educating children with learning disabilities and special needs could not advance in isolation but must form part of an overall educational strategy, which would call for major reform of the regular school. This approach was seen as necessary to advance the commitment to Education for All. The Framework strongly affirms the right to education of all children with their diverse characteristics and abilities, and demands that education systems and programs be designed to take into account this wide diversity. Regular schools must provide an appropriate child-centered teaching and learning environment that can accommodate these special educational needs. The article concludes with the statement that:

> Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, create welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieve education for all; moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

The Salamanca Statement made an appeal to governments to contemplate policy, legislative and implementation measures that will transform national education and develop a system of inclusive schools. The Statement document went further to provide clear guidelines for action

that are necessary safeguard changes at the level of school management, appropriate training of personnel, curriculum flexibility, and the development of support services. A partnership with both the parents and the community was highlighted.

The Salamanca Framework for Action was welcomed with profound acclaim from many developed countries due to placing emphasis on the individual strengths, weaknesses, and expectations towards children having an equitable right to education. Based on this position the school systems are required to change and adapt to meet the needs of all children. The supporters of inclusion highlighted that students with disability will profit from interactions with students without disabilities, particularly children with mild learning disabilities who tend to be easily ignored due to the 'hidden' nature of their disability. The largest group of school drop outs comes from this group. They have no visible physical disabilities. However, they may experience extreme difficulties with learning. These social interactions enhance the quality of academic advancement with peers of the same age, combats discrimination to create an inclusive, welcoming environment (UNESCO 2005). Inclusion fundamentally helps all students comprehend and acknowledge differences in their communities. The UNESCO and UN conventions both set out international standards for countries to adhere to, when using legislation, to guide their inclusive policies.

UNESCO (2005, p.14) defines inclusion as 'a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of learners'. The onus is therefore on schools taking responsibility to modify content, approaches and strategies that will meet the needs of every student of the same age as their peers in mainstream schools. The change of primary schools into fully inclusive schools implementing ADEC's SEN policy, which this study investigates, adheres to the aforementioned forums, in particular, the Salamanca Convention of 1994 in Spain. Furthermore, in 1990,

UNESCO hosted the first World Conference on Education for All, in Jomtien, Thailand. The goal of this conference was for a universal primary education with a focus to meet basic needs, with a flexible approach, for primary school students. The conference did not focus exclusively on disability. However, following this conference in Thailand, two significant events for people with disabilities emerged. Firstly, the United Nations provided a set of norms and standards guiding governments and their educational institutions to promote full participation and equal opportunities for all persons with disabilities. Secondly, UNESCO responded to the call from delegates at the Thailand conference to focus directly on disability by providing equal access to children with disabilities into mainstream schools. This response to call is the result of inclusion as we know it today. Progressively in 2000, the World Education Forum and the Dakar Framework For Action Conference took place. This conference gave tasks to all countries to develop actions and policies towards inclusion. The conference conducted the biggest review in the history of education. Results were mixed. Six goals were set for the achievement of Education For All by the year 2015. The Dakar conference reiterated a commitment to Education For All as a fundamental right for all children. However, many governments did not respond fully to its call due to the fact that it did not directly reference disadvantaged groups by name nor did it provide strategies that will support their inclusion.

In reviewing practices in the United States, its 1975 Education for All Handicapped Act mandated a free for all public education system based on a 'zero reject principle' within the least restrictive environment for students (Collins 2003 p. 28). This was ensued by the US Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997 and amended in 2004 which emphasized and provided opportunities in education, working and social living conditions for persons with disabilities. Furthermore, similar developments took place in the UK where the 1970 Education for Handicapped Children Act, approved the policy to stating that all

handicapped children had a right to an education. This Act was followed by the Warnock Report of 1978 and Education Act of 1981, where disability categories were abolished and a new terminology, 'special educational needs' was created. The birth of this new terminology produced a positive effect within inclusive education debate circles worldwide.

In addition, the Equality Act of 2010 led to a change in legislation on equality and equality rights in the UK and this Act abolished anti- discriminatory laws, to increase the protection on the vulnerable in society. This law provided several categories of protection, including disability, race, religion, gender, age and marriage. The Equality Act was a significant development because, it would come to align with the social model of disability, which formed the basis from where inclusion emanated. The law now viewed anyone with a disability as those having a physical or mental impairment with a 'substantial, long term negative effect on their ability to perform normal daily activities' (Department for Education, 2012, p.8). It is noteworthy that this Act made a connection between impairment and disability, with the former being any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function of an organ of the body, and the latter as a functional limitation or restriction, resulting from impairment, with regard to the ability to perform a particular activity. In other words, impairment is an injury, an illness, a congenital condition that causes a loss of physiological or psychological function; and disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others, due to social and environmental barriers emanating from impairment.

Due to this interrelationship between impairment and disability, schools in the UK are therefore required to make the expected readjustments and modifications and remove any barriers within their environments in order to be better able to cater for the needs of children with disabilities. This Equality Act therefore went beyond anything that had preceded it by 'extending the duty to

require schools to also provide auxiliary aids and services to disabled pupils' (Department for Education 2012). This Act therefore clearly aligned with the social model of disability to push forward reforms that removed any barriers to equal participation for all students with disabilities. Progress was now being made within the history of inclusion as schools were now moving from segregated systems as Frederickson and Cline (2002) had stated in the 20th century by challenging the existence of two separate systems of mainstream and special schools, on the basis of the human rights to equal educational opportunities (Barnes 1991; Barton 2008; Kinsella & Senior 2008; Lipsky & Gartner 1996; Stainback & Stainback 1992). These debates now led to an increase in momentum by the inclusive movement across several nations round the world. In several countries by this point, mainstream schools were now opening their doors

With calls for an abolition of segregated schools into mainstream schools for children with disabilities, the birth of inclusion and inclusive practices followed on from the history and ongoing international debates on inclusion. Inclusion as a concept now required a definition to identify its meaning. However, there is no universally agreed definition. UNESCO (2005, p.15) defines inclusion as 'a dynamic approach of responding positively to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as a problem, but as opportunities for enriching learning'. Thomas & Loxley (2007, p. 124) stated that, 'inclusion is about comprehensive education, equality and collective belonging'; hence not exclusively to meet the needs of children with special needs in mainstream schools. In addition, Booth & Ainscow (2011, p. 20) define inclusion as a 'never ending process aiming at putting inclusive values into action, reducing barriers and mobilizing resources'. They go on to explain that removing the barriers and providing the resources to facilitate learning will promote student participation. On the other hand, the United States National Centre on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion define inclusion as the services and provisions that are available for children with disabilities within

mainstream schools and working alongside peers of the same age. These varying definitions, however, have some common factors running across them namely; students working together in same classrooms, irrespective of their disability and with suitable support processes in place to meet their needs.

Following the historical journey from integration to inclusion, Allan (2008, p. 1) states that 'there is a conceptual confusion surrounding what inclusion is, what it is supposed to do and for whom', adding that Shakespeare (2005) referred to this as a 'hysteria,' and 'moral panic' about the principle of inclusion'. This clearly visible pandemonium with the term 'inclusion' and its associated challenges that teachers' encounter when trying to implement inclusive practices within a policy framework is well documented in the literature on inclusion. It distanced itself from integration which was supposed to minimize the gap between children with a disability and those without a disability. However, integration disregarded the quality experiences of these children in mainstream schools (Slee, 2001).

The debates on inclusive education have represented a lot of 'contestations that are often emotive and highly charged (Allan & Slee 2008). It is this confusion amongst the key researchers in the special education field, namely, Brantlinger (1997), Kaufman & Hallahan (1995), Gallagher (2006), Kvale (2004) to the key inclusion researchers; Oliver (1996), Allan (2008), Booth and Ainscow (2011) in the field that has not been of benefit to communities and schools suffering from educational and social exclusion to date. Despite the controversies especially for the common man and confusion on what inclusion means, what has been generally agreed in the field is that inclusive education is about all children and not limited to just children with disabilities. There is an application of social justice currently on the inclusive

agenda with Ainscow (1991a) arguing that an effective school that focuses on school improvement is an inclusive school. Moreover, Slee and Allan (2001) theorized that inclusive education is a victim of fragmented government policies that follow traditional patterns that are exclusive. Policy makers should therefore understand that special education and inclusion are two different things when they make decisions on educational matters.

Additionally, the Warnock Report of 1978 signaled the arrival of the term special educational needs. This term presented children in a more positive light, and was viewed as a fitting replacement to the term 'integration'. Inclusion at this pivotal point took center stage when it was authenticated by the 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs. 92 countries worldwide and 26 organizations adopted the Salamanca Convention Framework and inclusion.

Efforts in moving towards an inclusive culture, occupies a large part of the literature in the field, across many countries. As a global movement, inclusive education emerged over the last thirty years to ensure quality mainstream education for all students. In South Africa, as a developing country similar to the UAE in developing inclusive structures, the government had the political will to change legislation by adjusting its policies; however, this vision has not fully materialized. Developing an inclusive education with the complexity of the reality of schools in South Africa has been insufficient to eliminate the historical and structural inequalities in education (Engelbrecht et al, 2016). The policy idealism did not map over with school realities due to factors such as poverty and discrimination still prevalent in the post-apartheid years.

Palokosta and Blanford (2010) in their multiple cases study which examines the implementation of inclusive practices in the UK confirm the pressures existing within schools that put the rights

and entitlement of students with disability at risk. This study describes how three culturally diverse secondary schools in England tried to interpret and implement inclusive practices. The results of the study show that school staff were unprepared in their understanding of inclusive concepts and the dichotomy between the terms inclusion and integration. Also, there was a false understanding of special educational needs, the challenges of time limitations in busy school settings and the difficulties in putting differentiation into practice. All these factors presented barriers for the schools. The study recommends the great need for initial teacher training programs and in-service professional development programs to be revisited. It suggests that inclusion can work by 'creating a framework for teachers' lifelong learning, focusing on a social justice oriented pedagogy, that empowers teachers conceptually and practically (Paliokosta & Blanford 2010).

Furthermore, in another study in Malaysia, Jelas and Manisah (2014), conducted a study to show Malaysia's move towards inclusive education. This move occurred following their participation in workshops and conferences organized by UNESCO in 1990, The United Nations in 1993 and UNESCO in 1994. The government introduced inclusive education by enacting into law the Education Act of 1996 as part of services to meet the needs of special needs children. The researchers contended that the implementation of the new government policy, the contradictions translating it into practice within the Malaysian context resulted in constraints in practice. They found clear problematic issues in the interpretation and implementation of the policy at all levels in the schools. The lack of full comprehension of the meaning of special educational needs led to continuous barriers in the implementation that was also competing with other school priorities.

Therefore, the inception of inclusion arrived with high expectations for teachers to expand the participation of children with special needs in mainstream schools consequently remove any barriers from within the school environment. The change was radical. Schools now had to change their culture and ways of practicing as well as put in systems and processes to ensure children with special needs get equal participation. Oliver (1996) had long called for barriers to be removed from people with disabilities and for society to look at the societal barriers it had long imposed on people with disabilities. These societal barriers had led to their non-participation and exclusion. These barriers are physical, structural and attitudinal. The layout of the school buildings, the absence of disabled bathrooms and the absence of ramps are all examples of physical barriers. Structural barriers included examples such as no modification of examinations, hence a student with a disability is exempted from doing it. The most significant barriers that have a high impact on people with disabilities are attitudinal. Examples of this include the negative attitudes and actions, including bullying, pitiful and lamentable expressions towards disabled people which have no gains for them. Basically, inclusion is a way of working, a process that applies not only to students with disabilities, but to everyone.

In spite of the move forward towards implementing inclusive schools backed by various legislation, policies and conferences, the ongoing debates still differ as to this form of support being deemed as the most effective strategy to adopt within educational settings (Collins 2003; Hornby 1999; Norwich 2010; Warnock et al. 2010). Proponents of inclusion still claim that there is a clear disparity between policy and practice between the notion of equal opportunity for all and the practical application of the policies. Although supporters of inclusion justify that there is enough evidence from research to suggest that including students with disabilities into mainstream schools does produce great benefits and is the most effective way to educate children (Lipsky & Gartner 1996; Stainback & Stainback 1985; Stainback & Stainback 1992;

Thomas 1997), there are still opponents who do not buy into this view. These opponents argue that although there is a high moral premise for inclusion, the evidence on the ground suggests that students' performance does not necessarily improve and students with disability still lag behind their non disabled peers (Collins 2003; Warnock et al. 2010).

Moreover, another debate and school of thought within the sympathizers of inclusion reveal that some argue for full inclusion or part inclusion (Forlin 2004; Forlin et al. 1996; Kauffman et al. 2005; Zigmond 2003). The debates among these circles question whether full inclusion is actually possible and whether it really is possible and better to educate children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Forlin (2001) interrogates whether it is economically viable to administer full inclusion, especially in environments where teachers are not fully trained and prepared to meet the challenges of creating inclusive environments to meet their students' needs in such diverse and challenging classrooms (Kauffman et al 2005). On the other hand, Zigmond (2003) argues that 'appropriately targeted instructions in homogeneous group, is a more compelling social right for students with disabilities than full inclusion'. However, the above opponents do acknowledge the fact that developing strategies and practices for special needs education is quite challenging at all levels.

Additionally, Cipani (1995) asserts that unless inclusive education is backed up by essential transformations in the structure of schools, it will not produce worthwhile results. Cipani's comments are shared by many school teachers who feel that the very prescriptive nature of curriculums and focus on testing, grading is counterproductive for inclusive practices to thrive especially where curriculums need to be modified and adapted in order for differentiated teaching and learning to take place (Stainback & Stainback 1985; Thomas & Loxley 2007). This has led to Stainback & Stainback (1992) providing some solutions to remedy the situation where

teachers are calling for a change within the system to support the adaptations that are needed in order to meet the complex, varied needs of students with disabilities. These solutions, although not conclusive, include a team approach to solving problems which will involve students themselves where possible, have high expectations of them and use extracurricular activities to improve on their learning experiences and develop lifelong skills. Consequently, inclusion remains a hot topic in educational circles as confirmed by Oliver (2004). He regretted the fact that the social model still remains a trigger for debates instead of being action upon as a vehicle for change.

Moving closer to home, in reviewing the literature on inclusion within the Gulf Region, studies done in Kuwait (Manabri et al 2013) assert that for inclusive education to be practically implemented, teachers must have an adequate knowledge and understanding of inclusion and how to go about implementing such practices. Teachers' perceptions are affected by how adequately equipped they are to overcome the challenges in a diverse classroom where learners have very diverse needs. The study continued by stating that this gap in teacher knowledge therefore gives rise to the need to examine the role of teacher education programs as fundamental in developing the processes in an inclusive system, as well as peer support. Although the Kuwaiti government has invested on an educational reform program to improve education equal access opportunities, more still needs to be done.

The project they engaged with in their study involved mainstream teachers from a primary school getting first hand experiences of inclusive practices from special needs teachers in a special school. The aim was to improve the teaching skills of the mainstream teachers when working with children who have varied learning needs. There was evidence of improvement in the mainstream teachers' attitudes and views of students with learning disabilities. The rationale

for the project was based on the fact that special needs staff were the best and most knowledgeable and experienced in Kuwait to train the mainstream teachers on strategies they can use that will be appropriate for teaching children with disabilities and thereby implement inclusive practices. The study achieved its aims in changing teacher attitudes to a positive one. It also highlighted the need for professional development to give inclusion training to teachers, and continuous support provided to mainstream teachers. The collaboration between special and mainstream teachers 'offers the potential to develop inclusive practices within an educational system that has had little experience with such practices'. The Kuwait experience could act as an example for other states in the Arab Region to emulate when developing inclusive training approaches.

Furthermore, Carrington (1999) asserts that for inclusive education to be successful, the system has to be able to provide services beyond just those for students with disabilities. It is about creating a culture within schools where differences can be celebrated. Booth and Ainscow (2011) also supported Carrington's views which influenced their inclusion tool, The Index for Inclusion' which will be described later. This tool will be the main instrument in this study to evaluate the implementation of inclusive practices in a bid to answer the research questions. Last but not least, the more recent debates in the field of inclusion reveals a big shift in the thinking and future pathway into inclusion. Allan (1999) affirmed that inclusion is an ongoing process and most government policies do not treat it as such. She carries on stating that government policies put emphasis on placement and resources, rather than on how people with disabilities feel and want to be treated. In another study, Allan (2008) further expressed that the excessive amount of conversations going on about inclusive policies do not translate into practice, which is the basis for all the confusion. A significant contribution made was the fact

that policy formulation did not get the children and parents involved. Hence, policy makers were failing the recipients or end users, due to the absence of student and parental voice. She stated that it was a big missed opportunity.

In addition, Allan (2014), at the International Conference on Policy and Practice in Inclusive Education in Sweden, as the keynote speaker, discussed on how to progress with inclusion at various levels – local, national and international. The key theme at the conference was 'Inclusion – What it is about'. The delegates discussed the dangers of global pressures on schools to be seen as inclusive, which put huge challenges on schools to be seen to deliver inclusion. These pressures led to an expanded special needs industry, with manufacturers selling educational packages that claimed to inform teachers on how to teach children with several disabilities. In spite of the explosion of marketing inclusive products and resources, there were still uncertainties on what inclusion was. Teachers were complaining that they still felt guilty, exhausted, confused and frustrated. Allan (2008, p1) proclaimed that 'even Mary Warnock, the so-called architect of inclusion who coined the term 'special educational needs in the Warnock Report of 1978, is now questioning whether inclusion really works or is appropriate'. The global pressures to solve the dilemma of inclusion in one sweep led to a tyranny of transparency, where institutions were being obliged to show they were improving by being inclusive.

To reiterate, the government policies and systems were missing the students' voices, parental voices and teachers' voices. Policy was failing to motivate teachers and provide them with much needed training. Allan (2013) claimed that Tomlinson, known for propounding the term 'differentiation' had stated that SEN expansion was proving irresistible, with the continued need to get a diagnosis. Teachers were being asked to meet these standards. Allan (2014) concluded

that, inclusive teaching is an art, rather than a set of competences, where the setting should be favorable for teachers to respond to all the needs of the students. Using the arts, music and poetry will take students with disabilities into a new world. She affirmed that art is magical, provides sensory stimulation, is fun and very engaging for students. Allan (2015) had experimented on disability art with a group of students in Sweden, where teachers were encouraged to constantly inform the students that they can do it and can succeed. Students were constantly pushed on with lots of support, encouragement and positive thinking. In the study, she asserted that teachers were thinking outside the box and engaged students through drawing, painting and dance which were all fun activities. She believed that art can shift academics and move away from verbal speech, which acts as a barrier to many students with disabilities.

In addition, her stance was for policy makers and schools, in dealing with intervention processes, not to respond with remediation, because such an approach simply emphasizes the person's defects or disability. Rather, there were calls to respond to intervention with equity and respect, because people with disabilities do not want to be modified or changed or be fixed, as they do not perceive themselves as broken. People with disabilities want the policy makers and school personnel to work with them, ask them what help they need, than lay down a set of rules that they have to abide by. According to Allan (2014), people with disabilities just want to be seen as fellow citizens.

Lastly, in reviewing the literature in the field to more recent times, the 8th Inclusive Education Congress in Lisbon, Portugal (2015) was based on the theme of Equity and Inclusive Education. This researcher attended this Congress and was able to experience firsthand the current thinking and beliefs of the major players and researchers in the field. Whilst reiterating that

effective school systems advocated for all, Ainscow (2015) who was a keynote speaker at the Congress, re-emphasized that inclusion is key to school improvement. The strong view that emanated from the congress was that, teachers had a heavy workload and they needed lots of support. Key themes adopted at the Congress on inclusive principles were to promote teacher collaboration with peers and increase student participation. Co-teaching was stated as a very important part of inclusion, which aligns with this study as one of the key findings in School A, that promoted inclusive practices. The key speakers at the Congress, including the world renowned inclusive activist and researcher, Roger Slee, asserted that professional development was a powerful tool, and staff expertise on inclusion should be utilized. There was a call for students' and parents' voices to emerge. It was seen as best practice for lessons to be prepared together with the students, so that they will feel motivated and engaged. Other speakers revealed that inclusion needed to be rescued from labeling, on the narrative of a majority versus a minority. Where a diagnosis is needed, the call is to celebrate potential, and not the deficiency. Every child must be valued, with government policy makers to realize that inclusion is a process and not a state.

Finally, Allan and Slee (2008), who are both passionate about inclusion, and viewed disability as the biggest factor for exclusion in schools, reiterated parental calls for legislation and exposed school failures that did not include all. The researchers explained that the students' disabilities are blamed for their lack of attainment in school, which is a pity.

In conclusion, in reviewing the literature, this study gives the premise to observe how policy has impacted upon practice in inclusive teaching in Abu Dhabi to provide a suitable, differentiated education to a wide variety of students. The challenges of transforming the policy into practical

application have been the biggest test in the UAE and across numerous nations (Flem & Keller 2000; Haug et al. 1999; Hughes *et al.* 1996).

2.2   Theoretical Framework: Two models of inclusion

Furthermore, to completely comprehend inclusive practices, it is important to review the various traditions from where the theoretical framework emanated, to form the basis of the three established paradigms, which will be discussed here. Two models have dominated the research, albeit each having its own limitations. These two paradigms or models are – the medical model and social model which have formed the theoretical framework within which previous research in special needs education (Reindal 2008; Skidmore 1996) was conducted. The knowledge traditions have historically influenced educational systems, customs, values and attitudes within society which placed an emphasis on the individual child (medical model) than on a contextual approach (social model). The medical and social models are described below.

Ongoing research therefore identified different methodologies in dealing with the issue of disability. Traditionally, inclusion and disability studies in the 1960s and 1970s utilized the psycho-medical model as its theoretical framework within which context research on special needs education (Reindal 2008; Skidmore 1996) was done. The medical model dominated research into inclusion. This psycho-medical paradigm adopted a positivist epistemology. As mentioned earlier, inclusion research owed its loyalty to the medical model. The language of the writers of this era was hostile, with views of them as having a deficiency in the DNA of the child. This medical platform was used to classify and categorize SEN students (Skrtic 1991, 1995a, 1995b) and was rooted in a 'medical understanding of disability' (Coles 1987). Students were therefore segregated in schools. Offensive terminology as the 'backward child' or 'slow

learner' (Burt 1937; Schonell 1942, p. 18) categorized and classified these students. Based on this medical tradition, children with special needs were seen as having a disparity between 'cultural expectations and the child's ability to communicate and meet those expectations' (Special Educational Needs White Paper No. 23, 1997 p.8). Later researchers found this approach embarrassing in preserving an understanding of disability, which led to researchers looking for an alternative theoretical framework to base their quest on, hence the development of the social model of disability, which will be discussed later.

Oliver (1990, p. 2) depicted the medical model as "the personal tragedy theory of disability", where incapacity is seen as a calamity. Based on this perspective, people with disability were singled out as casualties of a tragic occurrence from cerebral deficits resulting in primarily health policies that 'aim to compensate their suffering' (French & Swain 2004). Interventions using the medical model were clinical in nature with 'scientific reports on the empirical testing of hypothesis by means of field or clinical trials' (Skidmore 1996).

An increasing body of unease among researchers on such misunderstandings of disability from the medical model, offering no pedagogic outcomes and solutions to children, was palpable. This led to a shift in focus for an appropriate alternative called the social 'constructivist' model (Reid, Maag & Vasa 1993; Reid *et al.* 1994). This model shifted the emphasis from the deficiencies caused by individual impairments, as claimed within the medical model, to the barriers imposed by society and the environment which limit access to equal opportunities (Abberley 1999; Albert 2006; Barnes 1991 & Barton 2008).

2.3 The Social Model of Inclusion

The social model grew in popularity in the 1980s to occupy a viable place in research circles and conformed better to the morality of inclusion. Its influence has remained significant. Proponents acknowledged the needs of students without discrediting their defect through stereotyping and classification in education as the medical model did. Oliver (1990, 1996) championed this model with its groundbreaking idea of making a distinction between impairment and disability to gain academic recognition of his views, which the academic world of special educational needs had to take note of. His ideas were published in his book titled 'Social Work with Disabled People'. This led to the birth of the social model of disability, which was later adopted into law in the UK. As earlier stated, this social model altered the focus on a child's impairments as seen in the medical model to being viewed as the barriers imposed by society and limitations to equal opportunities (Abberley 1999; Albert 2006; Barnes 1991; Barton 2008). This model viewed people with disabilities as an oppressed group with their social environment being the cause of their oppression and not the impairment that they suffer from. Their environment, therefore, made life challenging for them through examples, such as the inaccessible access into buildings, no provision for sign language to assist the needy, no braille teacher or materials in schools, lack of assistive technology and hostile reaction from members of the community.

In addition, Shakespeare and Watson (2002) posit that the social model had a liberating effect on people with disabilities and empowered them to rise up against their oppressors to demand equal rights as a primary human right; instead of accepting any help towards them as an act of charity and goodwill. Morris (2001) shares the same idea and added that this social model

provided people with disabilities the language to describe the experiences of prejudice they have felt, thus endorsing what Crow (1996, p. 56) depicted as the 'individual self-worth, collective identity and political organization'.

This model resulted in providing an alternative pathway for children with disabilities to be withdrawn from regular classrooms, in order to follow a modified curriculum which emphasized differentiation (Tomlinson 1982). Children were no longer segregated or branded, but were being taught in general education or withdrawal classrooms, depending on the severity of their disability.

This trend is on a contextual approach focusing on the link between cultural expectations and the child's ability to meet those expectations. For inclusive practices to succeed therefore, policy makers and practitioners need to change their value beliefs (Ainscow & Booth 1998). This view led to new approaches in research in investigating school provisions in dealing with student diversity in unique, complex classrooms (Ainscow & Booth 1998). The social environment now takes on a significant role to comprehend how children learn and develop. Vygotsky's theory on social environment with its socio-cultural approach to learning as a social activity in its theoretical framework became the norm. Therefore, a positive learning environment with adaptive resources is critical if inclusive education is to succeed. The social model does not emphasize a child's deficits for positive learning to happen.

In addition, Oliver (1992) the lead proponent of inclusion, suggests a more explicit vision of government policies for the provision of special needs which will engage and involve people with disability in the process of creating more integrated education systems. The literature now

empathized with people with disability as a persecuted group, blaming the social environment as reason for their oppression and not caused by their impairment. Hence, this social model sought to remove any barriers that prevented equal participation. The impact of this model has remained noteworthy. Pioneering researchers advocated for full comprehension of disability by identifying students' needs without categorizing their condition into education blocks. Noteworthy researchers adopting this model included Tomlinson's (1982) cutting edge analysis of special education, and Bines's (1986) study of the role of a remedial teacher. Other worthy contribution is found in Barton and Tomlinson (1981); Barton (1988; 1984b) studies. Drawing on from various sociological traditions, these writers share a common approach for an alternative educational route for children with disabilities on an adapted and modified curriculum (Carrier 1984; Tomlinson 1982).

Additionally, the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) in the UK and subsequent Education Act (1981) scrapping the derogatory term 'handicapped' as well as the ten categories of handicap, pioneered the current term of 'special educational needs'. A major success of the social paradigm is its 'sustained critique of the ideology of benevolent humanitarianism' (Tomlinson1982, p.134) existing for ages in this field. Students could now learn side by side, not separate; thus inclusion, the cornerstone of this study, was borne. Shakespeare and Watson (2002) remarked that the model had a 'liberating effect' on people with disability. Morris (2001) shared a similar stance that this social model of disability stressed the dilemma of prejudice and discrimination.

Criticisms, however, were labeled towards the social model. Shakespeare and Watson (2002) although empathic with some aspects of the social model, were against it for overlooking the health needs and character of people with disability. They claim that, although disability should

not be viewed as the medical model propounds, it should similarly not be restricted to being only the result of social barriers. They propounded that impairment and disability are different and not arms of the same branch. The aforementioned researchers felt that both terms depict different experiences for the disabled person and both require a different type of intervention at both the medical level to treat the impairment and at a social level in removing the barriers to progress. Oliver (2004) who drove the advancement of this model reacted to some of the criticisms; he explained that the social model was not dismissive of personal experiences of people with disability, but was in view of it. Using a strong statement of purpose, Oliver (2004 p.30) asserts that the model is not a social hypothesis but 'a practical tool that was developed to create a collective consciousness to drive a movement towards combating discrimination and social oppression'.

In order to contextualize the social approach within the UAE, although Federal Law 29 protects the rights of people with disability to ensure their full participation in education to remove any social barriers, citizens 'do not like to mingle with disabled ones' (Gaad 2011 p. 80). Although the UAE is a caring society steeped in Islamic teachings that take care of the 'weak' (Gaad 2011), cultural restraints prevent the social model to be shared by all in the communities. Cultural beliefs in the UAE still label children with disabilities using stereotypical words, such as 'handicapped' (Gaad 2004a; Gaad & Khan 2007; Arif & Gaad 2008; Gaad 2010; Gaad 2011). Educating them is therefore not seen as a right. It is still seen by a section of the community as charity to the disabled. However, there has been an increased drive towards the social model with its positive approach, hence progress is being made. This model aligns with this study to investigate ADEC's SEN Policy within the 'School for All' ideology because of the UAE's vision. It is this gap between policy and practice and societal attitudes that the present study explores.

Policy documents from ADEC which aligns practices linked to the theoretical framework of inclusion as a social model (Oliver 1996) are examined (Frederickson & Cline 2002; Hornby 1999; Kinsella & Seniors 2008; Norwich 2010; Warnock et al. 2010). The social model is favored over the medical model in that, people with disability are viewed as victims of a tragedy, and it is the society that places barriers with obstacles to access education impartially (Barnes 1991; Abberley 1999; Barton 2008). The social model demands equal rights and recommends the utilization of appropriate resources through the removal of these barriers. The centrality of this model in research debates makes a firm basis for its application in this study.

2.4   The Index for Inclusion

Booth and Ainscow's (2011) Index for Inclusion (Appendix 4) was utilized as a tool to judge the schools' arrangements in their explanation, understanding and implementation of the policy. UAE history on inclusion used a social approach, protected by law, for schools to provide effective access to people with disability. Nonetheless, the barriers caused by from negative cultural attitudes do not share the stance of the proponents of the social model theory hence people with disabilities are 'likely to be stereotyped' (Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Arif & Gaad 2008; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad 2004b; Gaad 2011; Gaad & Khan 2007), with inclinations towards the medical model of disability in the utilization of derogatory terms, such as 'retarded, suffering' as stated by Arif and Gaad (2008). Although Federal Law No. 29 has not declared the closure of special schools or centers, there is, however, a progressive move towards more schools admitting children with disabilities to eliminate any barriers to their learning. In investigating the gap between policy and practice, this study explores the current situation on inclusive practices.

The Index, a developmental self-evaluation tool to study inclusive policies and practices in three primary schools in Abu Dhabi, was used. This instrument will gauge the impact of inclusion in four focus areas including: curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service teacher professional development. The Center for Studies in Inclusive Education (CSIE) in Bristol (UK) pioneered the Index in 2000, which later developed in prominence in inclusive studies. Teachers, researchers, parents and stakeholders collaborated to create the Index. It has been translated into more than thirty languages and adjusted for utilization in different nations. It is an entrenched instrument intended to bolster institutions on methods to encourage all staff to contribute and practice an inclusive development plan. Using the instrument values diversity and uproots all deterrents to learning. Moreover, it has guidelines supporting schools to build up a curriculum for all students.

Booth and Ainscow (2011 p.80) assert that, inclusion is about 'minimizing all the barriers to learning and participation that existed in any of the school dimensions of culture, policy, and practice for all students. Barriers such as buildings, physical arrangement, school organization, interactions amongst children and adults, attitudes of teachers and their approaches to teaching and learning needs to be addressed as part of a school improvement plan'.

The Index is divided into a set of indicators that supports schools to develop. Each indicator has questions reflecting what the indicator represents and what can be investigated. Nonetheless, the Index for Inclusion has blemishes so it was criticized as lengthy, making it impractical to base feedback on research done in England (Norwich & Nash 2011).

Responding to their critics, Booth and Ainscow (2011) proposed its use as a guidebook supporting staff develop relevant plans. The Index for Inclusion uses a logical planning cycle consisting of five steps: (1) 'launching the Index process'; (2) 'finding out about the school'; (3) 'producing an inclusive development plan'; (4) 'implementing developments'; (5) 'reviewing the Index process'. Booth and Ainscow (2011, p. 20) believe that the Index for Inclusion is a cyclical, never ending process. It is flexible and adaptable with a goal for "sustained inclusive development, not the completion of a project" (2011, p. 50).

The Index for Inclusion received mixed responses. Some examples of its impact are from Hong Kong and Australia. In Hong Kong, the use of the Index led to the development of a curriculum framework (Carrington & Robinson 2004). In Australia, using it to implement policy led to the regulation of Queensland's P-12 curriculum (Duke 2009). Noteworthy is that it allowed "participants to reflect upon the expectations they had for their students and how these expectations impacted on their planning, teaching and assessment practices" (Duke 2009, p. 4). Additionally, the Index for Inclusion goes beyond learning to become accepted and valued as a full member of society in countries like South Africa (Booth and Black-Hawkins 2001; Engelbrecht et al. 2006). However, resource limitations with other health, violence and safety issues prevented its effective use. Translation challenges are another issue for some regions because it is seen as 'too English' (Booth & Black-Hawkins 2001, p. 31).

 'Save the Children Organization' carried out educational projects using a translated Arabic version of the Index for Inclusion (Williams 2003) in other Arab countries such as Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco and Palestine. This trial saw the birth of inclusion, although in a limited way, for children with disabilities in the region. Cultural beliefs, attitudes and teaching approaches which

hindered learning were challenged during sessions with families. Some practitioners, however, found the Index for Inclusion very complex.

In spite of the challenges mentioned above, the Index for Inclusion was a highly flexible tool that could be translated, adapted and contextualized to gain maximal satisfaction. This doctoral thesis, therefore, seizes the opportunity to use the indicators from the Index for Inclusion as the best fit investigative tool to explore the current topic, because its guidelines can be adapted to an Abu Dhabi context when analyzing the activities in schools as they implement the new inclusive strategy of 'School for All'. The materials from the Index for Inclusion were the springboard for the researcher's thoughts on the choice of topic and structure for the study, which in turn facilitated the creation of the interview questions, one of the key research instruments in qualitative studies used in this study. In addition, a previous research conducted in the UAE by Gaad & Alborno (2014) utilized the Index for Inclusion as a framework for school review in the UAE. Their qualitative study investigated inclusive provision introduced through the 'School for All' initiative and using a multiple case study methodology, to provide a rich, contextualized picture of implementation in schools in Dubai. They presented their findings in terms of the three key school dimensions of culture, policy, and practice. Positive themes emerged from the data such as a welcoming school climate, support among stakeholders, and emerging parent and community involvement. Nevertheless, barriers to participation and learning such as the lack of effective training, adequate support services, and inclusive classroom structures were found. The study provides insights into the possible challenges to the implementation of the 'Index for Inclusion' in schools in the UAE, which the current study will further extend this literature in the Region within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

2.5 History of Inclusion in the UAE

The researcher found some limited literature within the local context of the UAE on inclusion to add to worldwide debates that aligns to this study. Gaad's (2004c) study on including children with exceptional learning needs in regular schools in the UAE found 'holes in the system' that needed examining if inclusion is adopted. Teachers need training to identify these students. UAE policy was in need of change. Additionally, inclusion for children with intellectual disabilities needed a change from negative cultural attitudes and beliefs (Gaad 2004). She explains in her studies that the gender of teachers in UAE schools affects their attitudes towards inclusion, stating that female teachers convey more positive attitudes towards inclusion and integrating students with behavioral disorders than their male counterparts.

Again, Gaad (2006) researched on the challenges of teaching in culturally diverse, mixed ability students in the UAE. In her study, she attributes the reasons facing teachers as lacking the knowlwdge and skills to meet the needs of diverse students, as well as the negative attitudes from teachers. Similarly, Anati (2012) did a study on including students with disabilities in UAE schools, which revealed teacher dissatisfaction, lack of proper training in mainstream and lack of knowledge on inclusion as barriers for progress. Khan (2005) MA studies and Gaad & Khan's (2007) studied inclusive education and teacher attitudes in private mainstream primary teachers in Dubai. Data collected and analyzed revealed that these teachers lacked the knowledge, skills and resources to meet the needs of students with special needs. Furthermore, Al Zyoudi et al (2006) in their inclusive study on pre-service teachers in Jordan and the UAE found that teachers in the UAE had less positive attitudes to inclusion than in Jordan, due to the latter's lack of preparation and resources. Lastly, Alborno's (2013) recent study on the implementation

of educational provisions in primary schools in the Northern Emirate of the UAE, using the 'School For All' Initiative from Federal Law of 2006 revealed how progress is on the way and moving towards inclusive cultures.

In the UAE, the common practice is to have people with special needs catered for at centers provided by the federal government. The services offered at these centers are free to nationals and non-nationals have to pay a fee which can be significant at times. The centers also provide a general curriculum to students according to their needs as identified in their individual education plans. Students who reach the age of 16 are offered vocational training in specific fields, such as carpentry or motor mechanics. Furthermore, the UAE as a multicultural society accommodates peoples from all over the world originating from Middle East, Europe, U.S, Russia and Far Eastern Asian countries and residing in the country. These peoples all come in with their own cultural attitudes toward inclusion to influence and blend in with the Arab perspective. Attitudes drive behavior. These factors, therefore, have had an impact on school policies as they pertain to special needs particularly in private schools that cater to this culturally diverse population of expatriate students (http://www.uae-embassy.org/uae/education). Gaad (2004b p. 318) reports, that, 'over the years, people's cultural beliefs and set of values have influenced their attitudes towards individuals with intellectual disabilities; thus their attitude towards inclusion and mainstreaming is influenced in the same way'.

Due to this cultural mix, tolerance towards disability has increased and attitudes are changing as awareness of these conditions has slowly increased. Gaad (2004b) cites an example of people with downs syndrome who are no longer referred to as Mongols within the educational milieu. This is evidence of the fact that the society is becoming more accommodating of these

people and accepts them as an important part of society. They are now encouraged to participate in communal activities that ensures their growth which was not the case before.

Moreover in the UAE as in other western countries, the attitude of teachers is an important determining factor of any inclusion program within a school. These teachers are required to possess the knowledge and skills that will enable them meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities. However, in the UAE, teachers are not prepared for such inclusive classrooms and their attempts at implementing inclusive practices become unsuccessful (Gaad 2004b). Hence due to this unpreparedness, Gaad (2004b) contends that the teachers felt reluctant to take on students with disabilities into their classrooms, with Alghazo (2005) adding that, due to the large classes where teachers had to cater for both the students with and without disabilities, they found it impossible to work on a one to one basis with the students who needed it most. The severity of the disability is also a determining factor that influences teacher attitudes towards inclusion. Al Zyoudi (2006) supported this view adding that teachers who had more than twelve years of teaching experience manifested more positive attitudes and acceptance of students with disabilities. Teachers with less experience showed a negative attitude and overall were more accommodating towards students with mild and physical disabilities than those with intellectual and mental disabilities in Dubai schools. Alghazo & Gaad (2004) also revealed that due to cultural beliefs in the UAE, teachers are hesitant to take on jobs in schools where students with disabilities attend for fear that they may one day give birth to such children. In effect, teachers in the UAE still lag behind when compared to teachers from other countries like the UK & the United States (Bradshaw, Tennant & Lydiatt 2004).

Additionally, in the UAE parental views is mixed as some parents have been happy for their child to attend at the centers moving at their own pace (Gaad 2001) whereas as the society

evolved other parents are keen for their children to attend mainstream schools and have all the facilities there open to their children as well (Hassan 2008) asserting that it will provide better chances for their children to adapt to society and for society to adapt to them. Parents also have the genuine fear of their children being bullied and stigmatized at schools so some have a preference to sending them to special centers where there is more of an acceptance of their disabilities. Concerns from parents over how much time can be given to their children at a very personal and individual level bothers them (Al Sheikh & El Howeris 2006). However, as the country moves towards more inclusive practices, parents need a lot of education on inclusion and their rights to demand equitable services and equal participation for their children. In conclusion, with the dawn of Federal Law 29 that provides for the rights of people with disabilities, full inclusion will hopefully be attained to remove any forms of educational segregation that still exists.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Methodology: Qualitative methods evaluating the impact of an inclusive policy

A common trend in the type of methodology used in inclusive studies shows that the medical model relied on a psycho-medical paradigm based on a positivist discipline. However, the social model uses a social-constructivist, structuralist paradigm, which is used in this study.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are found in studies of the above two models as evidenced in research on special education and inclusive education. This study adopts a qualitative, flexible, instrumental case study approach to investigate the impact of an inclusive policy in state primary schools in Abu Dhabi. The approach from the hermeneutic, phenomenological traditions, 'provides insight into an issue' (Silverman 2005, p. 127) whilst studying a specific case in detail. A constructivist paradigm (Creswell 2009; Mertens 1998) formed the qualitative approach as the most frequently used in inclusive studies because it provides a rich portrayal of the phenomenon under study (Mertens & McLaughlin 2004) where qualitative instruments of observations and interviews provide the platform for rich data collection in three state primary schools. The aim is to generate the findings about policy implementation in the provision of educational facilities and access for students with disabilities as they come in contact with various stakeholders responsible for their right to educational achievement.

3.1 Research Design and Approach

A qualitative method is most appropriate to evaluate how an inclusive policy is carried out in primary schools in Abu Dhabi. This contrasts sharply with a quantitative research approach, which relies on its data from statistical analysis, however, devoid of the necessary instruments of interviews and observations to establish depth. Creswell (2009, p.182) supports the position that 'qualitative research occurs in a natural environment which allows the researcher to get a feel for the educational setting'. Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) similarly assert that this approach confirms direct involvement with stakeholders during fieldwork to provide the required in-depth information in evaluating the actualities of any institution using a naturalistic description of the current educational provisions available. A subjectivist investigation is explored on the vision and school goals as led by school leadership, as well as how these visions influenced the teachers in those selected schools, their teaching styles and resources available to them to support students with disabilities within the curriculum.

A case study method gives a qualitative edge to gather rich information using multiple sources of data collection (Robson 2002; Yin 2003), so a collection of approaches were used. The researcher provides insights into the participants' understanding of the phenomenon under study during fieldwork, thereby 'preserving the multiple realities and even contradictory views of what is happening' (Stake 1995, p.12). This approach is people centered, rather than variable centered, where knowledge is constructed than discovered. The approach focuses on meaning and on 'the why' and seeks to discover in depth, the 'insider' as opposed to the 'outsider' perspective. This case study approach provides 'a richer and deeper appreciation of the phenomenon' (Merriam 1998, p. 22). Using a multiple case study methodology further justifies

itself in using a qualitative approach by seeking to shed more light on how the different

participants who were selected including principals as administrators, teachers and students

with disabilities, understand and routinely implement the new inclusive provisions of the 'School

for All' initiative, each from their own viewpoint. Glesne (2006) suggests that, due to the nature

of inclusive practices being varied and continuously evolving to adapt to a specific school

environment, this research aligns with that view of inclusion being a social phenomenon, hence

having diminished objectivism.

Denzin (1978, p.8) states that qualitative research allows the researcher to 'actively enter the

worlds of interacting individuals', thereby gaining first-hand knowledge from the close proximity

with participants, hence using the participants language to collect and present the data for

authenticity. This research uses a collective case study approach to assess how school

personnel will apply their comprehension of the complex idea of inclusion. A case study is the

most tenable approach to choose because the researcher becomes committed to using

interpretations in order to gain understanding into the implementation process (Stake 1995).

Additionally, Ghesquie`re et al. (2004, p.172) maintain that qualitative case studies "had

enormous success in educational research because it allowed researchers to unravel the

complex school and classroom realities". Merriam (1988 p. 22) also asserts that 'a qualitative

case study approach accorded more opportunities to gain a richer in-depth understanding of the

case being studied'. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Silverman (2005) distinguish between

different types of case studies, pertaining on the amount of cases and the study purpose. They

proceed to mitigate that an instrumental case study approach is used when '... a case is

examined mainly to provide insight into an issue' (Silverman 2005, p. 127), in circumstances

where the specific case is studied in detail, however, the true focus is to facilitate the

understanding of the phenomenon in question. With reference to this study, the phenomenon is to investigate the implementation of the special needs inclusion policy in primary schools in Abu Dhabi. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 445) also justify that a multiple case study, which is sometimes referred to as a collective case study, is used when "... a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition". In this research, three public schools that would have been implementing the policy dictates in providing inclusive education in schools for the past six years is explored in depth. The study cannot be generalized as a representation of the UAE; rather the aim is to 'provide balance, variety and an opportunity to learn' (Stake 1995, p. 6).

Consequently, the researcher aims to construct the realities of inclusive education practices through observations and recording practices during the process of teaching and learning, as well as tracking the interaction between students and teachers, and the interactions between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers. Furthermore, the researcher documented the views of principals and special needs coordinator, each from their own perspective and understanding, of how the 'School for All' approach is being implemented.

To reiterate the five aims of the study, mentioned above in chapter one, the main question guiding this qualitative study is:

> To what extent is ADEC's SEN Policy implemented in practice and what
> can be done to improve its implementation to support inclusive education
> in government primary schools in Abu Dhabi,

During the data collection phase, it became necessary to break down the main research guiding question above into two sub research questions:

1) How do teachers and school administrators understand and describe their practice of inclusion?

2) What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

The research questions guided the design of the tool to use, namely the Index for inclusion, an internationally recognized evaluation tool. Previous research-based studies in the UAE on the education of students with disabilities (Alghazo & Gaad 2004; Anati 2012; Arif & Gaad 2008; Bradshaw et al. 2004; Gaad & Thabet 2009; Gaad 2011) also guided the design. The instruments to address the main guiding question, 'To what extent is ADEC's SEN Policy implemented in practice and what can be done to improve its implementation to support inclusive education in government primary schools', included observations, semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brickman 2009), and document analysis (Glesne 2006) in a natural environment (Creswell 2009). Each instrument is briefly and succinctly described below.

Researchers such as Creswell (2009) and Glesne (2006) support this methodological approach by asserting that, to develop their interpretations, qualitative researchers need to obtain access to the multiple views of the participants and subjective meanings of their experiences. Ultimately, as stated before the study objectives are not to generalize across schools in the UAE, but rather to investigate the phenomenon of inclusive practices in the context of three cycle one primary schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The study outcomes will then be made available to policy makers and school staff to assess the relevance of the findings and reflect on their own individual context,

in order to make improvements. This makes the choice of an interpretive approach as most fitting for this study (Creswell 2008).

Effectively, the reason behind using a case study approach aligns with Yin's three dimensions to research methodology. Yin (2009, p.18), states that a case study is "an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis" as explained in table 3.1 below:

Case study approach	Yin (2009, p.18) definition	Application to the study
Design logic	"investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context"	What is the impact of implementing ADEC's SEN policy to 3 primary schools in Abu Dhabi?
Data collection techniques	"relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion"	Data will be collected from ADEC officials, school leadership, teachers, students, Learning Support Team and parents. Triangulate data from observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis (Stake 1995).
Data analysis using theoretical framework to guide data collection and analysis	"benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis"	Analyze data using content analysis and reliant on the theoretical framework of the social model.

Table 3.1: Yin (2009) Justification for a case study approach

This study seeks to acknowledge that inclusive environments are always dynamic; therefore, it is imperative to observe teachers and students in lessons in order to see inclusive practices in action. Gaad (2011, p.80) asserts that the development of effective inclusive practices can only be explored through tracking and monitoring students with disabilities within mainstream schools. Successful inclusion requires 'persistence and innovation to sustain the effort and to

develop approaches to meet the new challenges that emerge over time' (Gaad, 2011,p .80). Consequently, this study has contributed to the limited body of literature available on special education in the UAE to make recommendations for future policy and practice. Additionally, Gaad & Thabet (2009) carried out research in UAE government primary schools which evaluated effective inclusion of students with disability in mainstream classrooms. This research led to a detailed action-plan for schools to adopt within inclusive education. The findings from that study are taken into consideration by this research.

An interpretive approach, using a case study is more beneficial than a positivist approach in describing the provisions of policy (Stake 1995). Teachers, teaching styles, resources used, and assessment procedures were studied. In adopting qualitative methods of data collection in three schools, Creswell (2009, p. 8) and Glesne (2006, p.4) support this approach. Creswell (2009, p.8) stated by posing that 'to make their interpretations, qualitative researchers need to gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants and subjective meanings of their experiences'.

This study does not intend to generalize based on Stake's (1995) assertion that 'The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. … the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself' (p. 8) of policy implementation in three schools. Evidence from the study will be used by ADEC and school administrators to improve the inclusive provisions at their disposal. Consequently, the choice of an interpretive approach is more suitable in the study.

3.2   Site Selection

Participants are policy makers selected from ADEC Headquarters, principals from the three schools, teachers who are both mainstream and special needs teachers, social workers, educational psychologists, students and parents as seen in tables 3.2 and 3.3. To facilitate the selection of schools to participate in the study, the researcher contacted the relevant School Operations Division as well as the Research Division in ADEC to obtain the required permissions. This was based on the relationship and contacts that the researcher had established when working on a professional development contract across schools in the three regions of Abu Dhabi Emirate. During this five year professional development contract, the researcher became involved with many schools that showed a great need to develop their capacity in supporting children with disabilities. The formal process to access schools was fulfilled by the researcher through completing an online form with full details of the aims and objectives of the study, methods to employ, how the study will be carried out, the target schools to engage with and the dissemination of the findings to all the relevant stakeholders. This step was facilitated by staff at ADEC headquarters Special Education Division who were keen to establish whether the SEN and inclusion policy was known and whether it is being implemented in the schools. Due to their vested interest to evaluate and analyze the status of policy implementation in its fifth year of inception, the researcher will readily make available to them the results of this study.

Purposive sampling informed the school selection, and the researcher identified schools that best represent the inclusive practices being researched. Silverman (2005, p. 129), remarks that, purposive sampling tackles the issue of 'representativeness' of the study.

The three sites selected were primary public schools, one from each of the three regions of the

Emirate of Abu Dhabi as earlier indicated. As per the SEN policy, this had to have been

distributed to all the public schools with support packages put in for its implementation, as this

policy was a UAE wide policy. Primary schools were chosen because it was important to use

the schools that had started implementing the policy from its birth to see its breadth and depth

of implementation, with students benefiting the most from a young age. The selection of

participants and process to apply in all the schools ensured 'balance and variety' (Stake 1995,

p. 5), follow a similar pattern of an initial visit, stating the research purpose and aims as in the

consent letter, describe the instruments of observations, interviews and document analysis to

utilize, assuring staff of maintaining confidentiality at all times and lastly, reassure participants in

a consent letter of their voluntary contribution. Consequently, greater preference was given to

more experienced ADEC teachers with longevity at ADEC from the inception of the policy in

order to maximize what can be learnt and provide a broader and deeper picture of its impact.

Table 3.2 below represents the sample size, composition and gender spread;

Grades	Participants-Regular or SEN teacher	Students with disabilities	Cycle 1 Schools		
			Male	Female	Co-Ed
Grade 2	2	3	2	1	
Grade 3	2	3	2	1	
Grade 4	2	3	1	1	1-male
Grade 5	2	3	2	1	
Grade 6	2	3	2	1	
Totals	10 teachers	15 students	(9)	(5)	(1-male)

Table 3.2 – Participant Observation Composition

1) Each regular or SEN teacher from Grades 2-6 was selected to a total 10.

2) 15 students from Grades 2-6, with varied mild to moderate disabilities and requiring more support, comprising 10 boys and 5 girls.

3) ADEC Head of SEN, principals, teachers and Learning Support team members, were interviewed as seen in the table 3.3.

Based on Table 3.2, schools were selected purely on the basis of the rich information they provided, with one of the schools being a model international school with a special needs team from a western nation that shared and facilitated best practices in inclusion within the school and acted as a training hub for other ADEC schools. Hence, the choice of selected schools was not based on convenience and accessibility (Denzin & Lincoln 2005) as the schools were miles away from each other, with one of the regions, the Al Dhafra Region, which is two hours away from Abu Dhabi and Al Ain regions. Two of the regional settings was cosmopolitan cities with one region (All Dhafra) being a semi-urban town. Another commonality in choosing the schools to include in the study was based on schools with a wider category of disabilities, from mild to severe in order for the researcher to obtain a generalist view of the implementation of inclusive practices to meet the different needs of students in their schools.

A minimum of three students with disabilities for each grade level in a male and female setting was selected. Students in grade one were not selected because they would not have spent a long enough time in an inclusive environment to have had an impact on their education. Hence, they will not be able to provide an information rich background that this study seeks to ascertain. Teachers being employed in each of the three schools had to be experienced teachers (Berliner 1986) and who are familiar with working in an inclusive setting and also attended the

professional development trainings offered by ADEC on special needs education approaches

and regular training workshops based around the policy of the 'School for All' Initiative. Some of

the teachers were also special education teachers with specific knowledge and experience in

working with students with a range of disabilities in an inclusive setting. Finally, another factor

that influenced the researcher's choice of schools, including the pilot study school selection,

was based around the variety of different types of disabilities among students as reflected

among male and female students.

3.3   Participants' Sample

Semi structured interviews	Participant	Per School/Class	Cycle 1		Total
			Male	Female	
	ADEC HQ-Head of SEN Section				1
	Principal	1	1	2	3
	Classroom Teacher or SEN Teacher	1 per class 1 per class	2	8	10
	Therapists	1 per school	1	2	3
	Social workers	1 per school	1	2	3
	Parent (if willing)	0			

Table 3.3 – Semi Structured interview composition

Several qualitative researchers use purposive and not random sampling methods to identify

groups or individuals in settings where the processes being studied are most likely to occur.

These participants in their natural setting will best illustrate the educational provisions under

study. The primary schools under investigation represented cases to obtain rich data due to the

fact that the phenomenon of inclusive practices has been implemented there. This increases the

validity of the study, because the context of the school and the role and views of the participants were clearly described, on how best they are promoting and implementing inclusive practices. Worthy of note is the fact that the sample size is flexible and the researcher may see it necessary to increase the size as the research goes on, in response to the data being collected where new factors emerge which require deeper investigation. Mason (2002) justifies such 'flexibility' as strength in qualitative research designs. Schools which have made progress in promoting inclusive practices will be particularly targeted while avoiding the choice of schools solely on 'accessibility and convenience' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The criteria for choosing three schools were based on the following:

- Non-selective schools admitting students with special needs.

- One male, one female and one mixed gender school for effective comparison.

- Schools with a large number of students with various categories of disabilities.

- Length of experience of staff chosen (Berliner 1986) - longevity in service.

- Variety in the disability type, gender, age of the children as the main factor.

Consequently, participant selection was random from a list of students on the schools' SEN registers that the person responsible for SEN gave to the researcher. Bilingual consent forms were sent home to every parent of a student on the list as well as to all the adult participants who agreed to take part in the study. The consent forms clearly stated the study objectives and how data will be collected and used. Also, interview protocol and confidentiality issues were explained in the consent form. The schools visited were all very warm and welcoming and agreed to work in partnership with me to collect all the data I would need. Nonetheless, schools were initially apprehensive suspecting that I may be a spy from ADEC coming in to check their

processes and grade them. I clarified to them that I was a researcher and my focus is to evaluate what inclusive practices are currently happening and from the findings, propose to suggest ways and make recommendations for more inclusive practices. This reassurance went down well with school staff at the initial visit. Participant selection bias was therefore kept at a minimum.

3.4   Observations

Participant observation is a widely used primary qualitative instrument in inclusive studies where the researcher engages with the participants. Researchers who have used observations in their case studies on inclusion are Ghesquiere et al. (2002) in Flemish schools, Peters (2002) in the United States and Freire and Cesar's (2003) work on mainstream teacher beliefs and practices. The directness in observations has a big advantage (Robson 2002, p.312) because it sustains engagement amongst stakeholders, hence researchers can reflect on their assumptions (Glesne 2006, p. 51). Additionally, the use of The Index for Inclusion by Booth and Ainscow (2000) as an evaluative tool with indicators specific to conducting a reflective analysis on inclusive practices was employed. To support the researcher during the lesson observations, standardized ADEC formal classroom observation forms (Appendix 5) were utilized.

Observations of fifteen students and ten teachers were carried out within lessons, with minimal disruption from the rear of the classroom (Kellehear 1993) to permit the normal flow of the lesson. The researcher actively participated during group activities in class to better interact with students. As well as using a checklist for observations in the classrooms, the researcher also

created an observation checklist to accompany out of classroom and playground observations. (Appendix 6). These checklists reflect a set of criteria for inclusive practices, including classroom setting, seating plan, learning environments outside the classrooms and collaborative interactions between students around the school grounds. Also, the Index for Inclusion was used to ensure observations of the policies and practice are aligned to the research framework and question, thus making the observations pertinent to the case issues being researched. Consequently, gathering data through observations serves the following purpose:

- Establish student-teacher interactions.

- Observe student-teacher working environment.

- Analyze student inter-relationships in and out of lessons.

- Present a transparent image of how students with disability cope with life at school.

In order to minimize the loss of data and avoid misrepresentation (Foster 1996, p. 43), the observation notes were kept in a safe place.

3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, as the main route into multiple realities earlier stated, with ADEC policy makers, enabling the collection of in-depth conversational data for analysis (Finlay & Gough 2003; Langdridge 2004).Three principals of the selected schools were interviewed with the purpose of finding out what the school has in place to support teachers to practice inclusive methods. Ten teachers, social workers and educational psychologists were also interviewed to capture their views of inclusive practices from their experiences. None of the parents invited agreed to take part to share their views. This method

facilitates flexibility in the responses at a more personalized level (Creswell 2008; Glesne 2006). It gives useful information from non-verbal cues like voice tone and facial expressions on the challenges staff face daily in putting inclusion into practice.

The interview questions are not open ended because these are not helpful when ascertaining educational provisions for both teachers and students and how these are put into practice (Freire & Ceasar 2003; Ghesquie're et al. 2002; Howell & Gengell 2005; Peters 2002).

The researcher created three sets of interview questions; sixteen questions to the Head of SEN at ADEC HQ, thirty two questions to principals and forty four questions to the teachers and social workers. All the questions reflect the indicators from the Index for Inclusion. The questions focus on the four areas of: curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service teacher professional development to evaluate impact and give importance to the study, any successes and drawbacks. Interview times and place were collaboratively agreed with the participants to suit them and last for approximately forty five minutes to an hour. The purpose of the study is reiterated at the beginning of each interview; with reassurance given that they can withdraw whenever they choose to. The interview questions are specific to the different roles of the Head of SEN at ADEC Head Quarters (Appendix 7), principals (Appendix 8), teachers and social workers (Appendix 9). These interview questions provided answers for the two research questions.

3.6 Document Collection and Analysis

This qualitative approach collected and analyzed ADEC policy document, Ministry of Education's 'School for All' document, international documents and school related documentation in order to identify the relationship between government policy and school practices. A key document is the 'School for All – General Rules for the Provision of Special Education Programs and Services' (MOE 2010) (Appendix 2) since this states the framework for inclusive education in all schools in Abu Dhabi. Other relevant official documents, including UAE Federal Law 29/2006 (MSA 2006) are also assessed. This is to ensure that the educational provisions match what is stated inside the policy documents.

Similarly, school documentation that formed part of the study included:

- SEN Policies
- Enrolment and attendance data, initial assessment data and progress reports
- Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities, showing any adaptations and modifications
- Learning Support Team Processes and Procedures
- Parental communication procedures

These documents provided information about each particular school's aims and provisions for inclusive practice which acted as a triangulation to the views from teachers and school staff interviewed. The documents and analysis will therefore provide answers to the two research questions.

In addition, other sources from the Ministries of Education (MOE) and Social Affairs (MSA) are examined. Relevant international documents from the United States, Europe and Australia is also be analyzed to make links to the UAE context. These included UNESCO policy guidelines on inclusion (UNESCO 2009), as it correlates with the change from integration to inclusion. Knowledge from literature in the field within the Region of other Gulf States with a common Islamic background are examined.

Content analysis, guided by the theoretical framework, is the analytical tool used for the data collected. Hsieh & Shannon, (2005, p.1278) define qualitative content analysis as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns". Also, Patton (2002) states that taking a volume of qualitative materials to identify core consistencies and meanings is what content analysis is about. Both definitions amongst several others emphasize examining patterns, meanings and themes allowing researchers to understand realities in a subjective manner. Texts in qualitative content analysis are purposefully selected as well hence; this approach supports the methods used in the study to understand how the participants view the social world. In a practical way, steps to content analysis the researcher took included careful reading of data collected, making notes on margins, creating lists, categorizing items, comparing and contrasting themes to see where they fit and are relevant to the study.

3.7   Case Study Methodology

This research uses a collective case study approach to assess how school personnel applied their comprehension of the complex idea of inclusion. A case study is the most tenable approach to choose because the researcher becomes committed to using interpretations in order to gain understanding into the implementation process (Stake 1995). Additionally, Ghesquie`re et al. (2004, p.172) maintain that qualitative case studies 'had enormous success in educational research because it allowed researchers to unravel the complex school and classroom realities'. Merriam (1988, p.22) also asserts that 'a qualitative case study approach accorded more opportunities to gain a richer in-depth understanding of the case being studied'. Merriam (1998, p.27) sees 'the case as a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries'. She carries on confirming that, a qualitative case study research as an 'intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as an institution, a person, process' (p. xiii). This study aligns with Yin's case study approach previously mentioned in Table 3, with its three dimensions to research methodology. Yin (2009, p.18), states that a case study is 'an all-encompassing method covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis'. Yazan (2015) conducted a study of the three key proponents of case study methodology in qualitative research, namely Merriam (1998) Stake (1995) & Yin (2003). He discovered that all three researchers in their individual studies agreed that qualitative case study is an empirical inquiry that commonly utilizes three data collection techniques of interviews, observation and analyzing documents. This observation from Yazan (2015) aligns with the approach in this study.

This study seeks to acknowledge that inclusive environments are always dynamic; therefore it is imperative to observe teachers and students in lessons in order to see inclusive practices in action. Successful inclusion requires 'persistence and innovation to sustain the effort and to develop approaches to meet the new challenges that emerge over time' (Gaad, 2011, p. 80). Consequently, this study contributes to the limited body of literature available on special education in the UAE to make recommendations for future policy and practice. Additionally, Gaad and Thabet (2009, p.169) carried out research in UAE government primary schools which evaluated effective inclusion of students with disability in mainstream classrooms. This research led to a detailed action-plan for schools to adopt within inclusive education. The findings from that study are taken into consideration by this researcher as indicated earlier.

An interpretive approach, using a case study is more beneficial than a positivist approach in describing the provisions of policy (Stake 1995). Teachers, teaching styles, resources used, and assessment procedures are studied. In adopting qualitative methods of data collection in three schools, Creswell (2009, p. 8) and Glesne (2006, p.4) support this approach by posing that 'to make their interpretations, qualitative researchers need to gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants and subjective meanings of their experiences'.

This study does not intend to generalize based on Stake's (1995) assertion that 'The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization….the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself' (p. 8) of policy implementation in three schools. Evidence from the study will be used by ADEC and school administrators to improve the inclusive provisions at their disposal. Consequently, the choice of an interpretive approach is more suitable in the study (Creswell 2008, p. 213).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are adhered to throughout the study, guided by the British University in Dubai's (BUiD) ethical code of conduct and permission letter (Appendix 10) and ADEC's permission letter (Appendix 11). Participation is voluntary and permission has already been obtained from ADEC headquarters following the approval of the research proposal by the university, in order to facilitate the visits to the selected schools and present a description of the study aims and procedures. Appointments were made to suit participants in the schools. Additionally, the researcher provided participants' consent forms (Appendix 12a-c) with a written description stating the study purpose and aims, procedures for data gathering to assist them freely agreeing to be part of the study. These consent forms also spelt out the participants' rights. The researcher advised the school to ensure they inform parents about the aims of the study, thereby ensuring that parental approval is granted to have access to their children when at school. This action also enlisted parental collaboration during interviews where that was possible.

Stakeholders were informed about their choice of withdrawal from the sample if they so intend without any consequences. Finally, the researcher guaranteed anonymity by using pseudonyms for all persons and school names in order to protect the identity of each participant and school. However, the researcher is aware of the fact that total anonymity is a challenge due to the narrow body of schools participating in this study.

3.9 Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out to fine- tune the data collection instruments as it pertains to the content of the data and the procedures to adhere to (Yin 2009, p. 92) following the approval of the research proposal. This pilot study increased the integrity of the research instruments. Access and convenience (Yin 2009, p. 93) was paramount in the choice of a pilot school where selected interview questions were used for each participant to test out the research tool. This provided the researcher with first hand experiences of how the special education and inclusive policy is being implemented in the school, which this study is about.

The researcher identified with the three primary schools based on her familiarity and work within public schools across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, with all the three schools deemed by ADEC and the inspection team who are outsourced as improving schools in many areas. Therefore all the three schools are in the middle to lower average band of schools (bands B and C). School B had a special needs coordinator who doubled as the SEN teacher in the school with 11 years experience from Jordan in special education. She led on most of the SEN trainings in the school, encouraging staff to become familiar with inclusion and what it means in practice – real life. The principal supported the SEN Coordinator by being a very progressive, dynamic and positive thinking leader who was keen for all her students to make positive progress and no child be left behind. She had held several meetings with her staff, the mothers' council and teachers explaining the importance of having a welcoming environment within the school with special attention given to their students who had disabilities. The researcher spent a total of four weeks visiting each of the schools, four times over four weeks. The school selection met the sampling criteria and the conditions of site selection described earlier and conducted an

interview with the school principals, an interview with the special needs coordinators, an interview with three regular teachers in each school and an observation in three classrooms in grades two, three and four, focusing on three students in each of the three grades who had intellectual disabilities, visual and hearing impairment and one student with autism. In total, nine students were observed and followed over four weeks.

The researcher also had the opportunity to attend four regular weekly professional development sessions that take place across all public schools. Professional developing is an ongoing process existing at all schools for staff to share good practices, be exposed to different aspects of teaching, learning and pedagogy and the vehicle through which ADEC fosters staff growth thereby raising staff capacity to meet international best practices and standards. This is one of the visions of ADEC across their schools to meet the 2030 vision for the Emirate to be a world class leader in securing a world class education for its citizens so they can compete with the international world. Coincidentally, the workshop that the researcher attended at one of the two pilot schools was on 'ADEC SEN & Gifted & Talented Guidelines – the role of the teacher' where the aims of the session were to identify the teachers' role and responsibilities and introducing a staged approach to provision amongst others. The researcher was able to see some of the strategies for a staged SEN approach (Appendix 13). Other trainings observed involved differentiation strategies and the role of the Learning Support Team where the school has an effective team in operation. The researcher attended four professional development sessions, one per week in each of the schools and at two of the schools was accompanied to the workshop by the principal or vice principal as required by ADEC policies. It was interesting for the researcher to make links between what the school is doing to support teachers understand and develop strategies that support an inclusive learning environment.

These trainings were delivered by providers from several countries round the world who had been outsourced by ADEC to provide targeted professional development as part of the educational reform program taking place in Abu Dhabi called the 'New School Model', now re-named the 'Abu Dhabi School Model'. These professional development sessions take place weekly across all public schools in the Emirate. It must however be noted that, of the four professional development sessions observed, only one session had a high degree of interaction and hands-on active strategies for teachers to explore. The other three sessions were highly theoretical with little room for interaction as observed by the researcher in attendance.

The researcher recorded and made notes during the interviews and class visits with permission from the participants in order to validate the data collected. Following this data collection, comparisons were made between the recordings and notes to ensure any gaps were filled in to increase the trust worthiness of the report as the weeks went by. Interruptions during the interviews were minimal during the pilot study hence facilitated collating the information. Following the professional development workshops, it was interesting that teachers were keen to share their knowledge and experiences of working in an inclusive setting during the interviews and how the professional development workshops make an impact on their instructional strategies. The majority of teachers and those selected for the pilot study were not too happy about the impractical nature of the professional development sessions which gave little support to them on their understanding of ADEC's SEN policy approaches. They felt ill-equipped and unable to fully demonstrate their skills within an inclusive setting. These findings will be developed more in chapter five of the findings. The researcher used the opportunity from their willing approach to give their views on the clarity and relevance of the semi structured interview questions and whether the questions truly reflected their daily roles in the school. The

researcher took note of their feedback and made adjustments to the interview questions based on their comments to provide lucidity. An example of this can be seen where a question about how the registration process for students with special needs is conducted was out of their realm and they had no impact or understood how ADEC procedures on registrations is carried out. Another question was re-written to provide more clarity. An example of how a question was revised is from; *'What are the ways that you can support students to meet curriculum goals?'* to *'What steps have you taken in your lesson to engage students with disabilities at an individual level so they can access a modified curriculum?'* which is more specific and clear.

This pilot study ensured the effectiveness of the data collection instruments, as well as informed the researcher about the processes occurring in schools and inclusive practices. A short personal report was written based on the researcher's experiences and adjustments were made as advised by the researcher's supervisor based on the information collected at this school. The pilot study proved to be an integral part of the study from the beginning as a good entry point to increase the clarity and relevance of the data collection instruments, test out the response from school staff on their knowledge and understanding of implementing ADEC's special needs inclusive policy pertaining to educational provisions across Abu Dhabi, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education's 'School for All' paper (2010).

3.10   The Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies the main role of the researcher is being viewed as the tool and the lens through which the data collected will be observed (Glesne 2006; Lincoln & Guba 1985). In addition, other researchers such as Creswell (2009, p. 177) state that the researcher is

generally engaged in a continuous and intensive experience with the participants. Therefore, the role of the researcher has to be clearly understood by all the participants as the researcher makes clear attempts to respond to the research questions.

Consequently, as a researcher I was conversant about entering into this role as a learner who will grab every learning opportunity to understand the implementation of ADEC's SEN and inclusion policy in the schools which emphasizes Glesne (2006, p. 46) point of a researcher as 'a curious student who comes to learn from and with the research participants'. Hence, I went to great lengths to ensure that the participants understood my role fully as a co-learner alongside them on this journey into the world of inclusion. Bias was kept at a minimum through data triangulation, validating the data in order to avoid my own personal input. I was able to reassure staff repeatedly, that I was a research student, who was there to learn from the collaborative experience on how the policy was being implemented, and not to evaluate them whether they were putting policy into practice or not. On this vain, my role was more supportive towards their efforts in understanding and implementing the policy, noting their concerns and seeking to find solutions and some recommendations from them on the best way forward in supporting the students under their care to receive the best education that meets their abilities.

Initially, virtually all the teachers and even some of the leaders, were suspicious of my intentions as an informant from ADEC who is there to check on them and report back to ADEC. This led to our initial interactions being a bit strained and teachers were not readily getting involved in the discussions. However, after the second and third visits, phone calls and emails thanking them for their support an contributions, I could feel the air becoming relaxed on my subsequent visits and they started to freely express their feelings, approaches tried out in lessons, some

frustrations with their school administration where lack of resources prevented them from doing what they planned to do with students who needed more of their support. I succeeded in creating an environment of trust between myself and the participants so they started seeing me as a fellow colleague with whom they could share their joys, frustrations and difficulties. I had to calmly explain to them that I did not have the answers to some pertinent issues they were seeking answers for, reminding them and myself that I was there just to observe and collect data to inform the study on how they were implementing the SEN inclusion policy.

It was necessary and reassuring to me that the participants in all the schools that took part in the study became reassured and trusted me to feel comfortable enough to provide the researcher with a massive amount of quality information. In developing confidence in me, participants towards the end of the data collection period started seeing me as a voice who can channel their concerns and frustrations to ADEC headquarters' Special Needs Division, of feeling that they were being thrown into the deep end to accommodate students with disabilities without being given the necessary training and resources to prepare them for the role effectively. At times, I found myself acting as a coach to them sharing some strategies to help them to engage the students with disabilities better or simply be a good listener to their worries without offering to give any solutions. This approach tied in with Glesne's (2006, p. 92) assertion of the importance of being a good listener with the 'research purpose and eventual write-up fully in mind'.

Throughout the study, necessary arrangements were adhered to at all times to ensure trustworthiness was never jeopardized (Cresswell & Miller 2000; Foster 1996; Stake 1995), through triangulation, length of time spent at the school sites, ongoing discussions and feedback with participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that when a researcher has a

prolonged period spent in the field, this will be of benefit to establish rapport and create a situation where ample data will be collect to allow the emergence of themes. This is the reason why the data collected for this study spanned over a two-year period with a total of 8-10 whole day visits to each school site, in addition to multiple half day visits to meet with the administrative team who were usually busy with other duties so it was necessary to be flexible and fit in with shorter discussion periods over several weeks to fully cover all the questions that needed their feedback with.

Due to the good rapport over the weeks and months that the researcher had established with staff across the schools, it became easier to follow up the weekly school visits with emails and phone calls as reminders to meetings or teachers sending in any needed documentation or lesson plan as agreed or just to clarify points raised. This confidence that had developed with school staff allowed the researcher not only free access into classrooms and meeting rooms/staff room, but also on the playground where I had the opportunity to observe staff performing their school duties, interacting outside the classrooms with the students being observed and also observing how the students were interacting with each other and with students that had disabilities.

The authenticity of these interactions and observations enhanced the trustworthiness of the data that was being collected, as well as obtaining member checking at the end of each week following the interviews in order for participants to review the notes that the researcher had taken to affirm the summaries as an accurate reflection of their views, feelings and experiences. Credibility was established following these meetings as the participants mostly affirmed the summaries as accurate hence decreasing the incidence of incorrect data or incorrect data

interpretation. The researcher therefore was able to achieve her goals of providing findings from these data that are authentic, original and reliable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checking as a technique in qualitative research that helps to improve the validity, credibility, accuracy and transferability of the study. Creswell (1998) also maintains that member checking ensures accuracy in the data collection process.

Merriam (1998, p. 204) purports that 'triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data and multiple methods to confirm the findings'. The researcher collected and collated information from multiple sources from the teachers, principals, vice principals, head of SEN, ADEC Head Quarters' staff and students. The multiple methods employed were the semi structured interviews, observations on the field and document analysis. In addition, I was conscious and careful to minimize errors as much as possible during the data collection and recount and recount the statements and discussions as naturally as they occurred. To further ensure validity and reliability in the recount, I employed a paired peer support with a co-worker who was also at the same stage of data collection towards her thesis in another field. We spent time in the evenings debriefing each other of our day's work, the challenges and successes encountered in the field and clarifying any doubts as we shared and advised each other. This was a very useful exercise to learn about different approaches in my deep passion to make this study and the use of inclusive education a success across all Abu Dhabi schools.

Several challenges presented themselves during the data collection. Firstly, with respect to the small number of schools involved in the study, three schools, it was challenging in obtaining the rich data sources that was needed. Another challenge was that the researcher had worked with one of the Provider companies employed by ADEC in delivering professional development

across ADEC's school system so was familiar with how the schools were functioning and there was a risk of bias, about some of the concerns they had that were preventing them fully working in an inclusive setting. It was important that I recognized and eliminated any bias in my discussions and work with school staff through triangulation of data. However, staff quickly became relaxed with the researcher after initial hesitations in the first meeting when they realized that I was not there in the role of an evaluator on their performance to report back to ADEC to put their jobs at risk. Once this fact was fully recognized, they were relaxed throughout the data collection process and willing to provide any information or document that would be helpful in the process. At the same time as trust and confidence was growing between the researcher and participants, it was pivotal that the researcher pays attention about sharing personal opinions that may prejudice the responses from the participants. Discussions with participants that took place during the interviews involved asking more probing questions to get deeper responses, agreeing or disagreeing with some views shared in a matured way through verbal and non-verbal gestures without negatively impacting on their eagerness to share their true experiences.

Furthermore, the researcher's background as a special needs coordinator in the UK could pose some limitations on a biased stance coming in with pre-conceived ideas and my deep belief in an inclusive education, however, I was able to take an objective position to use a fresh approach in a different country and setting so was keen to observe and understand how school staff viewed and understood what inclusion actually meant in practice. Nevertheless, I used peer debriefing and brainstorming and background research to challenge myself on a regular basis as the study progressed which minimized any personal biases I may have had throughout the data collection and data analysis stages. Ensuring anonymity was another challenge to ensure that the schools and participants were well protected during the study. The researcher

used pseudonyms masking the names of the schools and names of all the participants.

However, maintaining absolute anonymity was quite difficult at times due to the fact that the

researcher had to make the accounts as vivid, natural and authentic as possible to reflect the

real settings and interactions that were taking place. Lastly, the researcher wanted to do a

mixed method of qualitative and quantitative study and transcribing the data gathered, however

later abandoned this approach due to time constraints and the slowness in getting access into

the schools which was delayed by several factors beyond the researcher's control and

influence.

3.11   Analyzing the Data

Data analysis is an ongoing process with no particular starting and stopping points when the

analysis commences as purported by Stake (1995). In this study data collection and data

analysis were carried out simultaneously. Firstly, the researcher collected all the data and

analyzed them to fully understand where the selected schools were in their implementation of

the special needs and inclusive policy from ADEC, and as backed by UAE Law No. 29 (2006)

on the Rights of Persons with Special Needs to receive equitable educational opportunities. In

order to facilitate the analysis, the documents that were to form the basis for the study to begin

to answer the research questions were the Special Needs policy Handbook and the Ministry of

Education 'School For All' policy paper '(2010).

The researcher read through the two policy documents highlighting the crucial sections and

making annotations with a view to reviewing these sections with school staff to elicit their

understanding and familiarity with putting policy into practice. These annotations were further

developed and incorporated into interview questions with principals, special needs coordinators

in schools, mainstream teachers and special needs teachers who are meant to have been

exposed to the policy and implementing the provisions in the past 5 years prior to and during the

period that this study is being conducted.   Using the research questions, the interview

questions and answers were thematically presented, highlighting the key issues as the findings

that arose from the study. Therefore, the findings were related to each of the research sub-

questions, using a color coded system for each recurring theme, and backing up the narratives

with extracted pieces from the interviews done with 20 participants. The data from the semi

structured interviews and ensuing discussions validated the information from the policy

documents and shed more light on relating policy to practical implementation. The data

collection followed a systematic data collection schedule plan as shown in Table 3.4 below. The

data were categorized into different folders kept securely and digitally maintained and

continuously updated.

2 years: June 2015 – June 2017	
April 2015	Design the interview questions
June 2015-July 2015	Interview ADEC Administrators
Oct-Nov 2015	Conduct pilot selected initial interview questions
Dec 2015-April 2016	Case study School 1 data collection
Dec 2015-April 2016	Case study School 2 data collection
Dec 2015-April 2016	Case study School 3 data collection
April 2016-April 2017	Transcribe data collected Data Analysis Report Writing on study.

Table 3.4 – Data Collection Schedule Plan

The researcher developed a code for each of the 3 schools under study, for example, School A,

School B and School C were named as such. Under each of the three schools A, B, C a further

categorization was done for each type of research that was conducted as in Table 3.5 on the

data categorization codes; (1) observation as A1, B1, C1, (2) semi-structured interviews as A2, B2, C2 and (3) document analysis as A3, B3, C3.

School Name	Data Collection Instruments codes		
	Observations (OB)	Interviews (IN)	Document Analysis(DA)
School A	A1	A2	A3
School B	B1	B2	B3
School C	C1	C2	C3

Table 3.5 Data categorization codes per school

Furthermore, within the semi structured interview folder, separate codes are given to each participant type, i.e. ADEC Head Quarter Head of SEN, principal, SEN coordinator/therapists, social worker and SEN/mainstream teacher as depicted below in Table 3.6. These were electronically stored in a logical way for ease of access.

Semi Structured interviews (IN)	
Description	Codes
ADEC HQ Head of SEN	1-IN-HQ
School A principal	A-IN-P
School B principal	B-IN-P
School C Principal	C-IN-P
School A SEN coordinator/therapists	A-IN-CO
School B SEN coordinator/therapists	B-IN-CO
School C SEN coordinator/therapists	C-IN-CO
School A SEN/mainstream teacher	A-IN-T
School B SEN/mainstream teacher	B-IN-T
School C SEN/mainstream teacher	C-IN-T

Table 3.6 Codes for participant interviews

Following the data collection methods and analysis, several key themes were emerging that are explained in detail in Chapter 4 on Findings. These include:

a) Awareness and availability/accessibility of ADEC's SEN policy document

b) Teacher level of knowledge and skills in working within an inclusive setting

c) School structures and placements and the processes for these

d) Processes for intervention and assessment of students in the target group

e) Availability of resources for modification and adaptation and other support services

f) The role of parents in supporting an inclusive education for their child

All the data that was collected and recorded from the interviewers and notes taken were immediately analyzed on the same day and categorized and stored in the electronic folders. As the data collection went on, any new information that had been checked through thoroughly as described above was used to update the folders. When this exercise was over, the data collected were thoroughly checked through to ensure there were no omissions or irregularities.

Furthermore, as an attempt to answer the first research question, I triangulated all the processes used during the data collection and analysis stages that occurred simultaneously, by categorizing the three methods and mapping these over to align with the four areas mentioned in chapter one, namely the curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service teacher training that evaluate the impact of policy. This approach led to and provided answers for the second research question that seeks to provide improvements to inclusive practices. Consequently, in addition to observation method one using the indicators (IN) within the Index for Inclusion tool (Booth & Ainscow 2011) to gauge the impact of inclusion in the aforementioned four areas, the data for Research Question 2 are mapped against the three key parts of The Index for Inclusion,

which are inclusive cultures, inclusive policies and inclusive practices. The data accounts

collected were highlighted and annotated accordingly, to reflect and relate to the indicators.

The tables below (3.7 and 3.8) gives a description of the triangulation process from the data

collected from different sources to answer Research Question 1 and Research Question 2;

	Research Question 1: How do teachers & administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion?				
	Participant sample-ref. table 3.3	Curriculum	Accessibility	Assessment	In-service professional development
Method 1: Observation (OB)		In class Playground Learning outside	In class playground		professional development Training room
Method 2: Semi-Structured Interviews (IN)	Head of SEN-ADEC HQ	Q13, Q14, Q15	Q1-11,	Q16	Q12
	Principal	Q12, Q16, Q17, Q18,	Q1-4, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11,Q13, Q14, Q15, Q19-21, Q32	Q22-31	Q5, Q6,
	SEN Coordinator/ Social Worker	Q1-2, Q12, Q14, Q16-18, Q32-33, Q43	Q3-6, Q10-11, Q13, Q15, Q19-22, Q34-36, Q39, Q40, Q42	Q7-8, Q23-27, Q44	Q9, Q28-31, Q37-38, Q41
	Teacher	Q1-2, Q12, Q14, Q16-18, Q32-33, Q43	Q3-6, Q10-11, Q13, Q15, Q19-22, Q34-36, Q39, Q40, Q42	Q7-8, Q23-27, Q44	Q9, Q28-31, Q37-38, Q41
Method 3: Document Analysis (DA)		Modifications Adaptations Resources Policy & curriculum documents Articles & leaflets	Interventions Resources Support services IEPs Reports	Test samples Interventions	professional development Plans Feedback training reports Photos SEN Awareness Day

Table 3.7 – Triangulation of data; Research Question 1 aligned to 4 areas & mapped to 3

research methods – Observation (OB), Interview (IN), Document Analysis (DA).

Research Question 2 follows below;

Research Question 2: What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?				
	Participant sample-ref table 3.3	Inclusive cultures	Inclusive policies	Inclusive practices
Method 1: Observation (OB)		In class Playground Learning outside	In class playground	In class Playground Learning outside
Method 2: Semi-Structured Interviews (IN)	Head of SEN-ADEC HQ	Q1—3, Q10	Q4-7, Q9, Q16	Q8,Q11-15
	Principal	Q1-2, Q7, Q12-13, Q15, Q18-22, Q24-25, Q28	Q3-6, Q10-11, Q14, Q16-17, Q23, Q26, Q27, Q29-31	Q8-9, Q32
	SEN Coordinator/Social Worker	Q4-5, Q8, Q10-11, Q13, Q18-21	Q1, Q9, Q17, Q24-27, Q38, Q41-42	Q2-3, Q6-7, Q12, Q14-16, Q22-23, Q28-37, Q39-40, Q43-44
	Teacher	Q4-5, Q8, Q10-11, Q13, Q18-21	Q1, Q9, Q17, Q24-27, Q38, Q41-42	Q2-3, Q6-7, Q12, Q14-16, Q22-23, Q28-37, Q39-40, Q43-44
Method 3: Document Analysis (DA)		Effective displays Policy & curriculum documents Articles & leaflets	Health reports IEPs Profile of student Modifications Staff development plan Effective Learning Support Unit SEN policy	Test samples IEPs Modified Weekly plans Differentiated lesson plans Differentiated worksheets SIP-showing evidence of collaborative planning focus

Table 3.8 Triangulation of data; Research Question 2 mapped against the 3 key parts of the Index for Inclusion using the 3 research methods – Observation (OB) , Interviews(IN), Document Analysis (DA)

The next chapter describes the findings derived from the analysis of the data emanating from the above tables, in order to provide answers to the two research questions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1   ADEC SEN Policy Description and Analysis

This fundamental aim of this study is to investigate the implementation of Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) special needs inclusion policy in three primary schools across three regions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The rationale is to analyze the policy in order to establish whether the schools are implementing inclusive practices through closely interacting with the school staff on their day to day job roles and duties as well as policy makers at ADEC.

This chapter on findings will be broken up into four sections. The first part will give an in-depth critical description of the Special Educational Needs Policy and its contents. Part two, three and four will exclusively focus on each of the three case study schools A, B C, and present the findings in a structured way through addressing the two research questions which are:

Research Question 1 – How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion?
Research Question 2 – What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

In order to evaluate the implementation and impact of policy on practice, in each of the three schools, Research Question 1 is addressed using the four key indicators of curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service teacher training. Following that, Research Question 2 is also addressed in each school by utilizing Booth & Ainscow (2011) Index for Inclusion, a world renowned inclusive evaluation tool with its indicators that focus on inclusive cultures,

inclusive policies and inclusive practices. The data analysis identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the policy as well as school implementation practices in reference to inclusive education in order to provide the reality existing in the schools and pave the way for further improvements for the future.

The UAE government's strategic direction was to achieve a first class education that would 'develop students' skills, knowledge and readiness, by implementing proper governance in the education system' (UAE Government Strategy, 2013, p.9). To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Education adopted Federal Law No. 29 in 2006, regarding the 'Rights of Persons with Special needs' to promote the philosophy of inclusive education that ensured all students with disabilities in public schools have equal access to educational opportunities and protect their rights to be educated (Farouk 2008).

As a result of this, policy makers within the government, as part of a major educational reform, created Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) in 2005, as the government organ to implement the new reforms and policies. ADEC addressed this vision for a knowledge based economy by putting a lot of emphasis on the quality of educational systems, thereby developing a ''Special Education Policy and Procedures Handbook'', providing a reference point for UAE's Federal Law 14/2009, which is an amendment of the original Law No. 29, 2006. This ADEC Policy document supports the Ministry of Education's 'Schools for All' document in 2010. This Handbook, which is the focus of this study, describes the policy and procedures that support the delivery and implementation of special education services in ADEC schools. Hence, ADEC, in order to attain its 2030 vision for education in the UAE to meet world class standards, has initiated this policy with the hope that it will form the basis of equal opportunity and access to

learning for all students, irrespective of their disability. This fact is confirmed by the Head of

ADEC Special Needs Division who was asked the question at interview;

Why did ADEC decide to embrace inclusion? He stated that:

> ADEC formed the handbook in 2006 - the right time for policy development to use federal law as a leverage to engage and move schools to an inclusive model. We got a range of students needing it or else they have no rights. Policy framework backed up by law to support us in this initial kick off in their entitlement to have access to education.

The purpose of this study therefore was to examine and critique its contents, using one

qualitative research technique of document analysis, to investigate the ADEC SEN Handbook

as a viable policy document, using background research on effective policies to justify its

existence, in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs in all public schools

in Abu Dhabi. Although there is not yet a record of the number of children with SEN needs in

ADEC schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, efforts are being made by the SEN Division in

ADEC to compile this data to give a clear picture of the percentage of students who fall in this

category, to enable the intervention program to be implemented.

It was a drawback to effective implementation when the data from interviews with the SEN

Manager revealed that a proper register from all the zones had not been established with the

number of students on that register. This is an area that needs improvement as when the

question was asked to the Head of Special Needs at Head Quarters on;

Q3- How has ADEC SEN Division shared their vision of inclusive education with parents and the

wider community? His response showed gaps in communication with relevant stakeholders on

the inclusion journey. Below is an excerpt of his response:

an area we need to improve in much more is communication. Although the department is very small and stretched with resources, developing a data base for parental community groups and agencies, working to engage them as a source of sharing the vision and the policy documents. This is our charter to do for 2015 and beyond. We will do this by launching a public awareness campaign in 2015 through using ADEC's media communication channels to send out press releases to the school community and regional team leaders, using assistive technology and support systems.

However, inspection reports and reports from Providers (mostly Western consultancy companies) who train and support staff in the schools, reveal a high percentage of SEN students in many schools. Unfortunately, there was hesitance in providing me with this document as the process to collect the data is still going and not yet in the public domain. It should however be noted that, due to the introduction of another policy called the New School Model (NSM- and how renamed Abu Dhabi School Model, ADSM)) which emphasized collaborative, engaging, inquiry based learning, this SEN policy goes to support the NSM Policy in meeting the needs of children with varied levels of disabilities within school, where students are encouraged to work in small groups on relevant, open ended tasks that keeps them engaged, motivated and learn.

ADEC's SEN policy and Procedures Handbook (Appendix 1) is a fairly new document revised in 2012. Special Educational Needs in the policy manual is defined as 'the overall description for any disability, disorder, difficulty, impairment, exceptionality or other additional need that affects a student's access to learning and their educational performance'. The special education then refers to the additional provision that is made to ensure they reach their full potential. It further clarified the terms 'disability, impairment, disorder' where these diagnosis are long term or permanent to affect their educational needs. ADEC stated that the purpose of the manual is 'to provide a point of reference regarding the Federal Law, guidelines to assist education regions and schools in developing programs and services that enabled students with special needs to achieve academic success'. It also clearly stated that it is intended primarily for the use of the

regional office staff, principals, school based teams and special educational professionals, as well as help other social service and health professionals.

The context of the policy, as stated in the introduction to this study, emanates from UAE Federal Law 29, (2006). It is important for this policy to be protected by state law for its full implementation by all concerned parties as confirmed by the Head of SEN Division at ADEC Headquarters. Furthermore, the purpose of the Policy is to ensure that all students with SEN needs, including Gifted and Talented (G&T) students, can reach their full potential within a supportive environment that will prepare them for life beyond school. The implementation of the policy therefore will allow these students to participate in all educational opportunities as non-disabled counterparts, make progress in both educational and vocational opportunities beyond school to meet world class standards. Evidence of this can be seen in the response the ADEC SEN Manager gave to the question on how robust the policy is (Q2-1-IN-HQ) to meet world class standards.

To quote directly, he confirmed that:

> ADEC Handbook meets world class standards in using a staged approach in its framework which is based on international best code of practice, consistent with the UK stepped approach, US response intervention and the Australian and New Zealand combination of both. It is consistent too with the Finnish model. Work is on the right track, an external body is carrying out a quality assurance review during a four week duration in May 2015 and the work of the review team report has not yet been published.

a) Policy Key Elements

The policy expands on itself to describe an eleven stepped approach that would enable the application of the policy - including the staged approach to meet their needs, admission within an inclusive setting with other children of the same age in mainstream school as much as possible, the establishing of learning support teams, the creation of an Individual Education Plan

(IEP) for weak students and an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP), for Gifted and Talented students. Students are placed in a specialist setting whenever their disabilities will be best catered for than in mainstream. Finally, the role of parents who have students with disabilities will play a key part throughout the identification and development of an individual program for their child. On the admission processes currently in place, the findings reveal that on registering into kindergarten, the parents present extra information where a child has special needs to the SEN Zone office (ADEC has three zone offices in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and the Western region now called Al Dhafra Region). The zone office then arranges an assessment of the child and the school admitting the child will be given some level of provisions to meet the need, e.g. a classroom assistant, modified learning program, assistance to develop an Individual Education plan (IEP) and assistive technology. Content analysis was used to identify the key aspects in the policy, which was shared with the teachers in the sample. Their responses to these key policy elements reveal their understanding, and goes to provide answers for Research Question 1.

b) Implementation in schools

The clear message stated in the policy was that all problems identified should first be addressed in mainstream schools through effective classroom practices, consistent behavior management strategies and in-school academic support from the Learning Support Team. These are described as Stage one provision in an inclusive school (Gaad & Thabet 2009)

c) SEN Categories

The categories identified and defined in the policy Handbook do not mention all medical conditions. They are listed to reflect the categories in the Ministry of Education Guidance on 'School For All' which states the general rules for the provision of Special Education Programs

and Services (2010). Ten categories are identified. These include: intellectual disability, specific learning disability, emotional and behavioral disorders, autism spectrum disorders, speech and language disorders, physical and health related disabilities, visually impaired, hearing impaired, multiple disabilities and Gifted and Talented students, (Gaad 2004).

d) School Procedures-Staged Approach

There are four stages in implementing ADEC's SEN policy (Appendix 13) which the Head of SEN confirmed as what 'distinguishes our approach in stages two and three, and at stage three where students are assessed with clinical diagnoses'. ADEC does not perform the diagnosis. The student is sent to a specialist centre for example The Khalifa Centre for Special Needs. In Stage one, as stated earlier; ADEC expects that the majority of students' needs will be met in mainstream classrooms through effective, individualized teaching methods using differentiated strategies. Some students may have intervention plans prepared by the Learning Support Team (LST). Some examples of differentiated strategies in Stage one include adapted or modified materials, small group activities, extension tasks with three levels of challenge to meet the readiness levels of the students, enrichment and flexible opened ended tasks In Stage two, when all the intervention has been done in Stage one and the student is still not making progress, the LST will refer him/her for an assessment. Here, the student will remain in the mainstream classroom, but will be pulled out for short periods of time in the day to receive one to one or small group specialist, targeted support in an area of weakness before rejoining the rest of the class. A specialist resource room is used for this purpose. Borderline students, who with a time bound extra intensive input on specific targets will be able to access the learning better in Stage one, may be given an intervention plan (Appendix 14) instead which is different from an IEP. These students will be closely monitored by the LST and the teacher to facilitate their full accessible into mainstream lessons without the need for a pull-out. All the students who

are referred into Stage two will have an IEP and an ALP. To carry on, students in Stage three would all be in a specialist class, smaller in number, usually with specialist teachers who are trained to deal with specific disabilities. All students here will have an IEP. Stage four is where the students' disability is severe and complex such that they cannot be taught in mainstream and will get more benefit being in a restrictive specialist school, with specialist teachers and equipment to meet their learning and other needs. All students also have an IEP in Stage four. The policy document clarifies that students can move away through the stages and it does not have to follow a linear order. Also, students can move from Stage one to stage three directly. There is a clear statement of purpose that all students who qualify for special needs should be eligible to receive support from the LST in school and from external services from Stage two and beyond.

e) Roles & Responsibilities - Learning Support Team (LST):

The SEN policy guidance immediately draws attention to their responsibility in providing leadership to support staff in schools on their roles and responsibilities to implement the policy. It says that, ADEC Special Education Services aims to provide SEN students with the appropriate academic and social program so that they can make progress in school. In order to achieve this, they would:

> provide leadership, initiate policy development and planning to
> meet needs, support schools by providing specialist advice in managing
> students with special education needs, liaise with other organizations
> to support students, develop a range of teaching resources to support
> effective teaching , monitor and evaluate special needs delivery, promote
> good inclusive practices and provide ongoing staff development.
> (ADEC SEN Policy 2010/40-45).

The authorized persons responsible for this delivery are the education region, the school, students and parents. The education region is responsible for the delivery of programs to

students needing them. They develop an inclusion plan, procedures to identify and assess students, assisting schools in implementing IEPs, together with the LST. School principals, together with parents, provide the opportunity for the program to be delivered, ensuring students can access the curriculum, establish a Learning Support Team, develop, monitor and review the IEPs & ALPs whilst maintaining high standards of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the principal must ensure that all staff receive regular professional development training to better assist special needs children to engage in lessons (Gaad 2004).

A vital role for principals is to encourage effective communication with parents on progress or any concerns the student or school may encounter, as well as celebrate the achievement of students. This fact as stated above is still under-developed. Another important person to consider is the student himself who should be given the opportunity to work alongside peers in a safe and welcoming environment, where they will be made to feel included (Gaad 2004).The policy also recognized that students need to take an active role in setting up their own targets and attend all review meetings. Alongside the student, the parents are central to any help given to the student as they know their child better than anyone else and should be included in the implementation and monitoring plans for their child, hence they can offer their support as much as possible to communicate any necessary information.

Lastly, identified within the policy is the LST which has the primary role of ensuring that the needs of the SEN Child are fully met. They provide the planning, identify the areas of need and put in place strategies to meet those needs. Those needs could be as varied as behavioral and social needs, teaching and learning needs to name a few. The LST receives information from parents, class teachers, students to come up with a program that suits their ability and meets

their learning outcomes. They are responsible for referring the student on to the education region when their needs are beyond Stage one. The LST works in conjunction with the Academic Support Team (AST – Appendix 15) which was introduced when the New School Model Policy came in to existence. The ASTs main role is to identify any academic problems and provide support as needed. The LST follows a clear process of intervention and referral through the four Stages of the SEN (Appendix 13) provision. The policy document points out these steps that need to be followed and this ensures clarity and consistency across all ADEC schools. Monitoring and Review meetings are also identified within defined time frames. The guidance document also gave examples of accommodations and modifications that need to be applied in schools, especially as it pertains to assessments.

Individual Planning: The policy gives a breakdown of steps to creating an IEP or ALP using Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound (SMART) targets to develop these for each student with a chance of success accorded by the SMART targets criteria (Top Achievement 2011). Templates and proformas for intervention plan -Stage 1, IEPs, ALPs, regional request forms are provided as a start up to support staff.

The introduction in the UAE of a SEN policy is reflective of what Carter & O'Neille (1995, p. 21) summarized as policies aimed at pushing forward national interests by 'tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade'. The elements of such a policy enhances student outcomes in employment related skills and competencies, whereby governments have more direct control over the curriculum, whilst increasing the involvement of the community in decision making within schools. ADEC's SEN Policy therefore places high importance on parental involvement throughout the identification, intervention, monitoring and review phases. This assertion is also supported by Avis et al (1996) within compulsory

education on a shift taking place between government, politics and education. The modern trend for policy proposals is also backed by the 'European Union's *White Paper on Education and Training: towards the learning society which stated that 'the end of the debate on educational principles…. uses concepts such as the learning society, knowledge based economy'* which was a vision shared by the founder of the UAE.

Downey (1998) also identifies several characteristics of an effective policy which this study could be said to fit into. The SEN policy could be seen falling within the realms of instrumental policy which dictates how things should be done in a sequence. Downey further adopts the term of a 'public policy' which is authoritative, guided by legal authorities, future oriented and is a directive for action. These characteristics align with the policy being looked at in this study, as well as Heclo's (1972) reference to policy as an analytical category. Similarly, Jenkins (1978) advocated a six stage process in policy analysis - initiation, consideration, decision, implementation, evaluation and termination.

As stated in the introduction of this study, all young people have a right to an education. Students also come from diverse, cultural and social backgrounds with diverse abilities; hence diversity is a key factor to consider in any democratic education policy that ensures equal access. The conceptual model of democratic education policy stresses integration, cooperation and criticizes isolation and separation. This vision is shared by the UAE in developing this SEN policy to foster integration, equal opportunity and communication as much as is possible. Additionally, participation as a key concept guaranteed the rights of families and other stakeholders to participate in educational decisions as is the case with ADEC's Staged Approached to meeting students' SEN needs.

Analysis of SEN Policy

In order to prepare all students in Abu Dhabi to contribute to the economic and social landscape of the nation as expressed by its leaders, there was a need to adopt and implement an effective special education policy to meet the needs of students with varied disabilities. This was achieved by using legislation to produce a policy Handbook, as well as procedures and guidance that supported the delivery of special education services in ADEC schools. This policy manual was created as a point of reference to assist schools in developing programs and services that will support students with special needs to achieve the highest they can to the best of their ability. Included in the Handbook was procedural information that would assist schools in accessing the programs. It should be noted at this point that, this Handbook supported other ADEC Policy documents, especially the New School Model Policy which works alongside it.

It is clear and accurately presented in five sections, beginning with the purpose and rationale for implementing it across all schools. To prevent misjudgments and misinterpretation, the policy begins by defining what special educational needs mean, the wide categories of special needs were listed, where they comment that the list of disabilities is not exhaustive.

The analysis of ADEC's SEN policy adopts Perry L's (2009) conceptual model for analyzing an education policy, based on the key concepts of 'equality, diversity, participation, choice and cohesion'. The above literature review has attempted to make links between the research studies on the subject to align the analysis of this policy to some of those prevailing concepts of what can constitute an effective education policy, as pertains to the UAE educational system in Abu Dhabi's public schools. A conceptual framework for policy analysis has been used as the basis to critique the policy in this study. In analyzing the existing situation, this policy has been adopted and is being implemented in all ADEC schools in Abu Dhabi. In doing so, the policy has

identified its purpose using five points in order to meet its aims of ensuring that all students reach their full potential within a supportive environment. These aims are:

- Participate as equally as possible in the available educational opportunities

- Make progress and achieve an age appropriate accredited education

- Make a positive contribution to their local and wider communities

- Develop and maintain their physical, mental and emotional health

- Achieve economic well-being through access to educational and vocational opportunities beyond school.

The Handbook was therefore developed as a tool to support ADEC meets its purpose and goals. It was obvious that there was a need in the schools to cater for the students who fell into this category. Studies by Gaad (2004a) had revealed that the UAE statistics showed 17% of the population of children had one or another form of disability. Coming through the years of the stigma families carried with having a child with disabilities kept in isolation, this policy is a big step forward to put into practice an inclusive educational setting in schools where disable and non-disabled students could learn together as much as possible with peers of the same age.

The policy identified eleven approaches to meet the special educational needs of the target group. Following the eleven Approaches, eleven other actions are stated that schools would need to take to meet the policy requirements. Each of these actions was analyzed by the researcher to see if they met the criteria on each of the Approaches. The researcher observed that the 11 actions fully mapped onto the eleven approaches. Some examples can be seen below:

- Approach 1: schools will adopt a Staged Approach as part of a continuum of educational services provided to meet individual needs.

- Action 1: Adopt a staged approach to meeting student needs.

- Approach 3: Learning Support Teams will be established in all schools as part of providing academic support services.

- Action 2: Establish the school Learning Support Team.

- Approach 10: Parents of students with SEN will be key partners with the school staff in the development of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and in support of their child's academic program.

- Action 5: Involve parents.

As seen from the above examples, the SEN policy guidance does meet the purpose for which they were introduced.

Policy Implementation:

The qualitative research instrument of document analysis is used to analyze the implementation of ADEC special needs inclusion policy. Implementation of an education policy had been discussed by several researchers in the field. Colebatch (2009, p.88) states that 'policy is less concerned with achieving the desired outcome, than with understanding the processes'. He carried on by saying that describing the process as stages is 'persuasive and neat' and it is all about structured commitment as an organized activity. To implement the policy and achieve its aims and objectives was paramount, hence ADEC provided to every school, this Handbook which spelt out the eleven actions discussed earlier on the process to meet the needs of SEN students. Haddad, (1995)   described a Framework for Policy Analysis to contain Pre-policy

decision activities, the decision process itself and the post-decision planning activities. Within this framework, there are seven policy planning processes. These include an analysis of the existing situation, generation and evaluation of policy options, planning, implementation and assessment all flowing in a cyclical manner. Some more of the actions in the implementation stage were: identifying staff development needs to achieve an inclusive classroom practice, assessing progress against students' baseline, referring to external support services where needed and ensuring that students progressed through age appropriate classes. Using ADECs Staged Approach, the framing of this policy identifies with Colebatch's process of defining the approach, identifying solutions, evaluating options, deciding implementation, and evaluating outcomes.

The policy then went into detail about those who were responsible for implementing it in the schools, defined as their roles and responsibilities. Identified here were school personnel, principals, in consultation with parents, teachers, school psychologists, social workers and the education region staff. These professionals are directly responsible for implementing the program that supports students to access the curriculum. Then, there are the students themselves whose needs will be identified with a time frame and who commit to attending IEP and annual review meetings. Lastly, the role of the parent as paramount to the school achieving its aims cannot be over-emphasized here, as confirmed by Hassan (2008). Implementing the SEN policy started in 2012 and had seen two revisions to its present document as ADEC refined the process. At present, with the new revisions to the policy, ADEC has employed the services of Providers who are responsible for undertaking professional development training with all school leaders, teachers and education zone staff to familiarize them with the process that has to be adhered to in a consistent way. School staff have now received two rounds of training on the SEN policy between 2013 -2014. ADEC followed through with a monitoring

process in place by visiting the schools, including during training to further clarify where needed. At the training venues, leaders share with ADEC staff and the trainers, some of the challenges in fully implementing the policy where clashes arose with cultural inhabitations, mostly from parents who avoid having their children tagged with the name of a disability, as it is still a taboo subject in the region, as compared to the West (Gaad E. & Alghazo, E. 2004).

Some advantages have been perceived during the second round of training on implementing the policy as most leaders now are comfortable and understand the stages following clarifications and solutions shared on any problems they may have encountered. There has been a lot of targeted training for Stage 1 because ADEC feels the majority of students will have their needs met if differentiated methods are effectively employed with open ended tasks in small groups. The rationale here is that differentiation raises the level not only of SEN children, but of all students (Tomlinson, 2000).

Furthermore, the policy was effective in building up a series of steps that school principals and the education zones can take in identifying and planning for intervention for each student in need. The stakeholders are all mentioned in the policy and their roles and responsibilities spelt out to leave no doubts in the minds of those dealing with the student to know what to do. There is great depth into describing the role of the LST who are mainly responsible in ensuring that the Policy is implemented as indicated in the guidance document.

Besides, participation as a key concept in policy analysis can be applied to this policy where parental involvement is paramount throughout all the stages, from the identification to implementing, monitoring and review stages because they know their child better than anyone else. In Stage one, examples of excellent teaching practices, using differentiation, collaborative

and cooperative work in small groups, using relevant practical activities is highly encouraged. ADEC believes that the needs of many students can be met with excellent teaching as described above to enable them to engage in personalized learning and make progress. To facilitate the application of this policy, a flowchart has been included to support the schools, as an efficient way for the school leadership and LST Team to follow the referral process for special education assessment. Another positive in the policy is on assessment. This referred to both internal and external assessments and examination access arrangements. This aligns with Perry's (2009) conceptual model in education policy that promotes equality and diversity. Adaptations and modifications in assessments promote equality, equal participation of opportunity and diversity, rather than forcing students to sit assessments, for example, that cannot meet their readiness level and interest.

Evaluation & Critique

Policy evaluation is the process through which the policy can be evaluated to assess if the problem in hand is being solved. Four models of evaluating policies are: process, impact, outcome evaluations and cost-benefit analysis. This study does not go into depth about the types of evaluation because the SEN Policy is still in the implementation stages and getting staff familiar with it, hence no formal evaluation has taken place yet. However, Irtiqa'a, which is the school inspection arm of ADEC had done an initial inspection of most ADEC schools and unpublished reports affirm that SEN is still at the beginning stages of implementation. However, several questions can be asked at this point. Is the policy goal oriented? If so, it makes sense to measure progress towards those goals (Colebatch, 2009) and what extent they are achieving their goals. The purpose and objectives of the SEN Policy with its Staged Approach is clear to facilitate implementation. This makes life easier for the responsible staff in schools to implement

the Policy and develop effective systems that will minimize any misunderstandings in the process to follow (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1986). Trainings have been conducted with school leadership, who will in turn inform parents of their role and encourage them to join the parent council. However, speaking to the Head of SEN Division, he clearly provided me during two interviews sessions an overall in-depth view of where policy implementation currently stands and what inclusion in ADEC schools mean. He was keen to reiterate that inclusion with ADEC should not be confused with inclusion in the United States or UK or in other western countries.

In his response to the question;

What is the exact process followed to accept and register a student in an inclusive primary school?

He stated the following:

> Firstly, we have to define inclusion in the context of where we are; many of our schools are far from inclusive. We can't compare with the US or UK. Inclusion is a concept that ADEC holds to promote special needs, moving away from segregation towards inclusion and access to an education…our schools are still building their capacity for regular education so that they can be in a position to cater for special needs student. Currently our schools are experiencing a volume of professional development, resourcing for Abu Dhabi School Model, leadership and policy changes happening – they are the busiest schools in the world now.

The policy clearly states the referral process. As part of the registration process, ADEC and Zayed Centre work closely through a transition process. The ADEC transition team will conduct reviews to determine the level of support required to cater for a student referred by Zayed Centre who will arrive at one of their schools. These students will have a clinical diagnosis. If the student does not come from the Zayed Centre, ADEC will use their own referral team to refer

the child to the Sheikh Khalifa Medical Centre for further assessments and a special diagnostic report, because ADEC does not conduct the diagnosis themselves.

Also, in order to validate the policy, ADEC has taken several steps to measure the extent to which staff is engaging with the policy. Several customer surveys including school based and zone-offices based surveys have been conducted and at the time of this research, ADEC was still awaiting results from the surveys. The SEN Division engaged the services of the professional development Division to carry out the surveys for them and they saw this action as necessary in 'doing temperature taking because every year there's a misunderstanding of inclusion, there's policy changes, we have to keep a close look on the policy developments from the other divisions in ADEC to see how they impact on us'. Officials also conducted in-house an actual review of the policy which led to the creation of a supplementary document - The Learning Support policy.

Nevertheless, anecdotally, ADEC officials stated that they are aware that some schools are doing very well in attempting to implement the policy, whilst others doing not so well. Of the three schools under study, one of the schools is one such who is making some progress in putting systems in place to enable policy implementation to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

However, there are some staffing issues in many schools where an absence of a qualified SEN teacher is a hindrance to addressing the needs of these students. ADEC is aware of the staff shortages. For the implementation to be successful ADEC needs committed staff who buy into the policy and this is still an area where perceived views are difficult to establish. This study did

not explore that route. If what we see on the ground is 'significantly different from these goals then the policy has not been implemented' (Colebatch, 2009). Then we can justify policy as the pursuit of goals using the stage model as evidenced in ADEC policy.

Summary and Conclusions

The SEN policy is a robust and well designed policy that addresses the needs of SEN children in public schools in Abu Dhabi and meets the assertion of policy as a clear sequence of activities 'culminating in an authoritative document (Colebatch, 2002).

It is still at the implementation stage and ADEC have used an effective strategy to provide continuous training on it to school staff. During these training sessions, staff shared their challenges in trying to implement the strategy, and ADEC officials attending these training sessions offered clarity and took on board their anxieties. All ADEC Principals are now familiar with the implementation process. It will be necessary in the near future, for a formal evaluation process to be carried out by the inspection team to evaluate the success of this policy.

A formal, objective evaluation by ADEC's external contractors, as well as internal checks through school visits on policy implementation, needs to take place in the near future to assess whether it is successful or not in fulfilling its purpose and aims. Also, continuous professional development training needs to be carried on within schools to update support staff in implementing the policy. Schools should form professional learning communities for SEN in order to evaluate their internal procedures and processes as a continuous process of self evaluation. Parental involvement should continue to be highlighted and encouraged as shown from a study done by Harris & Goodall (2008), which stated that their involvement in their children's learning has a big effect on achievement. Hence, all schools should adopt an open

door policy to welcome parents and enable them to be part of the SEN professional learning group. Their group could meet regularly to review their procedures and systems and look for further improvements to support these needy groups and share ideas. In conjunction with this Policy, an assessment system needs to be put in place that accurately tracks and records the achievements and progress made by SEN students following the intervention programs. This assessment system should evaluate the success of the SEN Policy as stated by Schiefelbein and Schiefelbein (2003) that a well designed and applied assessment can change the course of education reform.

This study concentrated on the implementation of policy and the extent to which it achieved its aims and objectives in meeting the needs of all SEN students to reach their highest potential, and prepare them for life beyond school as independent citizens, to contribute to the UAE economy and workforce. It is recommended that future studies could be conducted to evaluate the ADEC SEN Policy, with school staff and students interviewed, and the results obtained used to give a realistic view of the success of the policy. Within the background of what has been discussed in this study, Fuller (2003) asserts that policy makers will carry on debating about the regulations and resources that would best meet the needs of teachers and students in schools, even though awareness of their unique settings are often ignored.

It was interesting to find in the data that those responsible for the policy at ADEC Head Quarters felt there were misconceptions what inclusion is within the context of ADEC schools. For ADEC, inclusion at this point is 'access to an education, provide a transition program for students who enter ADEC schools'. When compared to the western countries, no matter the severity of the disability, the needs of the student will be met by the education system fully. However, this is not

the case here. Two systems operate side by side with no direct link between the two service providers. The Ministry of Social affairs has special care facilities and ADEC has its schools within the education system. The Education Council has no mandate or regulatory authority over the education programs in those special care centers and facilities. So inclusion in the ADEC context cannot be applied to the centers like the Zayed Higher Organization and the Abu Dhabi Autism Centre, who provide a whole range of services but not an ADEC curriculum.

Hence ADEC creating an inclusive environment for all is not feasible with the current arrangements. Consequently, envisaging better inclusive practices for the future (Q8) requires a stronger aligned connection between the Ministry of Social Affairs and ADEC. Currently, there exists a disconnection, as reiterated by the Head of ADEC SEN Division. Closing the gap between the two entities so that they can align their service provision from specialist staff like speech, language, hearing and visual therapists– how we can share those results across the system and be more aligned. ADEC admits a wide range of children with disabilities and there is no set criterion of who can and cannot attend their schools. The determinant is how severe is the need and whether the school can cope, and more importantly whether the student can be safe and their safety can be catered for. In extreme cases of intellectual disability too severe for ADEC to manage, the child will be referred to the Centre to attend there. The more common types of additional needs are hearing, visual and speech impairments, autism, downs syndrome, high functioning intellectual disabilities for which ADEC has transition classes.

The data collection also revealed that the eligibility criteria for services following policy review helped in instances across the schools where leadership and staff were hesitant to keep children who they deemed unfit to be catered for in their schools although the SEN Zone office was adamant they will stay in the school than be moved to a center. So policy review helped to

clarify this grey area on where the child's needs can be fully catered for by developing a lot of support materials for the policy guide and eligibility criteria for services when transferring students to centers. The centers described above, when referring students to mainstream schools, also had the same issues as mainstream schools. Both institutions were oversubscribed so had a shared problem. This was deemed as a bigger governmental issue to be dealt with at a higher level than at ADEC Head Quarters level; all that the SEN Division can do is keep reporting that the services from both ADEC and the Ministry of Social Affairs need to be better closely aligned for maximum benefit to all stakeholders. The limitations on services provided are a big issue within the wide range of existing disabilities and the variety of needs prevalent.

Furthermore, the data from question ten to the special needs official shows that the role of parents taking an active part in co-developing education plans (Q10) is varied; some parents are more involved and this is an increasing number, and some parents are less involved. ADEC believes that they endeavor to involve parents as much as possible, although actual details can only be sought directly from the schools. However, The Head of SEN stated that, there has been progress made towards the right direction with parents over the years having become much more educated and '*a lot more confident'* in their right and entitlement to an education which is *'quite powerful'* because they are not coming under an empathy model that '*you must look after these children'*. Parents now approach ADEC with knowledge of their rights and this factor is a '*very powerful position for them, hence ADEC has the leverage and with backing from Federal Law to take their cases forward'*. The upsurge and forward thinking, confident approach from parents can be attributed to the wealth of information from other government agencies,

health professionals and community services being disseminated, so the public is picking this up.

The data also reveal that ADEC now provides a roll out plan for schools to become inclusive, through introducing the learning support tool pack where the effective schools' with strong leadership teams, have already put in place, learning support teams with assistance from ADEC Head Quarters. ADEC then assists them in moving forward by providing workshops to all regional teams from the three regions (Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and the Western region now called the Dhafra Region). This support was rolled out from September to December 2015 with the view to take schools to the next level. The Professional Development Division again collaborated with the SEN Division to continue to provide training to schools, including two of the three schools under study, and support materials are being prepared to send out to provide training to the schools on topics such as inclusion and differentiation. In addition a pilot was run in all cycle three schools to identify the Learning Support Team, which will be different from those in Kindergarten due to the changing needs of the students. The Cycle 3 Learning Support Teams (LST) are not as rigid as the cycle one schools, but are there to act as a hub for staff to share ideas that they have gained from various trainings delivered by through ADEC HQ, Tamkeen PD Providers who facilitated professional development to all the schools in the past five years. The aim is to bring staff together to regurgitate their knowledge and experiences gained and share within the LST as opportunities for all to learn new ideas and approaches.

Noteworthy is the fact that ADEC Head of Special Needs Division expressed the position that professional development for both pre-service and in-service teachers is fundamental to inclusive practices developing in the schools. Hence, together with the ADEC Higher Education committee, they have now engaged with institutions of Higher Education to look at pre-service

training modules and encourage the institutions to put into place mandatory modules for general SEN, student behavior, classroom management and differentiation. ADEC is also currently working with the federal universities to look at specialist tracks for visual learners and autistic students. All these modules will be factored into undergraduate programs. Secondly, the Tamkeen professional development program from the professional development Division is currently ongoing across all ADEC schools. Other trainings are being delivered by the SEN Division liaising with the PD Division. Following a needs analysis of individual schools training is now being delivered on modules such as differentiation and inclusion. Another project is to train more psychologists and social workers through the UAE University who are currently in limited supply and whose skills need updating on accredited courses.

It was interesting to discover that ADEC does have a heavily resourced, robust, bilingual curriculum, which is progressively being rolled out on a yearly basis from Kindergarten to the current cycle 2 in Grade 8. This curriculum is called the Abu Dhabi School Model (ADSM), which has been in existence since September 2010, of the educational reform taking place across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Hence, the fundamental belief and current approach as seen in the three schools under study is for the Learning Support Team and teachers to modify the ADSM curriculum (Q13). Schools are being asked to modify this curriculum through differentiation. However, although it was made clear that currently ADEC does not have the capacity to provide a modified curriculum for special needs, the researcher noticed that the support given to schools is still limited and teachers and administrators do not feel empowered and comfortable in their knowledge and skills in managing an inclusive classroom effectively, nor in modifying the curriculum. This modification according to the Head of Special Needs Division at ADEC HQ, is to be carried out by the SEN Zone Office and Learning Support Teams

within the schools. As part of modifications, there are no alternative assessments for those students registered as having Individual Education Plans (IEP). The SEN Division and the Assessment Division team are now working together to create modified and adjusted assessments, especially to the visually impaired students on font types, Braille, the availability of scribes. ADEC staff stated that their main focus now is to communicate better with schools on the provisions in place that has been described above, and push forward the academic LST across all their schools, especially in supporting and meeting the needs of Stage one and Stage two students. On the other hand, all the communication from schools is to be channeled through ADEC's dedicated Customer Service Division for any issues or complaints.

ADEC's long term goal is to have a set of objectives and outcomes for various types of learning needs and disability types, and to align this to the ADSM. At one point, there was a defensive stance from the Head of SEN Division that ADEC at this point in time was only eight years old, people come to it expecting an educational system to function like other long established educational systems in their drive to move schools from textbook, directed rote mode of instruction, to a modern inquiry-based, authentic, content based individualized and personalized outcome based instruction. This is what the ADSM promotes. Finally, ADEC has taken evaluative measures to monitor policy progress and inclusive systems in schools by having an independent review in 2015 and another international review report. These reports have been used to cross match with the inspection (Irtiqaa) reports which will all feed into reviewing the systems and improving on them. Also, at a smaller scale, regional SEN Zone teams meet with SEN teachers on a regular basis in workshops and small focus groups for ongoing support and the sharing of new ideas. In conclusion, using the research instruments of document analysis

and semi-structured interviews, based on the forgoing analysis, the findings provide answers to Research Questions One and Two.

4.2   School A Case Study

4.2.1   Research Question 1 – How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion? (with reference to using the indicators of curriculum, accessibility, assessment and professional development).

4.2.2   Research Question 2 – What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices? (with reference to using Index-inclusive cultures, policies and practices as well as the interview questions).

This is a Cycle One primary male school in the inner city of Abu Dhabi, built in a residential area surrounded by two other schools. It has approximately 124 boys from Grade one to Grade 5, of which fifty two students have special educational needs including gifted and talented, hence 23% of total school population. They had their last school inspection in 2013. The school is welcoming, with large displays at the entrance to the building, spelling out the ethos in words pasted on the walls which read as- 'integration', 'active student involvement' and 'individualized learning'. The school goal is to work in close collaboration with the SEN Division at ADEC in sharing information as they provide different forms of support and therapy inside the school. (Source; Handbook of student support in Project Schools 2015).

The school implements a joint program collaborating with a successful education system from a western country based on the best pedagogical practices to enhance students' performance and well being. However, the curriculum taught is based on the Abu Dhabi School Model. Particular attention is given to special needs education, as well as community building and engaging parents. The expatriate Principal is very keen on bilingual teaching. The educators will work jointly with Emirati educators to facilitate the development of the school. The practices were based on the project school's government student support system and adapted to ADEC guidelines. This have been working in this school for four years when the researcher arrived to conduct her research. Therefore, cooperative and collaborative work has been going on between Arabic medium and English medium special educational needs teachers. A handbook of student support was available, which includes a description of the project three tiered learning support system. This is loosely aligned with ADEC's five stage support. This handbook contains a selection of student support related forms, for example, action plans to be used as everyday tools by the teacher. In this school, the centrality of ADEC SEN policy position is clearly understood and reinforced, hence the handbook has practical guides on inclusive strategies.

The handbook also covers 170 teaching days; this aligns to the social model of disability which focuses on removing any barriers to the child and following a modified curriculum. For the students in the sample, justifications are given for adjustments made to the mainstream curriculum. 23% of the students have language and literacy difficulties which poses a difficulty for them accessing the curriculum due to limited proficiency in language.

There is an enclosed court yard open area in the center of the circular classrooms with an astro turf where the students can play and run around at break times. There is also a big field and activity area at the back of the building. The school is considered a unique school by ADEC due

to its collaborative teaching of western and Arab expatriate staff. Five students were in the

sample size and observed over several school visits as seen in the student demographic in

Table 4.1;

Student Name	Age	Grade	Disability	Lessons observed	IEP/No IEP
School A S1	9 years	From Grade 3 To Grade 2	Behavioral ADHD Delayed speech	English, Math, Science, Arabic	IEP
School A S2	9 years	Grade 3	Behavioral Disorder	English, Math, Science, Arabic	No IEP
School A Student 3-S3	9 years	Grade 3	Learning Difficulties	English, Math, Science, Arabic	IEP
School A Student 4-S4	10 years	Grade 4	Behavioral Disorder	English, Math, Science, Arabic	IEP
School A Student 5-S5	11 years	Grade 5	Visual impairment	English, Math, Science, Arabic	No IEP

Table 4.1 Code School A Students 1-5

The distribution is one student from Grade 2, two students from Grade 3, one from Grade 4 and

one from Grade 5 as per the SEN register from the SEN coordinator. Of the nineteen qualified

full time staff, fifteen are western expatriate teachers of whom two are qualified Masters level

teachers including the principal from the joint program and four Arab expatriate qualified,

fourteen teaching support staff including two western expats.

Focusing on Research Question 1;

4.2.1 Research Question 1 - How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion?

In School A, I will provide a brief description of the curriculum being used, called the Abu Dhabi School Model (ADSM), provide a description of each of the five students involved in the study using pseudonyms to protect their identities, and finally I will answer Research Question 1 by collating the responses from the semi-structured interview questions from participants as the responses address the four indicators of curriculum, accessibility, assessment and professional development which are key interrelated components that affect schools in the implementation of an inclusive system.

In respect to the curriculum, School A uses the Abu Dhabi School Model (ADSM), which is ADEC's robust curriculum. However, as stated above this school is a joint venture with a foreign educational partner teaching the ADSM curriculum, taught in a unique way with ICT integration using the Project's student support system. This model school system fully acknowledges the School for All mandate to provide equal opportunities for learning and growth to every student, and the support of learners plays a major role. Within the ADSM curriculum that is delivered to all the students, every opportunity is given to remove any barriers to learning through early intervention and differentiated teaching. The tiered support model is in phases from general support, to intensified support and then special support as the need increases. See figure 4.1.
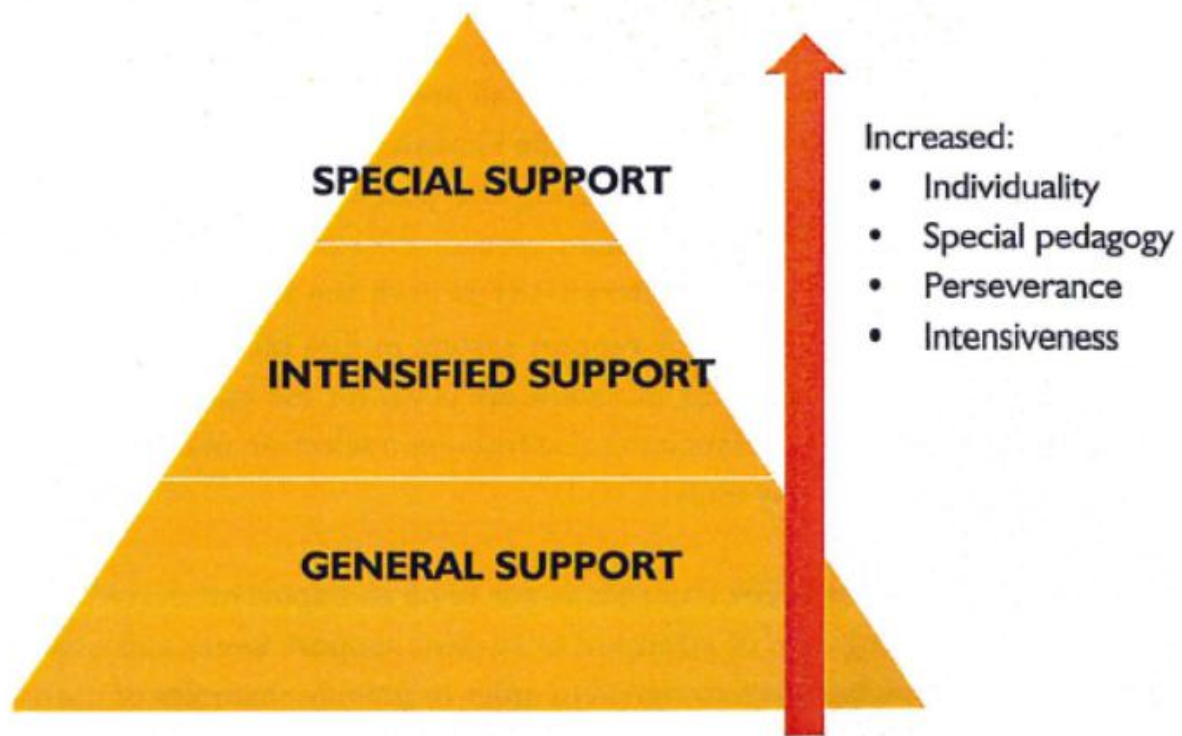
Fig 4.1 Adapted from 3 tiered support model

The ADSM curriculum is part of ADEC's ten-year strategy plan to improve the quality of education in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. ADSM is a student-oriented approach across schools to help students to be excellent in higher education to meet global market challenges in line with international standards. This model, which is a learning outcome-based curriculum, started in 2010 with a focus on developing Arabic and English language abilities, critical thinking skills, and cultural and national identity. The key drivers for this ADSM (formerly New School Model) include the Abu Dhabi Education Policy 2008, ADEC Strategy 2016-2020 and Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030. The student is at the center of the ADSM framework as seen in the figure 4.2.
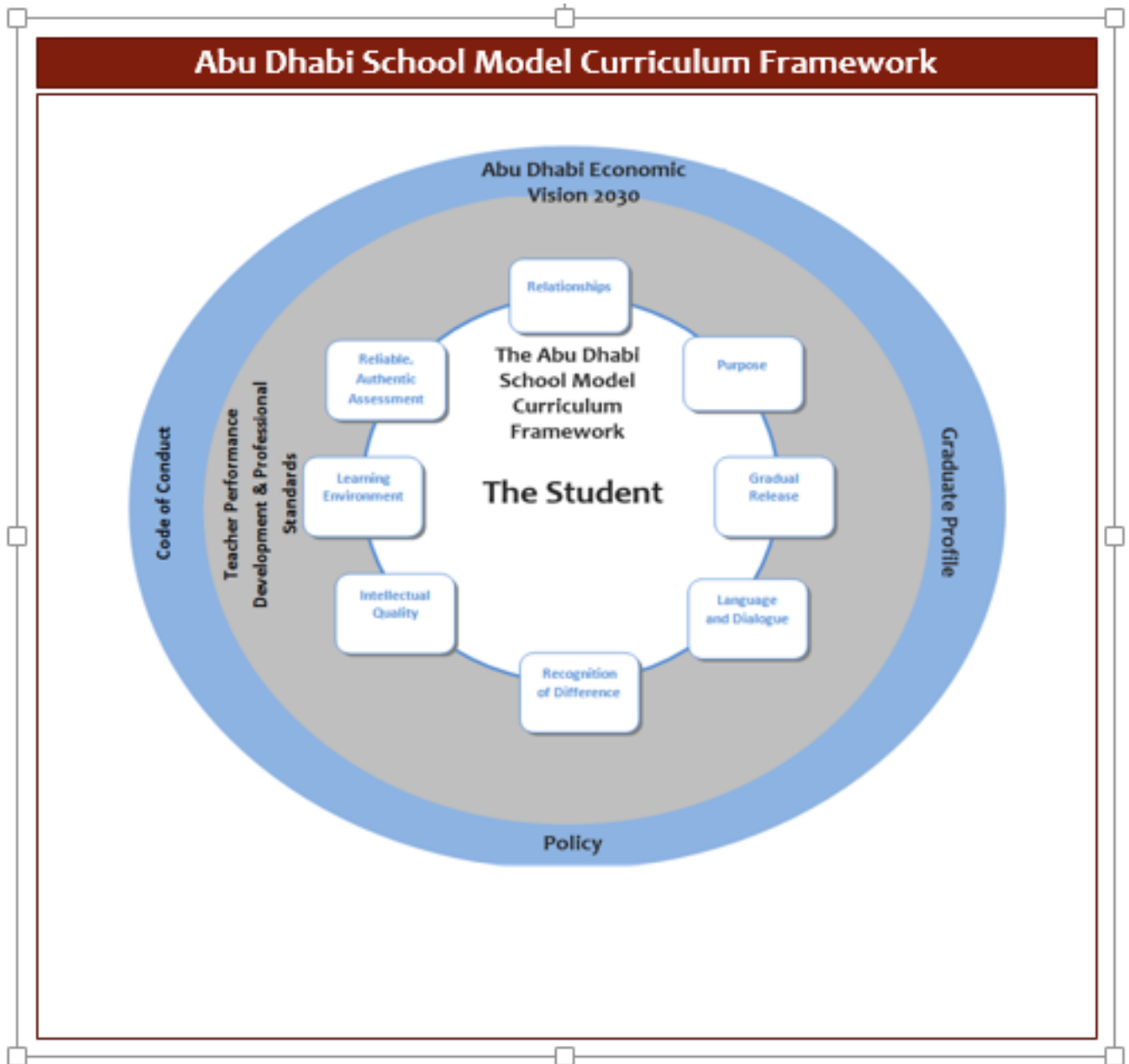
Figure 4.2 Adapted from ADSM Curriculum Framework 2010,

To further clarify on the elements of the ADSM (formerly New School Model) in the figure above, this framework comprises of eight elements with the child at the centre. These eight elements in the grey colored area of the above figure are relationships, purpose, gradual release, language

and dialogue, recognition of difference, intellectual quality, learning environment and reliable and authentic assessments.

tasks given to him quickly, however on other days he is not at all interested in doing any work and concentration become s very difficult for him. In English lessons, he struggles with his motor skills in writing. He knows thirteen of fifty sounds and can recognize them although In a nutshell, as earlier stated, the ADSM is a balanced and rich curriculum that meets

the needs and interest of all students for life-long learning and to compete at the international level. In doing the aforementioned, this curriculum supports the Emirates vision. The curriculum is benchmarked against high performing education systems in several countries including Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA, Finland, Singapore and Canada. The key curriculum elements of ADSM is the total set of learning activities experienced by students through a set of learning outcomes that is developmentally appropriate and progressive. This curriculum model allows students to learn in a variety of active and engaging ways, collecting and synthesizing, communication and collaboration, inquiry based, problem solving with students. Basically ADSM is a student centered approach and a gradual release of responsibility model from teachers to students using 21st century skills. Hence within this brief background, the ADSM curriculum is mandatory, with learning outcomes to guide teaching and learning outcomes and using curriculum maps to plan integrated thematic units of work.

To support the ADSM curriculum, the physical appearance of the school is designed in such a way to promote the key notions of the curriculum. All the corridors and classes in the school are decorated with the students' work to show appreciation and to celebrate student successes to act as a motivating factor. The classes are equipped with the right furnishings, such as Interactive White Boards (IWBs), modern comfortable desks with seating arrangements

organized for students to sit in groups of five round four individual tables so as to be able to engage, discuss and collaborate with each other.

Student 1: this student is a nine year old boy who has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and developmental speech delay following brain injury. He is on regular medication to manage his condition following clinical assessment in Sheikh Khalifah Medical Centre. His report states that he needs educational support including a shadow teacher who in the context of this school is a personal assistant who is paid for by his parents. Student 1, School A has an Individual Education Plan (Appendix 16) with targets to help his weak concentration levels, reduce his restlessness and weak academic skills. This is his second year in the school and at admission he was screened by the SEN teacher and school psychologist in order to provide the right support services to meet his needs according to ADEC procedures. The results from the screening revealed that he would needs a lot of support.

The school advised the father to contact ADEC SEN Department for advice on best placement for his son. The school recommended he repeated Grade 1. According to the father, ADEC refused that he be registered in Grade 1 and on intervention by the principal, he received lessons in Arabic, English, Math and Science in a Grade 1 class. However, in the 2015-2016 school year, he is officially at Grade 3 but attends all his lessons in Grade 2.

Also he has withdrawal lessons away from his main class with a small SEN group of students. He uses the IEP in all his subjects. The hope for these supports was that providing these services in an inclusive environment, Student 1 would better 'fit into the class society, follow better the instruction with the help of an assistant and raise his confidence'. The class teacher

reported that Student 1 has made some progress, is beginning to produce some speech in English and 'is now eager to explain many things and make himself understood'. He learns better by hearing and remembers what the teacher has taught. He is unable to learn by seeing as letters and numbers disappear in his memory. He is unable to use a pencil and writing is almost impossible in both English and Math lessons. He recognizes some letters of the alphabet, 'm,s,a,p, but he cannot connect them together to make words. He can count up from 1-30 in English but cannot make connections between the numbers. His goal is to become comfortable with holding a pen and connect sounds to letters and learn to operate with numbers between 0-10, add and subtract.

Information in his IEP states that, Student 1 can recognize three (s,a,p) of six sounds (s,a,t,I,p,n) of the first 'Song of Sounds which is a phonic program in the English curriculum..

Student 2 is a nine year old boy in Grade 3 who has got a behavior intervention plan. He presents with violent behavior toward his peers using a lot of abusive language. Some of the intervention strategies recorded in his behavior plan are 'constant feedback, communication and regular meetings with his parents, and a warning that he will be sent home after any violent behavior to secure other students' safety'. The researcher wondered why the strategies did not outline practical positive approaches to support and improve the student's behavior, rather than have a warning clause as part of strategy. The plan involved a communication section which has to be updated daily by the class teacher or LST Welfare team and when necessary, the school social worker will alert and meet with the parents and the principal as soon as an incident occurs. The SEN assistant is to monitor Student 2's behavior by 'following him through the school day'.

Student 3 is another nine year old boy in Grade 3 who is on the special education needs register due to the fact that he has a 'low achieving level'. He has an IEP. Student 3 lives with his grandparents and is the last of five children. An initial diagnostic assessment conducted by the LST shows results of the student earning 97 points in the IQ test and a percentile of 49%. In the psychologist's report, he is diagnosed as having average learning difficulties and several recommendations are provided in supporting this student as follows:

- 'Raise his motivation level by constantly encouraging him, give him praise and reward for simple tasks to raise his self confidence
- Provide him with exercises to strengthen his memory to communicate sounds and words
- Engage student in sports activities so he can be encouraged to attend school
- Encourage him to form friendships with other students who are academically stronger
- Keep communication lines open with his parents who will be encouraged to support him on tasks at home'.

His IEP details the support levels he needs and accommodations in English Math and Science. IEP records state his social skills as a student who behaves very well at school. He never disturbs anyone in lessons nor does he get into problems with other students. During plays he tends to play by himself, although once in a while, he can be seen playing with other students, preferring to watch others at play. He can at times engage with some activities when teachers encourage him. Occasionally, Student 3 shows some keenness to complete classroom occasionally he mixes them up. He is however unable to connect sounds to form words and can write the letters in unrecognizable handwriting.

In Math, he knows numbers between 1 -10 and can write them down in somewhat unrecognizable handwriting. He can also do simple addition and subtraction with lots of support from the teacher and manipulative such as counting blocks. The target for him is to encourage him to join in at play with other students and develop his social skills by for example, pairing up with another student in class. He is also being supported in learning all the sounds, connecting sounds to form short CVC words. Another target is to develop his motor skills in order to hold a pen properly which he struggles with. Parents have been advised to provide him at home with counting cards to further develop his handwriting and reading skills, use ICT to help with writing and less time on using a pen or pencil. In class, Student 3 is placed in seating in front of the class where the teacher can easily give him support, and at a table with a high achieving student who at times helps him. He has withdrawal lessons five times a week with the SEN teacher on a one to one basis to develop is communication skill, say the words from sounds learnt. .

Student 4 is a ten year old boy in Grade 4 with who has an IEP with behavioral needs. The school was unable to provide me with a copy of his IEP and the Head of SEN informed me that his targets are currently under review.

Student 5 is an eleven year old boy who suffers from an inherited retinal disease with severe visual disability. His medical report depicts gradual diminishing vision in both eyes since the age of one. He needs a 'vision book' and worksheets are modified to large A3 print and he requires a lot of reading support to be provided by the teacher. He can read and understand very well when he can see the text and pictures. He also uses a magnifier in class and sits at the front. Student 5 has compounding home issues with his personal life due to his parents going through

a divorce and his teachers confirm that this has had a big impact on him and keeps him very sad most times. Due to the fact that he is a quiet and pleasant student, other students have been very supportive towards him and are very friendly with him.

In addition, the profile of the school staff in School A was as follows; the expat principal who is in his first year in the school and has a PHD in Education. The Head of Learning Support and Welfare has an MA in Education, in her thirteenth year in teaching and specialized as an SEN teacher. Also, there are four primary trained SEN teachers with experience spanning 8 -17 years, two Arabic expatriate mainstream teachers with a BA in Education, years of experience spanning 19 and 7 years consecutively but both have no SEN experience. Additionally, there are two Western expatriate teachers with an MA in Education with 13 years and 5 years consecutively. From the aforementioned school staff distribution, the principal, Head of SEN and five teachers took an active part in the research sample, of whom two of the five teachers are SEN teachers and three mainstream teachers.

This portion of the findings addressed Research Question 1, through the participants' responses to provide the big picture of their understanding and application of inclusive practices vis a vis the four indicators of (a) curriculum, (b) accessibility, (c) assessment and (d) professional development.

a) Curriculum

Firstly, in School A, the Head of Learning Support and Welfare Team is an expat from the joint program running alongside ADSM curriculum. Her thirteen years practice as a specialist SEN

teacher provided her with the skills to manage the implementation of ADEC's SEN policy across the school. She had four members in the LS team who are tasked with monitoring and meeting the needs of students with disability in the school. She confirmed that, she focused on the ADSM curriculum, especially the 21st century skills so that our students can be 'world class learners'. She picked out communication as one of the key skills that her teachers across the school take into account when supporting the students with disabilities. She confirmed that all the students in the sample had communication targets in their IEPs or behavior Plans, for example, Student 3 has a target to learn the sounds and connect to words on a daily basis. She clarified that they do not only focus on the curriculum as a standalone, but that they give the children 'not only academic skills but also social skills for future life – we see students in a holistic way'. Teaching aids like manipulatives in Math was used in the classroom for all the students e.g. counting blocks. Student 5 uses bigger textbooks with enlarged print to support his limited vision. The Head of SEN also confirmed that they had applied to ADEC for additional teaching aids and materials, however, these had not arrived the school yet.

Also other support systems to assist the students engage with the curriculum is providing a teaching assistant to Student 4 to support his behavior challenges, as well as weekly pull-out sessions for three of the five students in the sample to further work with them on a one to one basis on skill development.

Another inclusive practice the school uses is co-teaching which she describes as 'an excellent curriculum resource we have'. All the teachers in this school have just one class with sixteen lessons. Due to the fact that student numbers are low, the English Medium teachers collaborate and support their colleagues in another class, usually working at the table that one of the children in the sample is at. Co-teaching benefits the both the students and teaching pair.

Furthermore, another inclusive practice observed during class visits and reiterated by the Head of SEN is called level groups. She was able to explain that this technique happens where classes in the same grade are timetabled at the same time and the students from the three classes of Grade 3 will   be divided across such that all the higher ability students from the three classes in Grade 3 will go together in one room to work in groups. The same distribution is made for the middle ability and lower ability group – or 'according to skill levels ability groups'. Students are then taught a unit within these new ability groupings. There is one lesson in Math and English together following the aforementioned 'level groups' in Grade one to Grade three. Students on the sample and those who need support follow a modified worksheet (Appendix 18). The LST has created SEN teaching practices (Appendix 19) from collaborative work by the teachers who have worked in the school for the past three years. She was concerned that her team's main focus was to see these inclusive approaches happen across all the classes in the school. I observed the activities were mostly hands-on as she believed that children 'learn best this way, make students active, no traditional teaching'. The classes with SEN students are very small (Appendix 20)

In addition another inclusive practice she described to me is called 'Big Brother' system. Here Grade one and Grade five students have lessons together, doing many activities, such as reading together, Math activities and art. These lessons could be inside the classroom or outside in the open depending on the teacher. Higher ability and lower ability students sit together in a group and the higher ability supporting the lower ability student. The teachers using this 'Big Brother' approach informed the researcher that they are happy with it because they have noticed that the students' performances improve as the higher ability students are very willing to help out the lower ability students. Such collaborative peer to peer partnerships or

peer buddy system is powerful within an inclusive setting. The team leaders also added that she

firmly believes that when students with disabilities work with the other non disabled students

'they learn maybe more than with the teacher, are able and willing to get more from the other

students than their teacher – so they feel part of the group and feel that they've learnt. This

inclusive practice promotes their self esteem. There is a regular practice of collaborative work

ongoing between the mainstream teachers and Learning Support Team members with an open

slot for curriculum meetings or updated daily where teachers go to the Learning Support Team

room if they need any support or modified materials to use in the lessons.

Furthermore, the views from both the SEN teachers and mainstream teachers in School A on

how they understood the curriculum in relation to inclusion varies. One mainstream teacher said

he was not aware that there was an existing SEN policy or education program as he has had a

boy in class with severe difficulties and in a wheelchair and nothing 'realistic was done for him'.

Currently, he teaches the Grade 3 student in sample and works with the SEN teacher to modify

the curriculum for him. They liked the fact that the timetable is such that AMT and EMTS can co-

teach so all students can get engaged and the co-teacher can focus more on the weaker

students. This has enabled the teachers of the Grade 3 classes do spelling tests every

Thursday, twelve words for the class with only 6 words to students with IEPs or learning

difficulties. All the students are given iPads which they use as much as possible in lessons.

Technology is a good aid that engages their weaker students. An expatriate science teacher

made very complimentary remarks how she feels good about the new system where

mainstream and SEN teachers plan lessons together and then the SEN teacher co-teaches with

her, focusing on the SEN students. She stated that:

at times the SEN teacher helps at the learning stations. My current SEN teacher who helps those who cannot read, assigns pages they read at home, checks on them daily whether the homework has been done. The students are always excited to see her come in. We always plan together because we are a team' Planning together as a team makes me feel safe.

During the lesson observations, although there is an co-teacher in the room, the students did very well in an English lesson writing stories on super heroes. All the students were motivated in giving out descriptive words on their local hero, they could not write well structured sentences and the SEN students found this extremely difficult. There was little evidence of modification of the activity in this lesson. The teacher then decided to give them the task as homework, which raises questions about the effectiveness of that. In an ICT lesson in Grade 3 with Student 3, the practice is to get each student identify one alphabet to spell out the word '*welcome'* several times over. Although most of the boys were hyper, all fourteen students in class were able to spell the word '*welcome*' accurately. Student 4 who has got a behavior disorder and an IEP was very restless, started being disruptive and could not stay still until the teacher came over to him for a one to one support. He was given a filling-in exercise using high frequency words but he couldn't do it on his own. He is able to ask questions to the teacher to clarify the task, however as soon as the teacher moves away from him, he cannot carry on working. The teacher then returned to him to save his work on the computer. The teacher later stated that Student 4's abilities in reading and writing is so weak so much so that he gets five lessons a week in Grade 1 on learning to read. The teacher added that:

he is usually in his own world, possibly the weakest student in the school and he doesn't have a teacher assistant in his ICT lessons. He usually goes to the playground during play however plays on his own in his own world and rarely joins in with the rest. He has got a home tutor.

I observed during break time that Student 4 was on his own throughout in the activity park, going on the swings and tunnel by himself. He did not join in with the rest. One student

approached him to play but he moved away, then later moved over to tap another boy on the shoulder as if inviting him to play but he moved away. He looked like he lacked confidence or just liked his own company. He kept smiling to himself, looked happy enough, picking up a small brick and moving about with it smiling. The teacher said he feels he's autistic however that was just his suspicions. Furthermore, I observed Student 4 in his Grade 4 class in a Science lesson on seeds and plants. The Arab expatriate teacher was very bilingual and kept encouraging the students to speak in English as English, Math and Science are taught in English. The teacher used video clips, when teaching about plants, followed by explanations using the image of a plant which got all the students focused. It was visual and Student A responded well, putting up his hand to answer questions, although he quickly got distracted and started messing about with another student. The teacher used a point system to manage noise levels which got the boys quieter temporarily. The class later on went to an outside garden to do some practical work planting potatoes.

Although the teacher said that Student A usually looks lost, he suddenly becomes alive and engages. The teacher gave him a potato to plant and he got quite excited and responded very well. In his English lesson later on in the day, he was withdrawn and taken to the SEN room to do some extra reading. Accompanying him, I observed that he was able to read single words although the 'b' sound was a challenge for him to pronounce. The teacher kept modeling the sound to him although he could not pronounce it. The SEN teacher takes him out for extra reading 3-4 times weekly. They reported that his mum is very supportive and practices going over the words at home. He looked very unsettled throughout the lesson, dashing in and out for a pencil case or anything that he could pick up outside the classroom. To support his needs, he is allowed out of the classroom for 10 minutes in a forty five minutes lesson. The rest of the

class is quite noisy as well which does not help in getting focused in spite of his needs and the teacher spent a lot of class time trying to gain control than teach. On this day the class was very hyper and the teachers outside in the hallway felt it was due to heavy rainfall which excites all the boys. Ali ran up to me at the back of the room, excitedly telling me *'rain outside'* and immediately ran outside into the open playground which was more or less filling up with standing water.

Further observation of lessons produced the following summaries that I noted and stored. In a revision lesson in Grade 5 on a past EMSA exam paper, prior to the start of the activity, the co-teacher took away six students who had learning difficulties to give them extra Math support in the resource room. As for the remaining six boys, including Student 5 suffering from severe degenerating visual problems was one of those who stayed behind in the classroom. They were given the past paper. I observed that Student 5 did not get a modified paper with an enlarged text to support him. The teacher asked a student to read out the question in English and translate it into Arabic for his peers. The teacher and students had difficulty understanding the question because of the use of the word isosceles, so they all got stuck. It was necessary to understand the meaning of this word for the students to be able to answer the question. The teacher then turns to me as I usually took position at the back of the classroom to prevent any distraction to the normal flow of lessons. I felt obliged to explain the meaning of the word; however, the teacher still could not make sense of it. This teacher is an expatriate from a European country who did not speak English as their 1st language, hence not a native speaker. The teacher then abandoned the question and moved on to the next question.

By this point, Student 5 had completely given up and put his head down on the table to lie down. The task had not been made accessible to him so he switched off. This same class on another lesson the following week had the principal stand in as cover teacher as the regular teacher was unwell. They were working on an ADEC Skills Practice revision task. Student 5 looked focused and excited on the day and made a request to the principal saying '*help me how to do'*. He gives Student 5 a modified paper and he immediately got engaged in a Math game of squares. He completed the exercise and showed off his work to the teacher-principal. He completed the task fully and got rewarded with lots of praise and encouragement.

Additionally, in a G3 lesson, Student 2 made a valuable contribution using English medium on a food chain lesson they were studying. The teacher used a variety of teaching aids including a video clip of the food chain. However, Student 2, who has a behavior plan, was unable to keep calm after 10 minutes and was off task, kept messing about on the floor walking on all fours hiding under tables. The teachers choose to ignore him. At the end of the lesson when a review of what has been learnt in the form of students being shown pictures of a food chain and they had to shout out *'consumer'* or *'producer'* was completely lost to Student 4. The teacher later explained to me that as the lesson just ended was in period five, Student 4 can only cope with four lessons a day to keep some concentration and get him to work at his desk. This is reflected in the records in his behavior plan, which reveals an uneven pattern of behavior with lower scores, between August 2015 to January 2016.

Lastly, in an Art lesson in Grade 3, Student 4 came in thirty five minutes late, sat himself at the front desk with his body limping over. He looked weak and unwell and persisted in biting his nails. This classroom had a good learning environment with an interactive board, and lots of

displays on students work samples on the walls. The teacher went over to Student 4 to explain the task on a one to one basis with him and he nodded acknowledging that he has understood. He then proceeds to trace his name on paper with the help of the teacher next to him and he also was able to recognize some of the letters written in English in his name. The teacher supported him for most of the lesson as the rest of the class got on with similar tasks. This was a collage of their names, pets, culture and family. S4 did not speak to any other student and he stayed focused on his work, smiling through. He spoke clearly in Arabic to the teacher when he needed to, then resumes biting on his nails when the teacher attended to another student, as he waited for her to come back to him.

When the teacher did not return immediately, two other boys sitting next to him wanted to give him some assistance but he immediately snatched his sheet off them. It was obvious that he wanted to complete his work by himself. The teacher then gave Student 4 some responsibility at the end of the lesson to go round and collect everyone's work and place them on her tray at her desk. He looked excited doing this at the end of the lesson. Another example where the researcher observed that Student 4 had a productive lesson was in a science class where they were revising a past exam paper and he was allowed to read from an Arabic version, answering the questions in Arabic and the co-teacher translating his answers into English. The teacher praised him aloud for giving three correct answers. It should be noted that students are allowed to respond in the language they prefer in the actual exam. This was the happiest lesson I had observed Student 4 inn as he was very engaged throughout the lesson. He wrote down the homework by himself, than let his assistant teacher do it for him.

His poor attendance is an issue for staff who believe he could make progress if he attended school on a regular basis. His parents have been informed several times that taking him out on several holidays during term time has a big effect on his school performance. Due to missing so many lessons, when he turns up for school and his teacher assistant is not with him, he is completely unable to do any work. I looked through his student folder and he has not been able to complete a lot of work when compared to the folders of other students in the class. It was also clear that the bits of work in his folder were mostly done by his helper as he had difficulty forming letters. The bulk of papers in his folder were tracing exercises to help him form English letters accurately.

   b) Accessibility

Secondly, moving on to answer Research Question 1 while addressing the accessibility indicator in School A, the LST leader is very passionate about inclusive practices and categorically stated her philosophy that 'every child can learn, be supported no matter their level and we can get potential out of each child. The education system should be equal to all'. Walking round the school, it was evident she and members of the LST team believed in and shared her philosophy. She however expressed disappointment that not all the mainstream teachers are qualified in meeting the needs of children with disabilities, not just those in the sample under study. Many things can still be improved and they are currently going through the rounds of all the classes once a year so that the English and Arabic teachers can have a chance to share any concerns.

The LST team operates an open door policy so teachers are encouraged to come in anytime to discuss any access issues that their students may be facing. On the staff understanding,

describing and adopting the 'School for All' Initiative to give access to all students, the school admits any student who applies no matter their needs. The majority of the students had academic learning needs, e.g. dyslexia, difficulties in Math. A total of ten students have IEPs including students in the sample student profiles described above, with one of them with severe visual problems. In previous years, they had a student with downs syndrome who has now left the school. They then follow ADEC procedures stepped procedures to find out the current needs of the student, and the SEN teacher will test him or her with a diagnostic activity to establish and provide the support that is required. Baseline tests carried out with students who have a disability and all the five students in the sample were tested at the start of the year and resources are then organized accordingly.

The students in the sample from Grade 2-Grade 5 have all received input following ADEC's 4 staged approach, however, the Head of LST and her team stated that at times they are unsure about the diagnosis reports received because some students have been assessed by them as being autistic however, their clinical reports come back stating that they have Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). As mentioned earlier other teachers in the school meet the needs of students by providing teaching aids, manipulatives, text with enlarged print. However, there is still a shortage of resources that ADEC is still to provide to the school following their request and this request is still awaited. Furthermore, to support access to an education, inclusive practices such a modified curriculum, differentiated materials is in operation with a focus on hands-on learning.

School A Head of LST summed up the component of accessibility by stating that:

> I feel that no student should be excluded from our school as this is a government school so belongs to everybody'. The inclusion of students with special needs is beneficial for students without disabilities because it's life. You have different kinds of people around you. So it should be the same in school as well.

She, however, admitted that the question of some teachers finding the notion of teaching students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms confusing is dependent on each individual teacher's attitude and beliefs on the subject of inclusion. A pivotal point in my discussions with the Head of SEN on admission procedure is when she stated that the system they follow in the school as a partnership school with ADEC also has a staged approach; however it is less bureaucratic than ADEC's. Nevertheless, she does understand ADEC's approach for the rest of its 249 schools who do not have the same level of resources as School A in the study. Also, the other schools have more students and may not have SEN specialist teachers. She however closed off that a staged approach is 'good and flexible so makes it easy for teachers to get involved where they need support for the students'. Another aspect of accessibility in understanding inclusive practices in School A revealed that parental involvement is on a balance, with some parents willing to hear how they can assist their child, although other parents deny that their children have any problems at all, which hinders the manner in which the students can receive support. School A informs parents when support has been identified as necessary for their child, and encourage the parents to contact the class teachers when they have any concerns.

Speaking to the teachers in the sample in School A, their understanding of inclusion is to get all involved, encourage good students to help weaker students. One expat teacher stated that

'in this culture it is inbuilt to help, the kids are eager to help each other'

This teacher appreciated the fact that one of his students who was initially placed in Grade 3 could not cope there is was dropped into Grade 2 and has settled in well with his parents happy about the small steps to progress he is currently making.

Another mainstream teacher stated her philosophy as follows:

> All kids can learn. Everyone has their own way. We teachers should be open minded to help them. The problem is there are too many SEN children so we have limited time, so we pity them but the SEN teachers can offer them more help.

It should be noted that the teachers all unanimously agreed that they try to make all the students in their class feel a belonging, particularly the SEN students who are made to feel welcome and not to feel that they are different and separate. Another teacher who has no SEN experience expressed satisfaction about the comparison between the past and the present. In the past, there was no support for them from the administration to deal with challenging students as the system was not there. But now with the new ADEC policy in place giving the school specialist SEN teachers from abroad on the exchange program, they can cooperate to deal with the students. 'it is a very nice thing after many years teaching from Grade 2 to Grade 4. I feel like their mum now, they understand me better'. The team work with colleagues has definitely helped'. Lastly, in School A, the principal was keen to confirm some of the arrangements he has put into place to support inclusive practices. These are: the length of the school day is from 7.15am -1.15pm. The principal confirmed that the day is shortened for students with learning and behavior needs for three of the five days in the week as their approach to help get these students access to learning. Also under resourcing, every student has an iPad for their use. The leadership has an open door policy and there is a teaching

assistant in all classrooms where students had learning needs, supporting them on a one to one basis, with some students like S1 using individualized materials.

c) Assessment

The third important core component that exists in an inclusive school is assessment. In school A, the principal, Head of SEN and LST members confirmed that baseline tests are done at the beginning of every year, which then leads to organizing the resources accordingly to meet each students learning needs. There still exists doubts from the professionals within the school from their years of experience working with SEN students' initial beliefs of the condition the student has and reports from outside agencies that do not quite match what they believe it should be. Teachers in the school, supported by the LST, provide different kinds of tests on the same topic. Some tests are easier and others are difficult and more challenging, however, not all the teachers do this. Some teachers in Math lessons let students use manipulatives as support aids when doing tests while others do not.

Where the LST agrees collaboratively that further evaluation is required on a specific student, they are referred to the welfare team for further diagnosis. The psychologist gets involved at this stage. The downside that was expressed here is that the psychologists are usually not always present at school and are shared between several schools so not always available to follow through with further testing. Also IEPs are developed in close collaboration with parents and the LST. The school goes out of their way to make several appointments with parents, some of who choose not to be cooperative with the school. The Head of LST purported that flexible assessment methods are used according to student skill level. This assertion is supported by

the Grade 3 teacher who teaches Student 1 a modified curriculum and she stated that 'his

assessment is totally different because I look at the goals in his IEP. The findings from

assessments done in School A indicate current practices to answer Research Question 1.

Recommendations towards more inclusive practices are provided in Chapter Five.

d) Professional Development

The last component indicator that the participants described to answer Research Question 1 is

on professional development of staff as part of inclusive practices. Although ADEC had a

professional development program called Tamkeen running across all their school in the

previous four years, the Head of SEN categorically stated that there was limited opportunity for

mainstream teachers to improve on their knowledge and skills through professional

development activities for further growth. She stated that:

> sharing good practices especially those who need a change of attitude and learn from colleagues
> who are successful is limited. Good cooperation with parents is also needed. I think I know a lot
> about the ADEC policy and in my work I go back on it always to see how we fit in with the system.
> Other teachers need to know more. We've had little changes in our schools its helpful-both to
> local and expat staff.

The teachers' voices in School A were very clear and unanimous on the limited training

available to support mainstream teachers, not just training that SEN receives. The therapists

also working with the children need to be afforded training. The mainstream teachers are keen

to learn more about how they can support the SEN students, as captured by one of the

teachers:

> we need training on what to do with them. If we are taught how to support them, more training is
> rewarding. Between ADEC and the schools, there's a gap. I have no idea of the next steps for
> this student who is going blind and needs to be supported with Braille.

4.2.2 Research Question 2: What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

This section will examine the evidence from School A based on the three concepts of (a) inclusive cultures, (b) inclusive policies and (c) inclusive practices from Booth & Ainscow (2011) Index for Inclusion (Appendix 4) to provide recommendations for more effective inclusive practices.

a) Inclusive Cultures

The experiences I went through talking to the teachers and administration in the school during the data collection period produced mixed feelings from the research participants. Some of the staff felt confident that there are pockets of inclusive practices happening, although there is no consistency across the school. The Head of SEN said they shared Abu Dhabi 2030 for an inclusive school by focusing on the 21st century skill of communication development with students through more focused group, interactive tasks with students working in peer groups. Although seating arrangements with students facing each other in group style arrangements, I did not observe a lot of constructive talk happening. There needs to be less teacher talk and more active strategies like role play, to increase participation of all students. Student 2 did not engage a great deal with other students and simply sat through one lesson just staring at the class. There is still room for a lot of improvement. Teachers need to set high expectations for all in an environment where everyone will feel welcome. There is democratic citizenship in the classroom as I observed a few students in class being given roles and responsibilities. Each

knew their job from distributing books, knowing their turn to go up to the whiteboard to display their work, or another student who was dressed in military attire ensued student stand in an orderly line to go out at break time. This was however limited to 4-5 students and it would have been beneficial to change the roles over so that all the students become engaged.

Furthermore, I observed that not all the children in an English lesson in Grade 5 were given the opportunity to read from the big book, which the boys were keen to do and kept calling out to the teacher, especially the student with visual impairment. All the students should be encouraged to participate in lessons; for example, students had a science lesson outside in the garden and not all were given turns by the teacher to plant potatoes; however, Student 4 was well behaved and engaged well with the teacher when outdoors, than I had witnessed inside the classroom. There were also several observations where teachers congratulated the students especially Student 3 who had behavioral problems. This made them feel good about themselves. The Grade 5 class had a reward wall, and students were rewarded with excellent stickers to put up thereafter accurately completely an exercise. The benefit of this was that the student who had a star went out first at break time so enjoyed play for a longer period. Some staff are keen to be in close collaboration with the parents and the school highly promotes this. Furthermore, as part of inclusive cultures, staff collaborates with the LST to plan lessons especially differentiated lessons. This practice however is not widely utilized across all subjects and some lessons involved too much teacher talk or the teacher telling off naughty students for extended periods which disrupted the lessons and limited learning was taking place.

Additionally, the ADEC Division Manager for Special needs explained that the SEN policy document had the respect of human rights for every individual as its central core, a fact that ADEC used in 2006 to engage and use the federal law of 2006 as leverage to move schools

into an inclusive model. The Principal further stated that although they do not run extracurricular activities to make the school more inclusive, their approach to evolving an inclusive culture comes with the LST planning support. He went on to state that for inclusion to promote the self esteem of the students with disabilities, '*the system must be built in a way to cope; if the system is well built it gives the feeling they are normal like the rest of us, the whole community benefits from inclusion'.* However, he added that the needs of students with severe needs at '*a certain age does not promote his self esteem'.* The ADEC policy, he carried on talking about, is a good one although his knowledge of it is not in depth. I suggested to him that it will be a good idea for him to get familiar with the policy in depth. This recommended task will be of great benefit for him as the school leader to focus on to support and develop his school better towards creating an inclusive culture.

School A Principal also affirmed that generally parents take an active role in the intervention process with fruitful discussions they have had with parents which corroborates the response from the Head of SEN in the school. Parents are also able to voice their concerns especially due to the fact that this is a small school so easy to approach staff. It is due to the size of the school that parents have expressed discontent with the news that the school will be merged next year with another boys school in order to manage resources more effectively. A group of the parents went over to ADEC Head Quarters to complain a lot. He, however, felt that his greatest challenge as a school leader is to ensure that there is proper diagnosis and follow up. The recommendation proposed is for school staff to have faith in ADEC's diagnostic processes and move away from their perceptions that diagnosis for some students is trial and error. This mistrust in the diagnostic processes has raised many questions for staff..

b) Inclusive Policies

All the staff in School A were unanimous that there needs to be ongoing professional development training to equip them with the knowledge and skills to understand and put inclusion into practice. The Head of SEN repeatedly made this claim that more professional development would be of great benefit to the mainstream teachers, some of whom still had a negative attitude towards inclusion. This, however, contrasted with the principal's views that they do professional development from which co-teaching is happening and SEN teachers involved in discussions. However, on my subsequent visits to the school, teachers re-affirmed that they would like to have targeted professional development workshops focusing on how to use the electronic materials and gadgets that ADEC sends to the school, which unfortunately is not tapped into. Furthermore, at times ADEC does not send appropriate materials needed like visual books for the student with severe visual impairment, hence training is highly needed.

Mainstream teachers felt that more training should be given to them than to the SEN teachers, and this may help some attitudes towards accepting students with disabilities in their classes, as well as ensuring good practice for mainstream teachers. Teachers would also like to be part of or taking an active role in the identification of SEN students when they arrive at the school. This will be very helpful for teachers to feel empowered to support the students after receiving SEN training especially as the speech therapist or educational psychologist visits the school only once a term which is unhelpful. Teachers will continue to rely on the welfare team in the absence of the above two specialists joining them in LST meeting to gain more insight into how to help specific student needs. Improving on such practices will ensure that the robust policy is implemented effectively.

Secondly, there is confusion on the role of the psychologist in the policy guide. The intervention policies they provided were unclear to teachers, and teachers will like to be involved in the process of creating their students intervention plans. Another area of improvement is directly linked to how involved the students' parent is in supporting the child's education. According to the majority of school staff, too many parents are not active participants in their sons' learning. One of the parents of the boys in Grade 5 in the sample was having limited contact with school personnel due to the mother's personal problems going through a marital breakdown and divorce. In addition to this, male teachers cannot ring home due to cultural inhibitions - hence communication needs to improve or other strategies need to be put in place to engage in regular meaningful communication with parents as seen in the policy document. The principal's interpretation of the 'School for All' initiative is put into practice through modification of the school day so as to provide for all students, although not yet 100% inclusive. The principal also reiterated that his goal for all staff and students (Q11) is to continue encouraging and supporting teachers to share ideas on the 'School For All' with more parents who are now engaged in discussions with the school. He asserts that staff attitude towards inclusion is gradually becoming more positive of late. Another parallel view between the principal and teachers is that he declared that he felt he had qualified staff who can meet the needs of SEN students although these teachers did not believe that this was reflecting reality. The principal had a clear vision of his role towards students with disability in his school. He stated that:

> My big role is to keep up the spirit for these kinds of arrangement, talk with teachers to open up their eyes to support inclusion within a team spirit. We have teacher from our western partner country where special education goes through the whole school system.

The principal also emphasized that ADEC's SEN policy, which views the inclusion of students with special needs is beneficial for students without disability and this aspect of policy is similar

to that of his home country. This item allows all students learning in a similar environment to reiterate that they are all equal irrespective of their disability. Students all have different things they are good at. Teaching them in such a classroom should therefore improve for teachers after the first few weeks of confusion.

c) Inclusive Practices

In all the lessons observed, students made some progress where they had support on a one to one basis to access the tasks. However, there is the danger of the student being too reliant on the teacher assistant, who does all the work for them as observed with Student 4. There needs to be a good balance between how much help can be given and when the assistant can step back to allow the student to develop some independent skills. The Science teacher asserted that '*all children can learn in their own way, however the weak students are too many and we have limited time to help them'.* Hence, where ADEC can hire more teacher assistants and provide them with regular training on inclusive practices this will begin to allow more time to be given to the most needy students. In addition, a lot of the co-teachers, who were Arabic speakers, had attendance issues and this tended to frustrate the main classroom teacher who would have planned the lesson with a co-delivery model in mind. A student who used a wheelchair in Grade 3 had to be re-located to a ground floor classroom as opposed to the first floor which had all the other Grade 3. Unfortunately, this adjustment and adaptation did not go far enough to meet all the needs of this student for example adapted bathrooms, play area, so the parents transferred him to one of the special needs centers.

During the interviews, I noticed that at least two teachers mentioned that they were not aware of the student's full history and condition and had not seen the learning outcomes from the LST.

Another teacher needed help with meeting the targets on the student's IEP and claimed that the student should not be in her Grade 3 class, but rather in Grade 2 because he does not yet know the alphabet as she cannot meet any of his outcomes. One teacher strongly felt that the school does not benefit the child in any way. In order to improve inclusion, it is pivotal that the mainstream classroom teacher is fully aware of the goals that had been set for the SEN student following their assessment. Effective communication is essential here in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Teachers all need further training to be provided to them by ADEC on a regular basis as they feel there is a gap between ADEC and what goes on in their school. For example, the partially sighted boy in G5 is going blind, '*he needs a Braille teacher, I have no idea of next steps to do with him, he cannot use his hand properly as he's got problems with motor skills'.*

They claimed that they had other students in their classes who were extremely weak but were not on the LST register and they couldn't understand why. The above examples of teachers not aware of ADEC's special needs provision needs to be looked at by school leadership in order to build an inclusive culture. Furthermore, students showed signs of performing better and engaging with tasks where they had an Arabic teacher assistant who is also bilingual. It will be beneficial for leadership to put systems in place to ensure that Arabic support teachers attend all the lessons they are scheduled to attend. The co-teaching approach where English Medium Teachers (EMTs) go into EMT classes is going well. The hitch often comes in where the Arabic Medium Teacher (AMT) has to go into an EMT class and for the AMT to be prepared and know exactly what to do with the student. This synergy is not currently happening. Teachers expressed a strong wish that they'd rather prefer the student to be out of their lesson to work with a smaller group in the resource room.

Several teachers also stated that it may be wiser to reduce the school day for struggling students, stating that '*seven hours a day is too long for Student 2, he gets tired too easily. The falling into bad behavior will reduce if his school day is shortened'.* The principal's response to this was that he's tried to modify the school day and teaching times so as to be able to provide for all students, not just for the struggling students stating that ' *but there's a limit, very needy students not possible for 100% inclusion. However, we are quite far ahead in that ideology like shortening the school day and teaching assistants helping'.* To further improve recommended inclusive practices, the principal stated that he encourages collaborative partnerships in his school by dividing all his staff into five teams, each with different tasks every term. Within the tasks teachers are allowed to operate independently which is a successful approach from their home country in Europe. Hence he created a pedagogic team who arrange meetings with parents to share the curriculum, a curriculum team who organize ADEC's 'Abu Dhabi Reads' a reading initiative across the Emirate. Also, he created a community team who organize and run parents evenings regularly, a LST and safety team who are responsible for safety round the school and recently did a safety walk with students in the upper primary. These collaborative partnerships are also supported by ADEC Head Quarters professional development team who run professional development sessions on how to effectively run these teams across schools and are a practice that needs to develop further.

A crucial point that the principal of School A affirmed had to do with exam accommodation for students with disabilities. He stated that the national tests called EMSA do not allow for any type of accommodation. Students either take the exam as it is or are withdrawn from taking it due to their needs. Grade 3 was doing the exam for the 1st time in 2015 and there was a lot of confusion because most of the students did not understand the questions. ADEC now allows

teachers to read out the questions so students can better understand them. Another recommendation which was still in its infant stages in the school was expressed by the principal as the right way forward on kids with disability being given opportunities to function in the mainstream classroom. In his school, there is a higher ratio of teachers to students. I was able to observe this practice in action, where in an Arabic lesson, the SEN teacher took out four boys, one by one, to explain the lesson aims to them. This is only possible because of the smaller classes as confirmed by the principal.

4.3 School B Case Study

Research Question 1 – How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe
                      their practice of inclusion?
Research Question 2 – What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

School B is a female cycle one school in quiet suburban settings off Abu Dhabi Main Island and several miles away from the city centre of Abu Dhabi. The school principal is a local Emirati female who had been running the school for several years when this study began. She knew her school thoroughly and took pride in the strides they had made in the school. She spoke Arabic and English fluently and was very welcoming. She however preferred to direct me to the social workers and other staff in the senior leadership team who will provide me with every answer like she would do in person. The school had an enrolment of 773 students from grade one to grade five, with an age range of 6-14 years. 84% of the students are Emiratis and the rest come from other GCC countries and Arab States. The staff composition is made up of two Student Services Arabic speaking vice principals, 16 English Medium Teachers (EMTs), twenty eight Arabic Medium Teachers (AMT), one Arabic Head of Faculty and one English Head of

Faculty. There is no Academic vice Principal appointed yet. Amongst the teaching staff is one SEN teacher, three teaching assistants who are not SEN trained and have very limited SEN background. Staff turnover is 25% based on the 2015-2016 academic year. The school had its last inspection in March 2016. The Inspection results judged the school in Band B for overall performance which is a satisfactory level and performing at an acceptable standard. The report supports some of the findings in this study stating that:

> Lesson planning is inconsistent in supporting the academic and social development needs of individuals and groups of children. Teachers do not focus sufficiently on the needs of the least able and the most able through effective differentiation… the work in classrooms does not adequately address the differing needs of students of students. This leads to many students not making the progress that they are capable of.

The inspection report recommends what the school should do to improve further by providing support and challenge for all students particularly those with SEN needs who find learning difficult.

The school has a Learning Support Team led by the principal and comprised of two bilingual social workers, an SEN teacher, a student services vice principal and the Arabic and English heads of faculties within the team. The Learning Support Team meet on a Wednesday every week to discuss and plan the education of students on the SEN register.

Participants included in the sample study in School B are the principal, two social workers, the English Head of Faculty, three expatriate English medium teachers, one bilingual Arab expat teacher and one Emirati English medium teacher. The school grounds cover a large area with two indoor covered playground areas as well as a massive filed at the back of the school. The building is semi-modern on two floors and the Grades 4 and 5 classrooms occupy a separate

modern structure recently built and including a multipurpose gym facility. There is a welcoming

feeling from the entrance of the school with bilingual signage everywhere spelling out ADEC's

vision for quality education to all students.

The five students who are part of the study sample range from grade two to Grade 5 as seen in

the Table 4.2 below:

Student Name	Age	Grade	Disability	Lessons observed	IEP/No IEP
School B Student 1-S1	8 years	Grade 2	Autism	English, Math, Science,	IEP
School B Student 2-S2	8 years	Grade 3	Emotional disorder	English, Math, Science, Arabic	IEP
School B Student 3-S3	9 years	Grade 4	Learning difficulties	English, Math, Science, Arabic	No IEP
School B Student 4-S4	10 years	Grade 5	Mental disability	English, Math, Science, Arabic	IEP
School B Student 5-S5	10 years	Grade 5	Mental disability	English, Math, Science,	IEP

Table 4.2 – School B Student Cohort

Student 1 is a seven year old in grade 2 who has been diagnosed with autism and has an

individual education plan (IEP). Targets in her IEP to give her opportunities for alternate means

of responding are to respond orally, records answers on tapes, oral administration and

shortened assignments. In her IEP, it is stated that her mental age is less than her chronological

age so her intelligence is below level and academically below her chronological peers.

Accommodation is needed for her, and she presents with hyperactive behavior. Her parents are

concerned and want to see their daughter's performance and behavior improve. Her short tem

goals are to write her name and remember it. Her target is to be able to distinguish different

shapes, pictures, colors, numbers and letters. Identify long and short vowels, read and spell two letter words.

Student 2 is an eight year old girl in Grade 3 who had been diagnosed with emotional disorder. She has an IEP and her goals are to remember her name, recognize photos and link them to words. Her target is to use the sounds of letters so that she can spell words. She needs instructions to be repeated to her in order for her to respond.

Student 3 is a nine year old in grade four with learning difficulties but who does not have an IEP. She looks happy and smiles to visitors and talks with a lisp which I noticed when she told me her name. Her progress report (Appendix 21) from term one to term three shows her making very little progress across several subjects.

Students 4 and 5 are both in Grade 5, both 10 years of age and diagnosed with mental disability. Both students have an IEP. In their IEPs, Student 4 & 5 were given targets to respond orally, shortened assignments, record their answers on tape and were provided with a positive reinforcement system. Data from their class reports (Appendix 23) show they are working at the lowest levels in most of the subjects.

4.3.1 Research Question 1: How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion?

In School B similar to School A, I will seek answers for Research Question one by addressing the participants' responses of their understanding and application of inclusive practices within the framework of the four indicators of (a) curriculum, (b) accessibility, (c) assessment and (d) professional development. I had an extensive interview spending a lot of time with the two bilingual social workers who the principal had turned over to me to be able to answer any questions for her as well as for the school. She was engaged at the time with preparing the school for an inspection that was due to happen shortly. Both social workers have a Bachelors degree in social work, with one of them being in her first year in the school; so she had limited experience in social work as her previous job was as a life skill instructor. The second social worker was experienced and had been in the school for four years.

a) Curriculum

This school also follows the Abu Dhabi School Model (ADSM) curriculum, which is a balanced and rich curriculum that allows for lifelong learning that uses a student-centered approach and enables students to compete at an international level. The model is an outcome-based curriculum that began in 2010 with a focus on a bilingual education in Arabic and English, emphasizing critical thinking skills, individualized and personalized learning in a rich environment that celebrates cultural and national identity. Learning activities are experienced through a set of learning outcomes. Assessment of student learning is weighted through levels from beginner to mastery levels of attainment.

In relation to the curriculum, both social workers' philosophy was to believe in the rights of children, dealing with each situation according to human rights laws whilst giving the students a safe environment to study in where they are supported. They also stated that parents should be aware of what is going on in the school. They asserted that SEN students should be treated the same as non-SEN students. As social workers, they also focus on making sure that the SEN students eat healthy meals, get all the resources they need to help them learn as they believe that they have got skills. The mainstream teachers' teaching experience spanned a period of four years to sixteen years and out of the five teachers, only one of them had a SEN background and experience. For an inclusive curriculum to operate, the teachers stated that it made sense for students to be in the least restrictive environment to help them reach their full potential, although it may take longer for some. This was summed up by the most experience teacher amongst the sample with 16 years of experience teaching in the United States. She stated that:

> all students can learn with the right support, they should be in an inclusive environment and maybe get pull outs as necessary for extra support. My students need exposure to be as independent as possible and think outside the box.

At a pedagogic level, teachers' had similar goals for all students to be successful and independent and show evidence of progress. Some steps they have taken to make their lessons more inclusive include use of technological aids like iPads and computers, audio tapes where students can record their answers to questions and including hands on activities as much as possible into their lesson plans as well as providing modified simpler, shorter tasks in English lessons. Three of the five teachers also added that they were not aware of the exact disability of their student so it was a struggle to help them as they were not equipped with the knowledge,

skills and resources to do that. All of the teachers were completely unaware about ADEC's SEN policy and some were shocked to hear that there was one available in every school.

Consequently, they had no idea about ADEC's four stage intervention. Furthermore, none of the parents of the students with disability has been put in contact with class teachers to share and update the parents on class work. The SEN teacher does not attend to any English lessons so teachers have no idea about a student's diagnosis or their history. The SEN teacher who has worked in ADEC for twelve years works closely with just the social workers and some Arabic teachers. She stated that the philosophy and belief in the "School for All' initiative is that all students can learn. She preferred referring to students as 'normal' and 'abnormal'. She then clarified that students with severe disabilities should have special classes of their own for a greater part of the day because the students without disabilities copy their disabled counterpart's bad behavior. She however, supported the view that students with mild disabilities can work well in mainstream classes.

(b) Accessibility

The school had in place several approaches to aid accessibility including bright colored strips lining all the corridors and steps to prevent any accidents happening. All the classrooms had interactive whiteboards; iPads were available from the learning resources centre which teachers could book in advance as a learning aid during lessons. Along the corridors and in classrooms, the environment was rich with bilingual signage. The two Grade 5 teachers confirmed that they used the iPads a lot for both the students on the SEN register as well as other students who struggled with work and these make a higher percentage of the class size. There is a learning

resource room where the SEN teacher can pull out students to. However all the English teachers said their needy students were rarely pulled out. The SEN teacher spoke English to an understanding level so she tended to pull out and support students only from Arabic lessons. She actually stated that this was the mandate ADEC instructed her which was challenged by the English head of faculty. I was informed that the school is currently making arrangements for her to begin visiting English lessons where students who are on the SEN register are. The teachers were not sure whether inclusion promotes the self esteem of students and felt that it has to depend on the nature of the students' disability for them to be able to function well in a regular classroom.

However, The 16 year experienced teacher felt it is necessary for every opportunity to be given to students with disabilities to function in a regular class of peers of the same age as that makes them rise up to the challenge with given support. The Grade 4 teacher modifies the lesson for Student 4 by using a modified lesson plan. She used low level materials for the SEN students, works with them on a one to one basis if they are to produce any work and she keeps records of their work very carefully The Grade 5 teacher meets Student 5's curriculum needs through a modified lesson plan. She placed Student 5 in an Emerging group and sits her at the front of the room. They all said they feel compassion for the struggling students and do the best to help them but without any SEN support or teaching assistant particularly in the two Grade 5 classes, they are limited in what they can do with large groups of twenty seven students in each class. So teachers find it difficult to give personal support to the needy students who are usually left on their own. In the rush to complete all the learning outcomes as am ADEC requirement. One of the teachers simply stated '*I am not sure we know what to do with them' But they are sweet girls. They teach you compassion'.*

On confirming that they know only little bits about ADEC's SEN four stage intervention approach, some of the teachers wondered aloud about the identification process because they have weaker students who are in their classes but not in the special needs register and ask '*is it just a pull-out of a bag'?* Another example of where teachers did not fully understand the importance of making learning accessible was seen in a Grade 5 classroom where Student 5 was in with twenty five students in the class. The classroom had a very rich bilingual environment where the teacher kept referring students to the wall displays to support their learning of key mathematical terms. The teacher is bilingual, which is a big bonus, as he was able to speak to Student 5 in Arabic and she nodded as a sign that she understood. Student 5 had physical features of a child with downs syndrome. The teacher informed me that Student 5 had an IEP, but she had never seen it and it is very difficult to help her. She was working at Pre-K level and had no support in the lesson at all. This teacher felt a lot of compassion to this student who was in her 5th year in the school. The student had no support. She requested from me whether I could help her speak to the SEN teacher and social workers as the student had just learnt how to spell her name in Grade 5. The student could not engage at all and sat down staring into space. Her attendance is generally good. The teacher stated that she had spoken to the student's mother as well as to the social worker to get her to attend at the Zayed Centre and that mother had tried but failed to get her daughter into a more supportive environment. The student is very weak in Arabic as well and gets a helper twice a week in Arabic lessons. The teacher stated that:

> Student 5 has got only survival language in both Arabic and English. I am hoping that the inspection team coming into the school will notice her to alert the authorities of her plight so that she can get some help. I brought in personal books to assist her given that I had taught SEN students in the past in the United States. I have no idea of the ADEC modified curriculum. She does not recognize words but can match letters to pictures very well. She will not talk to me but will point the words to the pictures.

On checking with the SEN teacher about this student at a later meeting, she informed me that she pulls this student out from Arabic lessons to give her one to one support five times a week, three in Arabic and twice in English which did not align with the English teacher's assertion that no one comes to support Student 5. Also she stated that an SEN assistant privately hired by the parents and not through ADEC goes into some Arabic lessons twice a week as she was diagnosed with a mental disability. The learning taking place in the school is completely inaccessible and not inclusive for Student 5 to make any progress as she comes towards the end of her primary education.

(c) Assessment

Assessment records were provided (23), however, none of the teachers had any idea whether students received modified exams as they had not seen that happen in English with EMSA tests. Their approach within lessons with continuous assessments was to give the very weak students very basic simple tasks and exempting them from other learning outcomes they felt was beyond their capabilities. This stated fact from the teachers was supported by the more experienced social worker's statements that the only formal exam done in cycle 1 is the EMSA and as social workers who know the students with intellectual disability very well who cannot do the exam, they exempt them and send the names to ADEC.

Another observation I noted pertaining to assessment practice at the school was in an Arabic lesson. The SEN teacher was present in this lesson. The regular classroom teacher announced at the beginning of the lesson after completing with the register of names that they were going to do a test in this lesson. She then spoke to the SEN teacher to take the needy students to test them in the SEN room. This was a test to improve reading skills as the children did better in

writing skills than reading. I later joined the SEN teacher with the three students withdrawn from the main lesson. In the resource room, she had a list of the students she works with and their goals and these students were able to complete a modified test with lots of support from the SEN teacher. This is due to the fact that the SEN teacher makes specific assessments in Arabic for these students when their in class exam mark is very low. She then puts up a weekly schedule with goals for each student, using symbols where necessary for them to understand. All the students in the sample are exempted from the EMSA national tests although teachers still have to do formative assessments for them at a very basic level in order to give them a score for their continuous assessment mark.

(d) Professional Development

Professional development to all ADEC schools has been ongoing in the past four years prior to the start of this study. The idea from ADEC professional development Division was to use five Providers with expat staff to deliver bespoke professional development that aligned to each school's goals as identified in their School Improvement Plan. Staff in School B however felt they were not being provided with appropriate professional development to support them teach in inclusive classrooms. Only one of the five teachers in the sample had had some experience and knowledge in special needs teaching in her home country of the United States. The rest of the teachers had limited SEN knowledge and had classes with a large number of SEN students to cater for. Hence training and associated support in the class was a unanimous frustration from the teachers. They wanted a message to be sent to ADEC that they needed more knowledge in SEN training through professional development. Teachers were receiving professional development on topics they felt were not very relevant to their classroom settings

but had to attend as it was a mandatory requirement of their contract to attend weekly professional development.

All of the teachers in the sample stated that they needed bespoke, hands on professional development that will make a difference in supporting all the students in the classroom, including students with learning disabilities. In addition, the social workers also expressed dissatisfaction that there has been no training provided on the job and they would like to see training given to the SEN teacher particularly so that she can support teachers better. Teachers are required to complete thirty hours of mandated training as per ADEC contractual obligations. However, the impact of professional development did not seem to have been beneficial to teachers and there was no evidence to show that professional development has helped to improve their practice of working in an inclusive classroom.

4.3.2 Research Question 2: What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

This section will examine the evidence from School B based on the three concepts of (a) inclusive cultures, (b) inclusive policies and (c) inclusive practices, from Booth & Ainscow (2011) Index for Inclusion (Appendix 4), in order to provide recommendations for more effective inclusive practices.

a) Inclusive Cultures

In order to provide some recommendations to answer Research Question 2, the data will be drawn primarily from classroom observation and staff interviews. Inclusive cultures as seen in

The Index emphasizes collaborative practices within the school to make everyone feel welcome, have respect for each other, increase participation for all as well as teachers and leadership giving high expectations to all. In School B, although there is a welcoming air around the school, the teachers expressed that communication needed to improve, so they are involved in agreeing on learning plans for SEN students in their classrooms. They felt ignored because no one tells them what the students' needs were. They have very little contact with the parents and would recommend that the social workers who have a schedule to meet the parents at any time involve them as teachers during these conversations. I observed one of the students in the sample in Grade 3 sitting at the back of the room by herself, and her peers did not seem to be very friendly towards her; so, this is an area to improve on as increasing participation for all helps to build an inclusive culture. Student 3 is quite new to the school and has not been able to make any friends yet with her classmates; so, it is important for staff to create an environment where the student does not feel so isolated as observed. The teacher responded, however, that she has been trying to get the other students to befriend her, but they all say they do not like her. This affects the student whose attendance is quite erratic and very irregular.

b) Inclusive Policies

To support participation for all in every setting that students are required to be at in the school needs to do more during break and lunch times. I observed that one student looked happy and knew what to do as her peers so lined up outside the classroom for break. In the lunch room she sat with her peers to eat her packed lunch. She rarely spoke to any of the other students although she gave eye contact. Her only reaction was showing her snack to the student next to her and then she carried on talking to herself.

In addition, the school has employed personnel to support the development of inclusive processes within a 'School for All' agenda. However, there is evidence collected that the social workers do not work as a team with the English group of teachers so this has an impact on how staff expertise is used to improve the learning of students with special needs and create an inclusive environment for all the students. The one SEN teacher in the school is limiting to meet the needs of the large number of students in the school who need extra help and support. The leadership needs to have a more inclusive approach by accurately implementing ADEC's SEN policy which does not seem to be the case at the moment. Although the school is admitting all the students from the local area, their needs are not being met across all subject areas in the school. New students need more support to settle into the school and not feel isolated. There needs to be more coordinated and collaborative work happening between the English medium and Arabic medium staff.

Furthermore professional development activities need to be more targeted to help staff respond to the diversity in their classrooms. All the teachers in the sample did not feel they have received professional development to support their teaching within an inclusive environment. One of the teachers stated that she felt lucky she had had ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) experience in the past so is able to use her knowledge of ESOL(English for Speakers of Other Languages) to support the very weak students in her classroom, with examples such as using lots of audio, pictures, and hands-on activities. There is evidence of positive behavior management. However, little evidence was seen of how this is linked to the learning of the students other than 'containing' them in classrooms. An example is with Student 4 who has some behavior issues and with no support, all what the teacher does is give her an

iPad and sits her at the front of the room to monitor her closely. I observed that she was playing games on the iPad throughout the lesson. So, this allowed the teacher some space to teach and her bad behavior was managed that way. This approach was also observed in the Grade 5 science lesson where both SEN students sitting at the same table were totally disengaged and left on their own, swapping the iPads between them.

c) Inclusive Practices

In Grade 3, Student 2 is able to engage with work when the student teacher is in the class and can sit with her on a 1:1 basis. The teacher doesn't know the disability that the student has and surprising exclaimed that when Student 2 has support '*she can actually explain the story being read in English. Her English is pretty good. She has got more English than I thought she had'.* However the teacher stated that she does not know any high frequency words and can be very disruptive at times so she tends to prefer managing her bad behavior when she has to stay in the lesson. She does not get any support in English from the SEN teacher. In another week, this student stayed focused during a grammar lesson. She sat at the front of the room and got on with her work. The teacher had a good rapport with her class.

However, Student 2 stopped working as soon as the teacher left her desk to help other students. I noticed that another student at the same table went over to her to help her complete the work. She was then taken by the teacher to the reading corner at the back of the room, sat on the carpet to practice reading some high frequency words, for example 'get, come, from'. She used a mini laminated white board, writing and saying the words aloud, but she was unable to read out the word. She then had to use manipulatives to form the word on the carpet. She was able, with support from a peer to write the following high frequency words (Appendix 24)

down 'will, are, that, then'. She got other students to look for the letters for her from a box as she couldn't. As soon as the other students completed their twenty words identification, Student 2 had found just one word by herself, without support. She stopped working when the other students took their work to the teacher and laid down on the carpet looking tired. There clearly needs to be a more coordinated support for her in lessons using a teaching assistant as she showed that she will work with support as the teacher had twenty students in the class to take care of as well. The teacher confirmed that she has got a trainee student who sits and supports her but was absent on the day.

This raises some questions on how teaching assistants are deployed across the school to support the students learning. All the teachers during interview expressed great frustration that the classroom assistants do not come into lessons. The narrative behind that is that classroom assistants complained the previous year that they were timetabled all day into lessons. The principal then later informed staff that directives has come from ADEC to withdraw them from working with students in lessons and provide them with desks to work from in a hallway for every grade level, helping out the teacher with any administrative work like laminating and photocopying resources, or cutting up papers as requested by the teachers. Teachers found this amazing because student teachers from the universities were inside classrooms and very hands-on.

Another example of the teacher needing to encourage the participation of all children was observed in a Grade 4 English class where the children were doing a spelling test. Student 3 did not have a clue and sat at the back of the room. The teacher then gave her a book to read and she started flapping over the pages. She then got bored, put her head down on the table and

shut her eyes. She could not engage with reading the Big Book which was the next activity after

the spelling test which meant that the lesson activities were not planned with this student in

mind. Again, this same student in a Math lesson was not engaged and looked restless. She did

not engage with an activity where students were throwing dice and recording the number on. At

the end of the lesson the teacher declares that:

> I am limited as to what I can do with her. She can roll a dice and recognize the number in her probability lesson. She uses some games at the back of the room to know her letters. She no longer dances in front of the class by herself. Other girls are very supportive to her but unfortunately there is no helper.

This was a similar case in other lessons in other grades to confirm to me that inclusion is still at

the beginning stages in the school.

4.4   School C Case Study

Research Question 1 – How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe
their practice of inclusion?

Research Question 2 – What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

School C is a cycle one co-educational school in another region of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi

which is quite rural and a two hour drive away from the city. The school has a male and female

section with a single principal running the two sections and assisted in her role by three vice

principals. This is a Kindergarten G and Cycle one school. The principal is a local Emirati female

who has been at the school for several years. This large school has an enrolment of 1700

students. The wide entrance into the school feels welcoming and its vision statement is written

in a prominent position, which reads as 'Every child can learn'. The vice principal explained to

me that she believed in the appropriateness of the vision statement which is there *to 'encourage*

every student to take charge of their own learning, teachers to step back and for students to step up'.

The Learning Support Team, headed by the principal together with the three Vice Principals, four Heads of Faculty (two Arabic and two English for both the girls and boys sections), two social workers and an educational psychologist was initiated in 2014 and has worked with over 150 students at the time this study took place. The school has pioneered using visual supports as a support intervention strategy for their students' and seen great benefits using this approach. The school grounds is a modern new multi-purpose building covering a large expanse of land in one of ADEC's new school model design buildings. It has several multipurpose halls and two gyms, a large modern refectory area and two outside playground in both sections. Classrooms are designed in pods of circular shape for each grade level with a break out open space where children can relax at break times or have lessons as the area has a rich learning environment with lots of displays of students work. The five students in the sample were three boys and two girls. I met the Academic vice Principal (AVP) who was to be my main contact person as well as the English Head of Faculty as her support when she is occupied by other duties. The Academic vice Principal confirmed that on the school register, they have several students enrolled in both the boy and girls section who are autistic, have physical disability and one girl uses a wheelchair, dyslexia and hearing disabilities are some of the cases they have.

The study began with 5 participants, The English Head of Faculty (HoF), one SEN teacher and 3 mainstream teachers. However, halfway through the study, two teachers withdrew from the study and the principal was not keen for me to approach two new teachers to replace them. The

3 remaining teachers had been in teaching between a span of 7-19 years of which all 3 had been at this ADEC School for 3 years. None of the teachers had SEN experience until their arrival in Abu Dhabi. Classes are large with 30-32 students in each class. The five students who are part of the study sample range from Grade two to Grade 5 as seen in Table 4.3 below:

Student Name	Age	Grade	Disability	Lessons observed	IEP/No IEP
School C Student 1-S1	8 years	Grade 2	Autism	English, Math, Science,	No IEP
School C Student 2-S2	9 years	Grade 4	dyslexia	English, Math, Science, Arabic	IEP
School C Student 3-S3	9 years	Grade 4	Learning difficulties	English, Math, Science, Arabic	No IEP
School C Student 4-S4	10 years	Grade 5	Behavior Disorder	English, Math, Science, Arabic	IEP
School C Student 5-S5	10 years	Grade 5	Physical disability	English, Math, Science,	IEP

Table 4.3 School C student cohort

Student 1 is an eight year old girl in Grade 2 on the autistic spectrum disorder with learning needs who is unable to read or write. The teacher confirmed that she rarely spoke and usually kept to herself with very little collaboration with the other students either in class or in the playground.

Student 2 is a nine year old student in Grade 4 with suffering from dyslexia and also has fine motor skill problems. He is unable to hold a pen correctly so his writing is scribbling all over the page. He has hot an IEP.

Student 3 is a nine year old boy in Grade 4 with learning difficulties. He does not have an IEP. His attendance at school is very erratic.

Student 4 is a ten year old boy in Grade 5, with behavior disorders. He has got an IEP and is very disruptive in the classroom. The teacher stated that she is unable to control him and the principal has stopped them taking him out of the classroom for a cool-down. His attendance at school is poor and all attempts to meet with his parents has not proven any good results. The teacher actually stated that she felt relief on the days he did not show up in school because she could guarantee that the other students will learn more due to the absence of his disruptive behavior.

Finally, Student 5 is a ten year old girl in a wheelchair in Grade 5 and who has an IEP.

4.4.1   Research Question 1: How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion?

In School C, answers to Research Question 1 will be addressed using the participants' responses to interview questions on their understanding and application of inclusive practices within the framework of the four indicators of (a) curriculum, (b) accessibility, (c) assessment and (d) professional development.

a) Curriculum

The Academic vice Principal has promoted a teaching and learning approach across both sections of the school to enable full access into the curriculum for all students. She describes her beliefs in inclusive practices as below, stating that:

at the beginning of lessons, teachers share the learning outcomes and starter activity for 5-20 minutes, then class groups break up into heterogynous groups of mixed ability students for approximately 10 minutes then swap around to do a problem solving activity in ability groups and then go into learning centers, differentiated peer tutoring and then a plenary to end the lesson.

(c) Accessibility

The Academic vice Principal affirmed that she keeps an SEN folder to keep track of students'

modification, where she has grade level binders for SEN students in order to share the

intervention and referrals. Her goal for all staff and students is for students to be self reliant and

lifelong learners and for teachers to act as facilitators in this process. She however expressed

that it implementing the SEN policy to world standards presents challenges because the SEN

teacher speaks only Arabic and cannot go into English lessons. The EMTs deal with this from

prior knowledge of working in SEN classrooms in their home countries, hence give students a

longer time to complete assignments as a form of modification. Her understanding of the

'School For All' is to break down barriers and move forward although a fear of the unknown

prevents mostly the Arabic staff from adopting the initiative. The school is trying to overcome

this by pairing up Arabic and English staff such that Arabic staff can see modification in practice,

to make the school more inclusive. The Academic vice Principal maintained that the playground

has been redesigned to accommodate the needs of all students like the girl in a wheelchair can

play in a safe way. Also the pods in each grade level have learning centers erected with

computers for an IT centre and students can choose to spend their break time at the pods with

staff supervision, or go out into the playground.

Another form of access to learning for all students as described above under curriculum is that the Academic vice Principal promotes and monitors practices daily to ensure teachers are giving each student an opportunity to meet their needs through varied learning approaches that cover the visual, auditory and kinesthetic learner in both ability and mixed ability groups. In promoting this approach the AVP is insistent on the fact that her leadership style is never to micro manage because that stifles creativity. She confirmed that the school has a vibrant Learning Support Team made up of the principal, Academic vice Principal, and the rest of the Senior Leadership Team, Including the two social workers and educational psychologist.

In a contradictory statement from the 2nd English Head of faculty, no formal testing is done, no policy referral is available for the students on the English side, only teachers can make accommodations and write a plan for their student. Some teachers attended a course the previous year at Zayed University which supported them in creating training plans for SEN.

(d) Assessment

Similar to School B, the teachers were unsure of what assessment had been done to access the SEN students' needs as none of the teachers had seen their Individual Education Plans. There was virtually no communication going on between the English staff and the Learning Support team in the school. In reference to assessments in the classroom, the common practice observed and shared by the teachers is that they simply exempt the SEN students from several learning outcomes as they cannot meet those expectations. Tests are not modified, and teachers turn to give these students a drawing or copying exercise to do to them quietly. The students are excluded from participating and learning as part of the class, especially those with

behavior disorders. All the students with behavior disorders in the sample are exempted from doing EMSA national tests. They have also missed several continuous assessment tests in the lessons due to persistent absences.

(d) Professional Development.

The Academic vice Principal mentioned that the English medium teachers attended an SEN course at Zayed University which provided them with some tools to write up learning plans for their SEN students. This is clearly limiting although any form of training is encouraged to support teacher development. There is a gap here on consistent valuable meaningful professional development for all teachers to adopt an inclusive approach in their classrooms.

4.4.2   Research Question 2: What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

This section will examine the evidence from School C based on the three concepts of (a) inclusive cultures, (b) inclusive policies and (c) inclusive practices from Booth & Ainscow (2011) Index for Inclusion (Appendix 4) to provide recommendations for more effective inclusive practices.

a) Inclusive Cultures

As stated before, this school is co-educational and the sample of English Medium Teachers (EMTs) came from the both the Boys and Girls Sections. The teachers in the Boys section were less positive about the notion of inclusion as they felt that their main role was survival in the

school due to the large number of boys in their classes with poor behavior who refuse to do any work. They do not feel supported by the leadership and do not know who to address their issues to having had several unsuccessful attempts at that. There was very little collaboration between staff and parents who they claimed they had invited into school over numerous times to discuss the progress and issues of their sons but none has showed up yet. One of the teachers took a firm stance on her views of including students with disability and their non disabled counterparts in the same class. She asserted that:

> as for my Student 4, inclusion for him is no good; disrupting the learning for others but I have belief in inclusion and can work with a modified curriculum. The principal's new policy to us is not to send the students outside to get them to calm down which is not helpful. Teachers are humans as well so we need to cool off and rebuild the relationship.

There is clearly a barrier here between the teacher and the leadership approach in managing bad behavior. The other teachers agreed to the fact that inclusion does promote the self esteem of children with special needs and having both types of students in the same class benefits everyone because '*we are teaching children what society is like and we teach empathy'.* It is more about teachers feeling sorry for the students so they do not have a high expectation of them and the school does not encourage students and adults to feel good about themselves. Inclusion is all about increasing participation for all where staff and parents collaborate, children help each other as staff cooperates amongst themselves to deliver the curriculum and none of this was found in School C. Access to the principal was difficult as she was always busy or having meetings in her office which linked to what the teachers said at interviews that it was impossible for them to meet with the principal to discuss any issues.

However, none of the teachers knew about ADEC's four staged approach to intervention. In Grade 5 the teachers had been told that the pods outside the classrooms will be used as pull

out areas for weaker students to work with the teaching assistants (TAs). Unfortunately,

teachers later realized that the teaching assistants had been told that their job is not to work

with the students, a fact which can be cross referenced to School B where teachers mentioned

the same thing. Given the above situation described in the school, teachers were unsure of the

benefits of special educational needs students in mainstream classrooms. One teacher stated:

> Not sure if it advances my student because she can't retain any information.
> I have to think she benefits more from pull-outs….hard to know if it's a language barrier or
> something more. She's very, very weak in Math.

To further expand on the above notion, another teacher stated that including students who have

a disability with the non disabled students is beneficial and good only where the disability is of a

physical and not mental nature. She added, '*yes socially, they learn compassion, support each

other, stops them laughing at each other'*. Teachers believed that when students are in a pull

out class in a small group they gain more confidence so their self esteem is up. The Head of

Faculty also clarified that, although they did not fully know the ADEC four stages of intervention

and their knowledge on it is patchy, they believed that all four stages, after the researcher

clarified these, are done in English lessons because the SEN teacher says ADEC informed her

to service only Arabic classes. But she reassured her teachers that discussions are now

ongoing to correct the wrong views held by the SEN teacher. The SEN teacher has now been

informed that she has to provide her service to all the students and not expect English staff to

write their own version of intervention plans as has been the case.

Similarly, for an inclusive culture to thrive, parental contact to teachers needs to improve

through the social worker. There is no regular schedule for parent meetings as far as teachers

know. The school sends home parental surveys so parents do come in to talk to the principal

and social worker but this information is not trickled down to the teachers. The school even has

a suggestion box for parents which on the outside are good practice but no evidence was seen

that it is being applied. Teachers said it is important for them to understand what is going on so

communication needed to improve between senior management, the learning support team and

the English teachers who feel sidelined.

b) Inclusive Policies

Evidence from school visits reveals that the school is still at the beginning stages of

implementing an inclusive approach as staff who have been there for up to a period of three

years still have not settled in and do not know where to go if they need help. The building is safe

and has accommodations for students, for example there are ramps everywhere for the student

using a wheel chair and lifts that take her up to the classroom or to the library or science

laboratory. None of the teachers mentioned that they had received professional development to

support them develop inclusive practices. Although mandatory professional development is

required by ADEC, this does not seem to have had any impact. The Academic vice Principal

said more professional development is needed to Arabic teachers in order that they understand

better what ADEC inclusion is all about. It will be good to have a visit from institutions like the

Zayed Centre in Abu Dhabi to come in and explain some of the different needs. The behavior

policy is not being implemented where there is such a large number of challenging behaviors

particularly in the boys section. There is no link of positive behavior management to learning

and students understanding of the curriculum. Poor attendance is a big issue in the school and

this is evidence that the SEN students are lacking appropriate supports which is directly linked

to poor attendance. Teachers do not seem to be aware and skilled in the processes and strategies of how to manage good attendance and good behavior management.

In spite of repeated appointments adjusting the time to suit the social worker, I was unable to get her to do the interview. Teachers were totally unaware of any processes to make the school inclusive and one teacher stated that:

> I have been here for 3 years and still don't know how to and who to request help from. If I could manage the behavior I could get some learning done. I am just trying to develop them into responsible young men to think and work towards the outcomes, then that will be good. There is no collaboration with other teachers whether AMTs or EMTs as well. At times, we EMTs discuss a bit but we don't sit and plan together.

The above statement is evidence of the fact that the teachers do not practice collaborative partnerships which is valuable in an inclusive setting.

c) Inclusive Practices

Due to the fact that there is not a whole school functioning learning support team especially within the English Team, no intervention plans were in place as this responsibility has been placed on the shoulders of teachers who are not equipped in teaching SEN students. Learning activities have been planned without all the students in mind. The Academic vice Principal (AVP) stated that a bilingual SEN teacher is highly needed in the school. Several teachers in the Boys Section stated that poor behavior is a big issue which prevents them from doing a variety of activities using different learning stations as they had to keep a tight grip on the boys or else chaos ensues. Hence according to the Index for Inclusion, children are not encouraged to be confident critical thinkers.

None of the teachers in the sample is aware of the 'School for All Initiative' nor have they seen the IEP of students they teach due to the fact that there is no service support in English. Due to the lack of support for teachers, the Grade 3 teacher revealed that with the SEN boy in her class who has learning difficulties, she tends to do more jolly phonics with him and ABC sounds using lots of visual input as he has the lowest level in the class. In Math lesson with Student 4, he is not a very weak student and is on the same level as most of the other students however his poor behavior gets in the way and he refuses to do any work or be part of a team.

Another example of where good practices can be encouraged and developed if teachers got the support of a teaching assistant in the classroom was observed in a Student 4 in a science and on another visit, a Math lesson. In science the lesson was an interactive one with Student 4 sitting at the front of the room, most likely the teacher positioning there to be able to manage his behavior. He sat with the rest of the group but was not writing at all. The teacher encouraged him to start writing and told him that they will use the sheet to study for a test. He was quiet and stayed on task for a short while, then gave up and went under the table pinching the other boys.

Furthermore, in the Math lesson the teacher had the resources prepared beforehand. She used class management strategies like 'Hands Up' and 'Hand on Head' to get all the class to focus on her. She modeled the activity from the front with students on the carpet sitting in a semi circular fashion. When she finished explaining the task, she got the able students to explain the task again to those who may not have understood it in Arabic. By this point, Student 4 was up and roaming round the room and was totally disengaged. Students went back to their table groups and started the cut-fold-glue activity. Shortly before the bell went to signal the end of the lesson, Student 4 picked up his scissors and attempted to do the task then the bell went and he picked

up his bag and ran out of the room. The researcher noted that Student 4 like in most of the other classes, without the presence of a teaching assistant it was impossible for the teacher to ensure that all the students are participating and learning is happening. He was not actively involved in the learning nor encouraged to participate which is an area of development that the school needs to look at. Modifications need to be made to support the student make some progress and deal with his poor behavior.

Similarly, the practices observed in the Girls Section require a more inclusive approach to be developed. In Grade 2 English lessons, the peers were quick to do the tasks for the weaker student and write in their books for them. Students struggled with the Skills tests on pronouns, however, when the teacher used a short video clip, Student 3 was able to engage. The teacher stated that one of the SEN students had calmed down a great deal so her peers could now approach her and give her help as she no longer hits out at them or scribble over their work. Another example was with Student 5 who was a wheelchair user. She had missed a lot of school time because she went abroad to Germany with a sick family member so missed all of term two. Consequently, her folder had very little work although she is able to form many letters accurately. However in Math she is unable to identify the relationship between minutes and hours due to her very weak Math skills which was similarly observed across the three schools as seen from varied student samples (Appendix 25) obtained. She was given the same worksheet as the rest of the students who had the missed the unit so found it very hard and there was no support for her in the lesson. She does not communicate with anyone and for the whole lesson, all she did was copy off what had been written on the whiteboard which were answers provided by other students. It was difficult to see how this student was learning from

the teacher or from her peers. Resources are limited, support is absent and inclusive practices were not evident.

In a nutshell, the absence of a proper buddy system among student peers is an area to develop further. Teachers sparingly used peer to peer support and when they did it was leveled. Due to lack of accommodations and modifications with limited resources available to them, some teachers used an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) approach that they knew from their past experience.

In summary, the analysis of the three case study schools depicted several similarities and differences in their understanding and implementation of the ADEC special educational needs policy. The findings utilized the research instruments of document analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations to collect the evidences to answers RQ1 and RQ2. The findings demonstrate that although ADEC has put in place a robust SEN policy to facilitate the implementation of inclusive practices across its schools and meet global standards, schools are at different stages of its implementation, hence the outcomes are all different.

The conclusion that can be drawn from these findings means that teachers are being asked to teach their students using methods and approaches that is quite different from the way they were taught or from their previous practices. In periods of change such as the ongoing educational reform currently taking place in the UAE, there is a high possibility of a decrease in confidence known as the "implementation dip" because teachers are attempting to adjust to new ways of teaching and learning (Fullan, 2001, p. 40). Teachers will require extra support and additional subject specific knowledge and skills to keep their levels of self-efficacy for teaching in their subject area high. New expectations are being placed on them where they have to show evidence of meeting these expectations in their practice in the classrooms. The interviews and

observations as research methods, largely provided a tool to collect and analyze these realities as truthful accounts found on the ground.

Chapter five will therefore discuss these findings and identify the emerging themes as they pertain to The Index for Inclusion by Booth and Ainscow (2011) whilst concluding the study with implications, recommendations and opportunities for future research to extend the knowledge base with new, significant studies on special needs inclusion policies and practices in the UAE.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

Chapter five will now present a cross analysis and synchronization of the results obtained from findings within each school context, in the belief that the two research questions are answered in a clear and succinct way. The organization of this chapter will be in two parts. The first part will discuss the issues identified from the findings of the three sets of schools' data in relation to the four indicators of curriculum, accessibility, assessment and professional development that answers Research Question 1. The three research instruments were employed to gather and triangulate the data for the four indicators. Part two will collate the emerging themes from the three school sets of data that answers Research Question 2 in relation to the three dimensions in The Index for Inclusion. Similarly, as was the case in part one, the three research methods were also utilized to gather and triangulate the data in order to answer Research Question 2. The rest of the chapter will then provide a reflection on the Index for Inclusion as a tool for developing learning and participation in schools within a UAE context. This tool provides a thorough understanding of the processes developing in the school. A concluding section followed by recommendations will assist policy makers in ADEC to review the policy and address any shortfalls and barriers to increasing participation and the effective learning or impact to learning for students with disabilities so as to influence any future decisions about their educational rights. The study will be completed with personal gains achieved for the researcher and an open invitation for further research and final thoughts.

This research is a qualitative case study investigating the implementation of ADEC's SEN Policy (Appendix 1) and the educational provisions it provides in three government primary schools across Abu Dhabi Emirate. The four areas to evaluate policy understanding and impact were: curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service teacher professional development, which will give some weight to the study. The investigation will target the schools' culture with reference to its inclusive policies and practices. The Index for inclusion (Appendix 4) developed by Booth and Ainscow (2011) with its set of indicators and three dimensions that ensure a flexible approach will be employed as a tool to measure how inclusive the three primary schools in the sample are.

This research aims to explore the impact of policy implementation in its fifth year of existence through a collective case study investigation that will evaluate how school staff apply their comprehension of the idea of inclusive practices in their school setting. The research instruments to collect the data for triangulation (Stake 1995; Denzin 1989) will employ qualitative methods of observations, semi structured interviews as well as analysis of ADEC policy and school documentation to gather rich information using multiple sources. Purposive sampling will inform school selection and the researcher will identify schools that best represent the inclusive practices being researched. Participation was voluntary with consent forms signed and the participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study when they so wished without any consequences. This withdrawal however did not have a negative impact on the study because the researcher had secured a bigger number of participants over the minimum agreed to cushion over any such occurrences. This withdrawal happened in School C where two teachers withdrew halfway towards the data collection phase. Ethical considerations

will be adhered to throughout the study guided by the British University in Dubai (BUID) ethical code of conduct. The main question guiding this qualitative study is:

To what extent is ADEC's SEN policy implemented in practice and what can be done to improve its implementation to support inclusive education in government primary schools in Abu Dhabi? It became necessary during the data collection phase to break down the main research guiding question into two sub research questions as follows;

1) How do teachers and administrative staff understand and describe their practice of inclusion?

2) What recommendations can be made to improve inclusive practices?

For clarity in the data collection and analysis procedures, it became imperative to use the four indicators of curriculum, accessibility, assessment and in-service professional development to answer, mapping these over to the research instrument of interview questions, in order to provide answers for Research Question 1. Similarly in order to provide answers for Research Question 2, the lesson observation notes and interview questions were also mapped to the three dimensions of The Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow 2011). A pilot study was carried out to fine tune the data collection instruments. This pilot study was meant to increase the integrity of the research instruments. Adjustments were made to enhance clarity some questions following feedback from participants. Data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously.

Data analysis followed a robust process of categorizing data collected into digitized folders and continuously updated. All the data were analyzed on the same day that it was collected in order to keep the story as true as possible. At the end of the data collection, it was thoroughly checked through to ensure that there were no omissions or irregularities. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, I used a process of member checking. Creswell (2012) advocates that this process will allow the participants to check the accuracy of my notes gathered from the interviews. Giving the notes and transcripts, and my observation jottings also gives the participation the opportunity to confirm or deny my understanding and interpretation of their narratives as accurate and valid. Each set of data was analyzed within the context of that school and how each institution is addressing the notion of inclusion in relation to the four areas earlier described and mapped over to the three dimensions of The Index for Inclusion.

5.2 ADEC Special Needs Policy

The research instrument used to analyze ADEC SEN policy was document analysis. Results from the study reveal that ADEC possesses a robust and balanced special educational needs policy manual that is guided by UAE Federal Law 14/2009, an amendment of the original UAE Federal Law 29, Article 12 (2006). The policy ensures that students with Special Educational Needs, including those who are gifted or talented, are able to reach their full potential within a supportive educational environment that prepares them well for adult life. It covers ten categories of disabilities. Also, the policy identifies the role of Abu Dhabi Educational Council in monitoring its use as well as the responsibilities of all stakeholders including the regional offices, school, students and parents. Furthermore, the policy is well written with a four staged

sequential approach that responds to the specific requirements of individual students. This provides very clear procedures for each schools' Learning Support Team (LST) to follow the procedures for implementation at the different stages. It encourages the active involvement of parents especially where individual education plans (IEP) have to be written for their child. The IEP must be based on the students strengths to allow them be included in every aspect of school life. The policy supports this by providing sample IEP templates to help the LST.

Due to the fact that students with disability require easy access to the curriculum and to the school learning environment, the policy rightly stipulates that accommodations and modifications need to be in place at every school. The SEN inclusion policy also emphasizes the enrolment of all children in their locality into mainstream schools and no barriers or refusals to admit the child due to their disability, except when their needs cannot be catered for and their safety is in jeopardy, as reiterated by ADEC.s Division Manager for Special Needs. The policy also caters for the gifted and talented students who need special advanced programs supported with Advanced Learning Plan templates to assist schools. Finally registration and admission procedures and student demographic data and documentation required are also included in the policy to avoid misinterpretation.

All in all, this policy meets international benchmarks. The downfall comes in where schools are not aware of the policy and teachers work in the blind. Evidence of a lack of teachers' knowledge on the availability of an SEN policy was collected using the research instruments of document analysis, as well as notes taken during the interviews. Consequently, there is a need for a clear and consistent means of communication between headquarters and the schools when it comes to policy implementation. Also, I was able to observe that, more training on the

policy will benefit not only the LST Team and special needs teachers, but the whole teaching staff as well for them to begin to operate within an inclusive setting. Additionally, using the research tool of document analysis, a review of all ADEC policies was conducted by an international review team in December 2015. The review team from abroad worked towards the purpose of getting feedback from the school leadership on policy structure and layout, implementation issues, policy gaps, policy communication in schools, policy communication from ADEQ HQ. The review team also stated that all feedback will be taken into consideration in the review process. Implementation issues will be communicated to relevant divisions and addressed during the Policy Refresh meetings. Among the areas identified as a shortfall is the shortage in qualified SEN school-based staff which aligned with the findings from this research. The report also identified the following anomalies; (Source: Policy Team School Visits November –December 2015, Abu Dhabi Education Council):

- SEN admission criteria are unclear and diagnostic process is weak.

- Lack of English, Math and Science curriculum for SEN students –SEN teachers are AMTs

- Provide more training for SEN teachers.

- Identification of SEN students is lacking.

- Education Psychologist is needed, as well as SEN Cluster Managers and Education Advisors. (Personnel Services)

- Strategy for Parents awareness and support.

- No resources and time to plan extra curricula activities for SEN students.

In Cycle 1 specifically, the suggestion from the review team was to develop cycle-specific behavior guidelines appropriate for that age group and have clear processes to manage SEN students' behavior. The review team report identified several points that had been expressed by school staff during the data collection period.

5.3   Discussion Points from Research Question 1, using the four indicators

The issues related to Research Question 1 on how the teachers and administrators understand and describe their practice of inclusion from the findings provides some insights into their views through a mirror on the four indicators of curriculum, accessibility, assessment and professional development. All the three research instruments were used to gather the relevant data on the four indicators.

5.3.1   Curriculum

The researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the curriculum using the three research instruments of analyzing curriculum documents, sharing anecdotal discussions on the curriculum with staff during the interviews, and finally recording observations during lessons as the curriculum was being taught. The Abu Dhabi School Model (ADSM) curriculum is a heavily resourced, robust, balanced and rich curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all students. It allows for lifelong learning and enables students to be able to compete at an international level. All public schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi are required to use this

curriculum as described in chapter four as per ADEC rules and regulations. English, Math and Science are taught through the medium of English with the majority of teachers coming mostly from western countries like UK, United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The rest of the subjects in the curriculum are taught through the medium of Arabic.

The curriculum is a set of learning activities experienced by students through a set of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes should guide the teaching and learning experiences with lots of active learning going on using a multiple of strategies and differentiated resources to meet the various learning styles and needs of students. Teachers are meant to keep a record of student performance against the learning outcomes. All the three schools in the sample had a learning environment rich setting with lots of bilingual displays along the corridors. The physical appearance of the walls in all the three schools is content rich, lined with student work samples celebrating their successes and other relevant materials. ADSM puts a lot of emphasis on collaborative learning using critical thinking skills, higher order skills with high expectations demanded of all students. However, this internationally recognized best practice approach as stipulated in ADSM was not consistently meeting that high level of application across the sample schools visited. Occasionally, where the SEN students got engaged and participated in the lesson, this was acknowledged with words of praise and clapping from both the teacher and the students. In respect to the lessons observed, teachers were seen to use a variety of teaching strategies including group activities, audio and video clips for visual input to benefit the auditory and visual learners, using both the reading and science corners at the back of the classrooms, all of which had a mini class library, as well as worksheets. The research supports this teaching approach claiming that both oral, visual and kinesthetic stimuli is productive to the learning of students (Carrington & Robinson 2004; Meijer 2003).

One Grade 5 teacher in School A used the learning walls which had high frequency words in a good way when I observed her teaching. Her lessons were interactive, encouraging her students to refer to the Word Wall in both English and Science lessons as an extra resource which students responded very well to. This action kept the majority of students on task. In the lessons where students used tactile resources and videos, the SEN students were engaged for a period of time. Another example of this was seen in a Grade 3 class in School B where the quiet SEN student gave an accurate answer on identifying a noun and a pronoun, showing up a word card for both to the teacher who was amazed and turned to me at the back of the room to say that she did not expect the student to produce such sentences in English as she rarely spoke up. It was very rewarding to see the student smile in contentment and she got a star placed on her table group as reward. The downside to the lesson, like most of the other lessons I observed was that, the teachers did not have differentiated worksheets for the SEN students. When worksheets were handed out, they were all the same and weaker students found it very difficult so switched off. It should be noted however that, the majority of teachers used a variety of activities in the lessons but there was no evidence of a modified plan for the students in the sample who were largely ignored. I was able to collect the primary data described above predominantly, through using the research instrument of observations.

In the cases when a teacher assistant was present, they tended to do all the work for the student, hence preventing them from becoming independent learners. The notion of gradual release which is central to the ADSM encourages the adult to take a step back and allow the student time to begin to take ownership of their own learning. This was completely absent. Training is a necessity here. Also in the English classes across the three schools, no support was given in the form of teaching assistants and the teachers did not know the students'

diagnosis or how to assist them. Some teachers were not even aware that the SEN students had IEPs until I informed them that they did. Hence with these students, they were mainly working in the blind or using what prior knowledge they had of ESOL students abroad to help them.

The curriculum is meant to be accessible and to remove any barriers to access. The teachers need to be supported by the LST in modifying the curriculum materials in order for the SEN students to engage with the learning. The ADEC Head of Special Needs Division confirmed that the Learning Student Team should be the ones to do the modification in partnership with the mainstream teacher. It was observed across all the three schools that teachers need support with differentiated instruction and to create materials that included a variety of visual input, audio and kinesthetic aids especially in English, Math and Science which is taught in a second language. I observed that the teachers in School B were much better at utilizing a variety of teaching strategies within the English Department. The ADSM does not have a separate special curriculum for SEN students which align with the current trend in inclusion debates worldwide not to have a separate agenda for special education from mainstream and inclusive education. ADSM uses the same textbooks for all students. ADEC therefore, rightly is on the right track, to encourage teachers to use their knowledge and skills, supported by the LST and professional development input, to modify the curriculum for the students with disabilities or learning difficulties. This is where there is a gap as the modification is not taking place as well as relevant professional development sessions that are more practical and less theoretical.

Some schools deal with this hurdle to modify the curriculum by crossing out some of the learning outcomes for some students who are not yet at that level. They then use the short and

long term targets in the IEPs to judge against the students' progress. ADEC has facilitated this by providing IEP pre-filled templates for LSTs to complete with the relevant information pertaining to each student, including recommendations from the educational psychologists and any assistive device needed. Parents are also encouraged to get involved and take an active role in the IEP process as well as sign off on the forms when completed. However of the fifteen students in the sample, seven had an IEP and only four of these were signed by parents which reiterated the staff observations that some parents were not giving their support to the school in any way. It was a concern that several teachers voiced their unease that they did not know that their students had an IEP as they had never seen one before. This moan from some teachers in School A however contradicted what the Head of the Learning Support Team Welfare Team said that some mainstream teachers were still resistant to having students with disabilities in their classrooms and had declined the invitation to attend some of the LST meetings where their students' IEPs were being discussed. The excuse they gave was that they did not feel comfortable to top make any suggestions as they lacked the skills and knowledge to help the students with disabilities. They felt that this was solely the role of the SEN teachers and LST.

During the interviewing phase, some of the teachers were unsure whether their actions to exempt the SEN students from some learning outcomes was the right thing to do or not as at times they felt it was like a hit and miss which is risky. Research done in the UAE by Arif & Gaad (2008), Gaad (2011) and Bradshaw et al (2004) confirms the above. Teachers, during the interviews, requested that ADEC should provide them with a bank of differentiated resources and ideas that align to the curriculum so that when the SEN teacher is unavailable or where the challenge is that there is a language barrier; teachers can work independently or collaboratively with other English medium teachers. Professional development on practical examples for

curriculum topics and differentiated worksheet samples was also repeatedly requested and expressed. Teachers' views on differentiation were mostly based on giving SEN students' shorter, brief tasks or simple exercise like coloring, paper cutting or watching videos on their iPads to keep them busy which is clearly not what differentiation is about. It shouldn't be about doing shorter basic exercises, rather it's for tasks to be modified to match the students' ability and learning style as shown in their IEP (Gibson 2013; Stanford & Reeves 2009). Finally, a lot of bespoke training needs to take place. In conclusion, using the three research instruments in this study, the points described above provided answers as to how teachers and administrative staff described and implemented inclusive practices for indicator one, the curriculum.

5.3.2   Accessibility

The second indicator is accessibility. Accessibility in inclusion refers to withdrawing physical barriers in the building environment, in communication and in equipment, all being barriers which prevent access. There are also barriers caused by people's attitudes, barriers in the organization of the curriculum, exam testing and other school processes such as enrolment and the effective functioning of the learning support team if available.

With reference to ADEC SEN inclusion policy, this begins with an open enrolment whereby there is no set criterion of which students can or cannot attend their schools. The determinant is on how severe is the students need and whether the school can cope so that the student can be safe and safely catered. This is a grey area that needs more clarity for practitioners. In order to keep in line with the 'School for All Initiative' recommendations that students be placed in the least restrictive environment (Federal Law 29/2006; MOE 2010 p. 15) the students in this study had a wide variety of disability ranging from autism, emotional disorder, behavioral disorder,

physical disability, dyslexia and visual impairment. All the students were enrolled in age appropriate classes except Student 1 in Project School A who had been withdrawn from a Grade 3 class to a Grade two class as he was not able to cope at all in Grade 3 and the principal stated that ADEC gave permission for him to have the majority of his lessons in Grade two and attend art and music lessons in Grade 3 as a unique case. The policy process of students being the same class as peers of the same age was largely adhered to and the students with IEPs were supported by the LST and SEN teacher across all three schools. However, in School C, there was no support for these SEN students in English, Math and Science lessons. The reason given was that the SEN teacher did not speak any English. Hence, not being fluent in English, the SEN teacher preferred working with the Arabic staff to the detriment of the notion of a bilingual education in the school. Across the three schools, the LST informed me that 70% of class teaching time for the SEN student was done in the resource room in a small group or one to one basis by the SEN teacher to give them added support in Arabic reading and writing.

These students were also taken out of the English lessons to get extra. I observed that in School C, the SEN students were not withdrawn from main English lessons in a consistent way as in Arabic lessons. The withdrawal was very much reduced to once or twice a week as compared to five to six times a week in Arabic lessons. This led to the students in School C being completely unable to access the curriculum and coupled with no in class support, they spent a lot of the time messing about looking bored or lying down at their desks. The mainstream teacher had twenty five other students in the classroom to cater for so she was overwhelmed and with no teaching assistant available to support the SEN students, she completely disengaged with them. She later explained to me after the lesson that the pressure

to complete all the learning outcomes was an added factor to keep going as fast as she could

than stop to support a very weak student who would need all her attention. Batten (2005) stated

that not giving mainstream teachers added support places enormous and unfair pressure on

them to meet the needs of all students in an inclusive setting. Data from the findings indicate

that there is a compelling need for more suitable, bespoke focused training. In planning for

professional development, a key consideration is on workload, reliable and consistent support

needed by teachers that will enable them meet the needs for collaborative planning and delivery

in inclusive classrooms (Smith & Smith 2000).

Maijer (2003) states that where mainstream teachers are not keen to work with students with

disabilities, they pass on the blame onto the SEN teacher. This was evident in Schools B and C

where the teachers repeatedly said that it was not their responsibility to teach these students as

they did not possess the knowledge and skills to do it. Hence it was a lot easier to use the

weaknesses of poor communication and lack of support in the system between ADEC, the

social workers and the teachers. The teachers went on to inform me that they had been

informed by their leadership that the teaching assistant can no longer come into their classes as

a new directive from ADEC as they were not allowed to work in class with students anymore.

In School A, due to its small student population, a system of co-teaching was in operation there

daily so it was easier for the SEN teachers and other mainstream teachers who were not

timetabled for their own individual lesson to pull out the SEN students from their main lesson

and give them added input in the resource room. However, I noticed that a lot of time was

wasted between the two teachers trying to agree on which student should be withdrawn or not.

There didn't seem to be a clear consistent process for the withdrawal. This was also impacted

by the fact that most often, the Arabic co-teacher was absent from school so the plan of work suffered. All the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the behavior policy not being adhered to especially with the male students who were not disciplined properly. Some of them had repeatedly requested to meet with parents and are still waiting for this meeting to take place so they can work together with the parent to support their child with positive behavior management strategies. Parents who came into school spoke with the social worker and SEN teacher however, teachers felt sidelined not being invited to these meetings. Bad behavior predominantly among the male students was the greatest area of concern among the students in the sample. This avoidance by parents may be due to language barriers or having a large family with younger children so limited time to come to the school.

The general consensus was for a meeting calendar to be shared with all teachers of students who had behavior issues so that they can be part of the discussion on positive behavior management strategies. Failing this, teachers preferred that these SEN students did not attend their classes as they are a cause for disruption and prevented the learning of other students. Inclusive studies reveal that students with behavioral disorders when supported with effective strategies can thrive in an inclusive environment (Meijer 2003). Strategies such as mixed ability groups working on a collaborative hands-on task that gives each student a role and responsible on problem solving tasks supports such students stay focused on tasks.

Additional resourcing is another aspect of accessibility that needs improving. The visually impaired student did not have a Braille teacher in School A although the school had made a request to ADEC four months prior and are still waiting for a response. Resources in audio format, computers with text-to-speech systems for visual impairment and dyslexic conditions as

mention in the policy were not seen; nor accessible recreational facilities that will be of benefit to this student. Student 5 from School A is a bright boy who has shown evidence that he can make good progress if given the right tools. In all the three schools, there was evidence of lighted strips on all floors for high contrast warning to prevent tripping by any student especial students with low vision.

Further challenges with accessibility had to do with referrals and the appropriate specialist diagnosis following assessments. In School A for example, the Head of SEN challenged the report of one of the students who she said from working with him, was extremely weak, showed signs of having dyslexia and a speech impediment. However, after he was assessed by the educational psychologist the report said he had only mild learning difficulties which staff did not agree with as he could barely recognize the letters of the alphabet in both English and Arabic in Grade 3.This was made more complicated by the father who refused to accept that his son had any issues but argued that was just a naughty nine year old.

Furthermore, a school and community awareness program to support accessibility is necessary in all the three schools to raise awareness of inclusive issues (Gaad 2004). This program will provide the knowledge around the needs and experiences of people with disability and break down barriers. This can be done through in-service training for school staff and other meetings with parents and the community on inclusive strategies available to prep staff for best practice in teaching and learning, thereby improving integration as students learn together. This awareness program is particularly crucial in the UAE as in other Gulf States where Al Thani (2009) in her study on inclusive education in the Gulf Region (Gaad & Al Thani 2009, p. 20) asserts that:

Persons with disabilities are a source of shame, a financial burden, even seen as a curse on their families; the words used to describe or denote disability are derogatory and pejorative; people are often identified by their disability, or their disability replaces their given name. In colloquial languages the words that denote different types of disabilities have become common swear words. Such attitudes are no longer as prevalent as they used to be a decade or so ago, but they do still exist and constitute the basis of an awareness raising agenda for the Arab region (Al Thani, 2009, p 20).

Parents in School A were generally present and supportive working with the school. However in Schools B and C teachers had no contact with parents. It should be noted that all the parents received invitations to take part in the study however they declined although they all signed the consent forms allowing me to work with their child. Language barrier was a possible reason for their refusal as well as parental load with limited time to attend school. The literature supports this assertion on parental involvement (Banker 2012; Hornby & Witte 2010). Additionally, noteworthy is the lack of educational psychologists as a big issue across all the schools where they can attend school only one day in a month which is hardly enough time to support the education of SEN students. Staff shortages are high for qualified professionals in educational psychology, specialists for Down's syndrome and different types of intellectual and mental disabilities. It is unclear whether the universities in the UAE are training students for these much needed roles across their schools in supporting "The Schools of All' agenda. For the students with disabilities to thrive in the schools, it is imperative that all the relevant support services be put in place in order to develop inclusive practices (Hewitt 1999).

Lastly, the clash of interest existing between the Ministry of Social Affairs and ADEC on the identification of SEN students and the services to provide to meet their immediate needs requires a more collaborative approach between the Disability Centers controlled by the Ministry who pursue a more social agenda than an academic one. This will benefit the students and their families.

All the classrooms were well equipped with modern facilities to support their learning. For example students had individual desks where they can independently work at as well as group the tables with four desks to work collaboratively. All the teachers in the study made use of flexible seating arrangements and provided accommodations to promote student engagement by sitting the SEN students in the front rows in both ability and mixed ability tables so as to be able to easily support them on a one to one basis as well as encourage peer support. Collaborative learning occurred when this took place as the stronger students usually helped the SEN students when they got stuck and the teacher was attending to other students. However, the resources and manipulatives to support the SEN students were not used, as I was able to see boxes of tactile materials stacked on shelves alongside the walls, so students could not access learning. Finally a recommendation is for the schools to have accessibility plans outlining how they have improved the physical environment, increased access to the curriculum, made provision to improve the communication links with all stakeholders.

5.3.3   Assessment

Assessment as a core indicator to measure inclusive settings in this study is twofold. Firstly, the assessment I have looked at the assessment done as part of an intervention plan by the Learning Support Team which is headed by the principal in all ADEC schools with member being the social worker, SEN teacher, another leadership team member, educational psychologist, speech therapist and a mainstream teacher if the principal decided to appoint one. School A, as an ADEC project school, had a robust Learning Support and Welfare team as earlier stated. This team took responsibility over all the SEN students, accessing their needs and prepared the IEP following an assessment of each case. The IEPs had goals and targets to

assist the student make progress in lessons as they access the curriculum with a high level of teacher input and support. Some of the students across the three schools showed signs of making progress on their IEPs and in such cases new targets were set. However this was not an established pattern seen in Schools B and C as the system to monitor this was not fully functioning. Secondly assessment is viewed in the context of outcome based assessment tests. The ADSM curriculum incorporates authentic formative and summative assessments and all teachers are expected to keep a record of student performance against the learning outcomes. In cycle one which is the target level in this study, both types of assessments take place and from Grade 3 - 12, students sit the External Measure of Student Achievement (EMSA) in the core subjects in Arabic, English, Math and Science and started since 2008.

These are standardized national summative tests that measure student performance. These tests are made up of multiple choice questions in reading and open ended questions in writing in all the above subjects. The Math and science papers are in both English and Arabic and students are given the choice to choose the language they feel most comfortable to sit the test in. ADEC states that 'Student performance is measured using a numerical Standardized Score Scale (in the range 360 – 620) as well as Bands 1 to 5 (or A to E). These scores/bands are derived from the standardized scores which are criterion-referenced by performance against published learning outcomes' (ADEC portal). I observed over several visits in the three schools that teachers spent every week going over the past EMSA papers to get students familiar with the exam questions in doing the test practice. Nonetheless, I was able to observe that a lot of the test questions required students to memorize facts, especially in science. This mode of assessment should be highly discouraged because disadvantaged students with intellectual difficulties and does not align with best practice learning and assessment which the ADSM expounds.

However, all the past papers I saw were the standard test papers and none of them were modified for the SEN students. No wonder none of them could really engage in the lessons which were dedicated to exam revision. The Head of SEN in School A however informed me that Student five had a modified paper in large print that ADEC sends although I did not see a sample of this. Some of the SEN students were exempted from the practice tests and the social workers in School B confirmed that after their analysis of the students' abilities, they felt it was an appropriate decision to exempt them and inform ADEC accordingly. Also in order to give the students a fair chance, I observed that in A School C, the SEN teacher took one of the students to complete his test in the resource room and accommodations' for longer test time was applied to her. This student was also given extended time to complete all her homework.

In line with current research the goal of assessment in an inclusive setting is to support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all students who are vulnerable to exclusion. It should inform teaching and learning and support teachers in their work. Also the assessment methods should complement and inform each other and celebrate diversity by identifying and valuing all students' progress and achievement. Lastly, assessment should act as a source of motivation to students and encourage their future learning. Hence from the literature above, the three schools in the study still have a long way to go to meet the demands of an inclusive assessment.

5.3.4   Professional Development

Professional development is central to the core of the ADEC SEN policy. The policy states that:

> individuals working with people with special needs should engage in ongoing professional
> development activities which include completing training programs, attending workshops and

conferences. Individuals working with people with special needs should engage in ongoing professional development activities which include completing training programs, attending workshops and conferences. Training must be continuous and in accordance with the best international practices in the field of special education services for all staff working with the students with special needs. (Policy No 6410)

However, professional development as a key asset to promote an inclusive setting met with a lot of frustrations from all the staff across the three schools, from leadership through to the teachers. The general consensus was that targeted professional development with practical outcomes was highly desirable to support inclusion. The literature on inclusion continuously cites professional development as playing a pivotal role for teachers in removing barriers so as to promote full participation for all students (Ainscow 1994; Ainscow 2001; Engelbrecht et al 2016; Forlin & Chambers 2011; Mitchell 2008; Tengel 2005)

Staff across the three schools confirmed that professional training after school for ninety minutes per session was taking place weekly as part of ADEC mandatory professional development training plan led by the Professional Development Division in School Operations. This professional development program is called The Tamkeen Program. All school staff must complete a mandatory minimum thirty hours a year of professional development. This professional development workshop was facilitated by Providers who were outsourced from five different companies who partnered with ADEC to work across all their schools. There were three levels of training initiated by ADEC – namely group training for the senior leadership team, cluster training for a cluster of five-seven schools in close proximity to each other, and facilitated teacher trainings for teachers. Attendance to training was confirmed by teacher signatories that were uploaded to ADEC for monitoring purposes. However, teachers articulated that these trainings, although ongoing for the preceding four years, were mostly theoretical and not very useful for the teachers.

There was a wide range of useful topics covered in the training to reflect every aspect of school life from literacy, differentiation, assessment for learning, behavior management and special educational needs teaching approaches to name a few. The issue with the training was that some of the topics had very limited practical tips that teachers could take into their lessons with them and apply immediately following the session. The training module on special needs was one such example where teachers were unable to convert training ideas to help them deal with the needs of their diverse classrooms, especially teachers who have had no prior background in teaching SEN students. The quality of the SEN materials that were delivered were an issue as stated before in its theoretical nature, mostly devoid of hands-on practical strategies. This conforms the assertions from Alghazo & Gaad (2004), Gaad (2011) and Khan (2007) on recent studies in the UAE that teachers are dissatisfied with the availability of relevant training on strategies to support the inclusion of all students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

The Tamkeen professional development program carried out a series of trainings in the schools on positive behavior management when the Behavior policy was recently updated but teachers are still not using the ideas learnt during the training sessions. Some said that it offered nothing new to improve the knowledge and skills to effectively support students with varying types of disabilities.

Teachers were requesting specific training on how to deal with autistic, behavioral and mental disorders that they know very little about. They voiced their preference for training that is contextualized to show best practices within the UAE context than the training modules showing them excerpts of an excellent class from the United States or UK which does not reflect their current classrooms. This emphasizes what the research in the field says that effective

meaningful professional development that shares hands-on strategies with teachers should be as close as possible to reflect their unique context. Such trainings or course is the most effective to foster inclusion practices (Booth & Ainscow 2011; Forlin 2001; Howell & Gengel 2005).

ADEC responded to some of the school concerns in professional development by encouraging principals to be flexible with the delivery at a convenient time that best suits the school day without encroaching on lesson time. Cycle Onene schools can only conduct these training sessions at the end of the school day which is a similar phenomenon in other countries, commonly known as twilight training hours. ADEC has also instituted a professional development Week to support the development of inclusive teaching so the issue of the content of delivery seems to be the sticking point still in the schools in the sample. A positive report from the Academic vice Principal in School C reported that the SEN teacher and social worker went to a training course offered by the Zayed Organization was rewarding to them as they received useful in understanding how to develop and write IEPs effectively. No one in the sample has received training on inclusive education.

Furthermore, a recommendation from the findings is that ADEC may need to provide training on the policy itself so that all existing and new staff joining the schools are familiar with the contents of the special needs and inclusion policy, its processes and not just the LST or SEN teachers, some of whom do not know the policy in depth as expected. Overall, without receiving any training, the mainstream teachers felt overwhelmed and ill prepared to create, for example, differentiated worksheets, and fell on blaming others for not working in a collaborative way. Research has shown that mainstream teachers will successfully implement inclusive practices

where there is continuous training available to them to address these needs in a practical way (Beacham & Rouuse 2012). The researchers further went on to say that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion become altered to a positive one when the training issues are addressed. Additionally, they stated that positive attitudes are more likely to be sustained when teachers have the knowledge, skills to persist with inclusive pedagogies.

Another study by Buell et al (1999) established that 78% of mainstream teachers specified that they needed training but never received any training opportunities on inclusive education. They argue that such an opportunity should not be missed because in service professional development training does provide mainstream teachers the unique chance to learn how and why these students should be included in the same classrooms as their peers. Training also affords these mainstream teachers the opportunity to dispel their own negative attitudes and myths about the challenges of inclusion as they ask questions and interact with other colleagues in learning about strategies and techniques that includes all the students including those with disabilities in their classrooms.

In addition, I was involved as a senior professional development training manager on the Tamkeen Professional Development Project, facilitating and monitoring the delivery of ADEC training modules in public schools across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. These modules covered a vast span of topics that teachers need daily at work. Some of the topics covered included literacy, assessment, differentiation, positive behavior management, active teaching strategies, assessment for learning and 21st century skills to name a few. Feedback from staff was mixed and positive responses where staff confirmed the training had made an impact in their lessons where training materials were hands-on activities, with lots of strategies for teachers to apply in

their lessons. Also good practice was for the facilitator to work with teachers on modeling the strategies shared at training sessions inside their lessons. Where teachers provided negative responses in their feedback and in surveys to judge on satisfaction levels, these sessions were more theoretical than practical. These sessions took place weekly usually at the end of the school day in every school attended by teachers, vice principals and principals in accordance with the topic and target group focus. ADEC mandated that each staff must complete thirty hours a professional development per school year. Evidence of learning and transferability of new skills learnt was used by the school evaluation team to evaluate teachers throughout the year to see growth.

The Tamkeen training program, although it addressed other aspects of developing schools into effective learning environments, more still needs to be done in the delivery of inclusive practices and culture for the teachers. All the schools in the study are at the beginning stages of their journey into developing into inclusive schools. Teachers are prepared and ready to welcome professional development sessions that model practical approaches to support students with disabilities in their classrooms.

5.4   Emerging Themes from Research Question 2, using the Index for Inclusion Indicators

Part two will collate the emerging themes from the three schools' sets of data that answers Research Question 2 on how to improve on inclusive practices, in relation to their consistency with the three dimensions in The Index for Inclusion being; inclusive cultures, policies and practices.

5.4.1   Inclusive Cultures

Inclusive cultures concern the value systems and beliefs within a school that produces a secure collaborating and accepting community for all the participants within it. The core element to easily recognize within such a school is its welcoming atmosphere and the presence of inclusive values. These values are seen when people are encouraged to help each other, there is constant collaboration going on from everyone and everybody is treated with respect. Booth & Ainscow (2011) define such cultures those that 'reflect relationships and deeply held values and belief'.

Seven themes emerged across the three schools from the data analysis. These are as follows: 1) Welcoming school environments, (2) Students are valued, (3) Poor communication and Lack of collaboration, (4) Lack of engagement, (5) Low parental input, (6) Lack of SEN knowledge and skills, (7) Mixed beliefs in inclusion.

1) Welcoming School Environments

All the three schools in the study have a welcoming environment right from the front entrance into the large foyers. The reception staff are bilingual speakers and offered a very warm welcome, taking me to the principals (School A & B) and the Vice Principal's office (School C). It should be noted that this is common practice to any visitor who comes to the schools in Abu Dhabi. The entrances looked clear, the school vision all displayed in a prominent position in bilingual for all to read. There were colorful posters and educative slogans and statements all round the walls and encouraging words to students, for example' Learning is for All, we can do it', 'Yes we can'. Students' samples of work and art drawings were also on display. Also the

national identity was clear to see with the image of the founder of the nation who believed in education for all in a   prominent position. Hence this welcoming entry made for a positive feeling in the schools. The hospitality was palpable and as I waited in the reception room to be ushered into the offices of the principal and vice principals, I was offered Arabic coffee or tea and some dates which is a local hospitable gesture towards all visitors. All three schools had the word 'inclusive' in their vision statement so saw themselves as an inclusive environment as well as "School for All' banners.

In spite of this welcoming feel, teachers appeared drained and frustrated particularly in School C and lacking in any form of enthusiasm. Some were actually very cold in their reactions towards me, stating that inclusion can never occur within their school where nothing positive seems to take place. Their attitude was very negative and one teacher became quite offended suddenly and decided to withdraw as a participant. I was later informed by the English Head of Faculty that the teacher who withdrew had a background in special needs education and had introduced some SEN projects in the school, however she got quite frustrated that leadership gave her no support. She was no longer prepared to engage in any discussions around special needs and inclusive practices. She had been one of the teachers who presented their school project on inclusive practices at the SEN workshop day organized by ADEC. In addition, School C did not have any banner display on 'School for All', as seen in Schools A and B. however, the students looked relaxed and happy across the three schools, however, in School A and in the Boys section of School C, the noise levels were very high during lesson changeover or at break times.

Another feature of a welcoming school environment is the relationship between the students, teachers and parents. This relationship was noted as polite and friendly in all the three sample schools. They all had an open door policy and I observed that the principal came out of his office to greet parents and attend to their requests. The principal of School A also chatted with his teachers as they prepared for morning assembly in the inner courtyard, open space. In Schools B and C, I noticed that the principals rarely came out of their offices, which supports the views expressed by the English teachers that they rarely see or talk to their principals, and that they have no relationship with them. This is the reason why they feel so isolated in their classrooms, do not know who to talk to and they believed that their principals do not care about them or their needs.

2) Students are Valued

The second theme that ran across all the three schools emphasized the fact that the children are valued. In all the classroom observations done, students sat in mixed ability groups working with their peers and with the non disabled students participating and contributing to lessons. The teachers rewarded them with claps, reward tickets for good work, although such rewards nd cheers may have been rehearsed due to my presence in the room. Students were also given roles to do in the lesson. Also noticed was the fact that the students generally came to the assistance of the disabled peers when the teacher was occupied with other students. Within the classrooms, there was a lot of students' work on display to celebrate their work although these were not marked by the teachers to show next steps. The participants all agreed that from a compassionate and Islamic perspective, children who are disadvantaged are valued as members of the community purely from human and religious beliefs. However, there were

several pockets of instances of isolation were students were either given iPads to occupy themselves while the rest of the class worked with the teacher on their learning outcomes.

On a few occasions there was a dedicated table for the SEN students and such practices attached a stigma to students and should be avoided as much as possible due to the fact that it leads to isolation for students with SEN needs. In such instances, the SEN teacher's role should be to help all the students as a co-teacher in the classroom, sharing in the responsibilities of the lesson, than merely supervising students with disabilities. The value system did not seem to extend to the adults making sure that the students are valued at an educational level to facilitate their access to all aspects of learning and school life. Teachers assisted them where possible because they were vulnerable. So the issue of valuing the students had a different understanding from what inclusion actually means and the absence of teaching assistants was a determining factor to uphold values. Also, the participation of all students was limited across all the classes with teachers unsure of how to support them.

Alongside students being valued is another dimension of, namely, support and respect. The principals in Schools A and B appreciated and showed respect to the teachers and two social workers respectively. In return, some parents in Schools A and B appreciated the support that the teachers were giving to their children, especially those that dealt directly and regularly with the social workers and SEN teachers. There was a reciprocal relationship ongoing. However, the mainstream teachers in both schools expressed views that the parents were not all at the same level of working closely with staff. Parents varied in their involvement with their children's education and the parents who hardly responded to concern letters and communication from school negatively affected their children's' progress. The extent of parental contribution was affected by their age, educational level, and the workload of having young siblings in the family,

leading to these parents having limited time to attend to concerns about the children at the schools.

As stated earlier, teachers showed kindness and compassion to the students with disabilities and offensive words such as 'retarded' (Arif & Gaad 2008) were not used. Students were all called by their first names, than identifying them through their deficiencies. However, inside the resource room in School B, the SEN teacher spoke about a student's disability and her difficulties when supporting the student, in her presence, assuming that the student could not hear her words. I found this quite uncomfortable and undermining and potentially hurtful to the student as other students who could express themselves well in English could overhear the SEN teacher's words. Such a practice must be avoided.

3) Poor Communication and Lack of Collaboration

The third theme that emerged was poor communication and lack of collaboration. Similar to theme two, communication issues were at various levels. The leadership felt that it would be of benefit for ADEC to communicate with schools more in supplying resources and supporting the development of inclusion through meetings and professional development. The teachers on the other hand saw a total breakdown in communication between the LST teams headed by the principal and teachers. Most of this was felt by the English Medium teachers who are unaware of the needs of their students with disabilities and are not aware of the intervention plans for them. They are working in the dark. Teachers did not have a high expectation of the students and in many instances the SEN students were ignored in lessons. The LST team tends to work mostly with the Arabic medium teachers and support the students within Arabic lessons. The SEN teacher could have played an active role as a co-teacher in English lessons.

Also there was little evidence of collaboration between teachers in terms of collaboratively planning lessons. Where this took place as in School A, such arrangements worked well when the co-teacher was another expatriate western teacher. The cooperative and supportive relationship between the subject teachers and co-teachers aligns to the literature where Boyer & Mainzer (2003) stated that the mainstream teachers' confidence in teaching students with disabilities is dependent and strengthened by the relationship they can establish with the SEN co-teacher. However, it became unreliable for the main class teacher to work in a situation where the co-teacher was be absent from school.

Furthermore, all teachers in School A, who had an SEN background, were appreciative of the support from the Learning Support Welfare Team. These teachers considered the Head of SEN and her team as the backbone to the success of implementing inclusive practices in School A. The teachers repeatedly highlighted the Learning Support Team's role in providing them with differentiated materials. However, the mainstream teachers with no SEN background were not very complementary of the LST team and requested more training and more support to cope with the students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Another aspect of collaborative culture was evident in School A between the older and younger students. Students in Grade 5, once a month, teamed up with students from lower grades to support them in their reading and writing. However, in spite of this good practice, some opposite views were expressed by mainstream teachers with limited SEN experience that unfriendly behavior inevitably surfaces during the team work between the younger and older students. Students with behavior issues found it difficult to cope during these team sessions as the older students preferred teaming up with students who had mild weaknesses. This led to a situation

where the boys on behavior plans stayed away from these 'buddy' joint sessions, preferring to go into the resource room. Such preferences from the older students created feelings of jealousy among students, leading teachers to have to focus more on students who have disabilities. More so, older student with disabilities tend to be less friendly, hence, they find it difficult to make friends. Here again, teachers stressed that they were not equipped with the knowledge and skills to support students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

4) Lack of Engagement

A lack of engagement was two-fold – from the teachers and from the students. Pertaining to the teachers, the ADEC policy guidelines provided details and a set of competencies on the responsibilities for the special needs and mainstream teachers. It provided guidelines for a monitoring process, communication and engagement towards students with disabilities. However, as stated earlier in the previous chapter, there is a big gap between policy and practice. Consequently, the recommendations on how teachers should engage with the students in the policy guidelines are not yet fully applied as expected. Also, the guidelines are generic, with teachers who have had the opportunity to see the policy, finding it too vague and not practical enough for them to engage with. Hence, further training and workshops to support policy implementation is highly needed for inclusion to become an effective practice in engaging teachers. Furthermore, a lack of engagement by the teachers towards the SEN students was obvious across all the schools. Students did not receive any differentiated work so they tended to switch off. Tasks were not modified for them and adaptations in examinations, for example, were absent. The social workers in School B simply withdrew students from the national EMSA tests because they did not have the skills to sit the exam. No alternative test was made available to them.

5) Low Parental Input

Low parental input was voiced by staff in all the three schools. This is compounded by the fact that all the staff did acknowledge the importance and necessity of working closely with parents who knew their child best. Research shows that the more parents are involved in their child's education, the better the outcomes for the student. This is called constructive parent involvement by Lipsky & Gartner (1996), which is a key factor for successful inclusion to occur. Students with special needs need the support and collaboration of all stakeholders at all times and the centrality of parental involvement cannot be underrated. Additionally, the Learning Support Team members in School A clarified that the parents who contributed and supported the school in educating their son had an impact on their progress. All the schools said they had an open door policy to parents with meetings and schedules throughout the year, for them to attend. Bankar (2012) stated that schools need to make parental involvement work by going the extra mile to facilitate the involvement of parents, and their participation in school activities. The frustration of limited communication with parents, especially for the boys with behavior disorders, left staff feeling dejected and they expressed strong views that inclusion will not succeed with such students who do not have the capacity to learn or allow others to learn.

Factors such as having other younger siblings, language barriers, and marital issues for the visual impaired student, affected the parents' level of participation and support. The social workers however had a good relationship with the parents in all the three schools. Extending this parental engagement to the classroom teachers will be of greater benefit to the students. Parents, however, do not always respond to the communication from schools. Bankar (2012) further states that teachers need to understand that disability is stressful for parents and

families. Furthermore, parents need reassurances that teachers can accept their children as they are, with their disabilities, so as to build trust and a two way collaborative relationship.

6) Lack of SEN Knowledge and Skills

There was a clear difference in skills and knowledge observed between the older and younger teachers based on their knowledge and skills about inclusion. The younger teachers seemed to have had some recent exposure to inclusive practices, during their pre-service training programs. These younger teachers showed a more positive attitude towards inclusion. On the opposite side, the more experienced teachers were more resistant to inclusion. An example was the SEN teacher in School B who openly doubted the benefits of inclusion and preferred a segregated school for children with special needs, in order to prevent non–disabled children copying the bad behavior from disabled children, as she stated. According to her, inclusion was counterproductive, because it hindered the learning of non-disabled children. Whilst on the contrary in School A, the Head of SEN, who had thirteen years of experience as a qualified SEN teacher, expressed her strong beliefs in inclusion. Alghazo & Gaad (2004) supported this view expressed by experienced teachers having a positive attitude towards inclusion in their investigative study on mainstream teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in the UAE. The principal of School A, the two social workers in School B and three experienced teachers in School B who had SEN background, also expressed their positive belief in inclusion and asserted that, with more training and resources, inclusion is of great benefit. In School A, the school leadership as a whole was proud to be an ADEC model school that promoted inclusive practices. A similar sentiment was expressed by the teachers from the schools that presented

their school's inclusive projects at the SEN Day organized by ADEC in 2016, to share good practices.

Another positive outcome, emanating from the early stages of introducing inclusive practices in schools A and B, led to more parents becoming engaged with the school. This was as a result of parents seeing improvements in their children who were able to access the curriculum more. Co-teaching is one example in School A that made a positive impact. In spite of the differing beliefs in inclusion amongst the teachers and school leadership, 60% of them agreed to the social benefits of inclusion, leading to increased participation in class activities, facilitated by the presence of a subject teacher and the SEN teacher working together. The confidence of the students grew, as well as their self esteem.

The teachers who showed a negative attitude towards inclusion were those who had students with behavior disorders, and they believed that inclusion works only for cases of mild disability. They would be ready to change their stance if there was additional support in class to assist these students.

Furthermore, the entire teacher sample argued that they were not equipped to work with students with disabilities, especially where the disability had to do with emotional and behavioral disorders. They needed support through ongoing training on strategies for differentiated instruction for the SEN students, as well as current inclusive practices that are relevant in the UAE context.

7) Mixed Beliefs in Inclusion

Finally, the last theme on mixed beliefs about the benefits of inclusion that presented itself from the teachers can be viewed from different angles. Firstly, teachers felt overwhelmed with the workload and the overloaded ADSM curriculum.. The new ADEC curriculum emphasized raising the academic performance for all students, particularly, students performing below average. Achieving this goal required schools to create remedial plans and extra supports for students who were performing below average. This posed a problem for teachers with mixed beliefs in inclusion, who were already overloaded with fulfilling all the requirements and learning outcomes of the new curriculum, so had less time to plan and prepare differentiated activities and materials to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Any such new initiative as the ADSM brings on extra burdens to teachers and in the absence of training to support the implementation of new strategies and methods, the student becomes the victim. Hence, teachers did not believe that inclusion can work. This fact aligns with the literature, with studies in the field where Freire & Cesar (2003), contended that new initiatives are perceived as an extra burden, and would breed discouragement to teachers, where this is not supported with relevant training, that leads to new practical strategies to support the implementation of inclusion.

Secondly, teachers lack the knowledge and skills in special education having trained as mainstream teachers only, with no training received on special needs teaching. Hence, the fear of the unknown in doing the wrong thing on how to educate these students, coupled with feelings of inadequacy, leads teachers to question the real value of inclusive education. Thirdly, the training provided to them on the Tamkeen professional development program, does not

equip them with transferable skills in SEN instruction, to guide them to support students with disabilities.

Consequently, the belief in inclusion as a successful practice, varied across the three schools. Most of the participants agreed that inclusion can be successful; however, the daily difficulties they were facing prevented that. Although the SEN teachers and social workers saw the value of inclusion, having been trained on special education and acquired some knowledge and skills, they still felt that there were many challenges from the lack of adequate support, limited resources and teaching materials. The general feeling agreed by the majority of teachers across the sample schools was that the success of inclusion depended on the severity and type of disability, with the sticking point being the inclusion of students with behavioral difficulties as counterproductive. Teachers felt ill-equipped to deal with such behavior disorders. The extremely limited availability of an educational psychologist coming into schools on a regular basis, added to the teachers' frustrations. Several studies have been conducted that affirm the view stated about the success of inclusion, linked directly to the type and severity of the disability (Alahbabi 2009, Alghazo & Gaad 2004). In their research study on the inclusion of students with mild difficulties in government primary schools in the UAE, Alghazo & Gaad (2004) confirmed that teachers' were not in favor of accepting students with multiple, profound or severe learning difficulties. They rather preferred students with mild to moderate difficulties.

5.4.2   Inclusive Policies

All public schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi are regulated and maintained by ADEC who mandate all the policies that schools have to align to. Hence policy creation and monitoring is a centralized process and ADEC is in charge of the SEN policy and all its processes. The role of

the schools is to implement these polices following the guidelines and their internal procedures for effective delivery. Consequently, each school should have a copy of the policy, as this is the key policy document with respect to special education in schools. However, using the research instrument of interviews, it was only in School A that the LST and two teachers confirmed that they had read the policy. In School B and School C, the teachers stated during the interview sessions that they had never seen the SEN policy. Accordingly, the three schools in the sample differed in their usage of the guideline recommendations in the policy document. Hence, School A should not have been the only school who had seen and read the policy document. Teachers in Schools B and C had never seen the document, with some teachers stating that, they were not even aware that such a document was in existence. This represents a failure in policy management and implementation. Best practice clearly requires that every teacher should have a copy of the policy in order to refer to it at all times. The policy document should act as a 'Live' document for teachers and school administrators. During the interview data collection, the Academic vice Principal in School B, asserted that, she kept a copy of the policy book in her office. Such a practice fell short of expectations, and schools as well as ADEC, have to be more pro-active in getting all the staff familiar with the policy guidelines, in order for inclusion to begin to take root across schools. This practice will increase teacher knowledge on the contents of the SEN policy document.

An inclusive policy focuses towards admission and accessibility of the school and buildings, towards recruitment of staff and students, professional development of staff and on the policies that support processes for celebrating diversity. Regarding admission and enrolment, schools are obliged to enroll all the students that apply to them and only when the students' safety is not guaranteed can the school refer them to the special needs centers. Admission follows a process

of assessment and diagnosis of the student's needs and disabilities. This is in order to establish an intervention plan to meet the individual needs of the students. However, a situation presented itself in School A where the subject teacher did not trust the assessment process and wanted the student re-assessed for a more accurate diagnosis. This teacher felt that the student had a mental disability, rather than the results of the diagnosis stating that the student was dyslexic.

ADEC reviewed the initial SEN policy in 2015 and made it mandatory then for all schools to develop a learning support team who are the main drivers for the implementation of the 'School for All' initiative across all public schools. There was no indication across the three schools that they had an inclusive induction policy to welcome new staff and students and help them to settle in fast. The school buildings are safe, with School C having what is commonly called the new school model building which is modern with state of the art facilities, interactive classrooms, break out interactive areas in pods, modern gymnasium and refectory and covered played area and an activity area. The buildings all have lifts and ramps to cater for any student who is physically impaired.

All three schools have an open door policy and the social workers in School A & B informed me that parents and teachers are encouraged come into the Learning Support Team room whenever they have any issues. The parents who came in had friendly relationships with school staff, as confirmed by the social workers during the interviews. However, in spite of this friendly rapport between parents and some school staff, this may result in parents feeling too friendly to actually express their concerns with staff and request for better services at a professional level.

ADEC HQ in turn operates an open door policy as well and parents can also go to ADEC Head Quarters to make any complaints about their child when the need arises.

Following the analysis from the data collected, four emerging themes emanated from the findings;

(1) Limited professional development trainings, (2) Irregular identification processes, (3) Positive behavior management gaps, (4) Safety of buildings.

1) Limited Professional Development Training

As earlier stated, Professional Development that made an impact to the teachers to increase their knowledge, provide them with strategies and the tools to plan and prepare for differentiated inclusive classrooms, provide opportunities for collaborative sharing with peers to improve instruction, was not happening on a consistent basis. Ainscow & Miles (2008, p.7) revealed that, 'teachers are the key to the development of more inclusive forms of education'.

Teachers requested that they were ready to attend professional development session and workshops if it would give them handy tips to take back into their classrooms and support the students with UAE context rich differentiated materials. Professional development has to provide them with transferable knowledge, skills and hands-on practical strategies to use in their classrooms.

Additionally, the Head of SEN in School A and the Vice Principal in School C reported that it would be most helpful if ADEC provided more training for their SEN teachers who need constant professional development on the SEN processes, for them to be able to effectively support the inclusion practices across the schools. Therefore an analysis of the findings as

related to professional development and its implementation of inclusive practices can positively change the teachers' role as a reflective professional. It is paramount to make available to teachers, workshops on new learning and teaching in special needs education and modern inclusive approaches, such as team teaching, collaborative planning, differentiation, modifications and adaptations. It is only when the aforementioned training topics can be delivered to teachers who in turn implement these in their classrooms, can teachers begin to change their attitudes from negative to positive attitudes towards inclusion. Carrington (1999) affirms that where such trainings are transferable into classroom practices successfully, teacher attitudes do change for the better and students' performance improves. The literature in the field has been overwhelmingly in favor of continuing professional development as a great necessity in supporting the development of knowledge and skills in inclusion.

2) Irregular Identification Processes

The Learning Support Team is responsible for the identification of SEN students. The team is headed by the principal or a delegated staff member from the leadership team, and includes the social worker, SEN teacher, school psychologist, school nurse and appointed subject teachers. The team refers the students for assessments to Sheikh Khalifa Hospital or the centers. The team is also responsible for testing the student to know their ability, devise the IEPs whilst liaising with parents and monitoring the IEP targets on a regular basis. In Schools' A & B, this team meets once every week and once a month in School C. The decisions made in the learning support team meetings are usually followed through into the classrooms by the SEN teacher so her role is very important in the success of an inclusive school.

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In Schools' A & B, the Learning Support Team was conversant with ADEC's identification process and adhered to it. This was not very clear in School C. there was no cohesive plan for new staff and students to settle into school. The main bone of contention was that leadership did not seem to have a good collaborative working relationship with the English medium teachers in Schools' B & C. Teachers in these schools were not involved or aware of the intervention process and what targets the special needs students in their classes had in their IEPs or intervention plans. They had no knowledge of what their condition was. This led to lapses in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. The principal in School A as a western expat principal asserted that he was focused on getting all his teachers to understand inclusion and support them in every way possible towards achieving best practices. This is why he took the decision to shorten the school teaching day for the students with behavior challenges so that staff can use the limited class time to support them effectively and the SEN teacher can support them on a one to one basis in a quieter resource room for the rest of the day. This supports the literature where Stein and Nelson (2003) maintain that 'effective leaders are focused and determined about improving their schools to become more effective organizations.

3) Positive Behavior Management Gaps

Another pertinent theme for inclusive policies that emanated from the findings, through the data collection, using the instruments of document analysis, interviews and observations is to do with behavior management. Document analysis of the SEN policy revealed that student exclusions are discouraged. In order to prevent exclusions as much as possible, the policy encourages schools to develop robust behavior management processes. The Learning Support Team has a

behavior management plan for each student with a behavior disorder. Teachers questioned the usefulness of the behavior plan as it did not curb bad behavior; students were not allowed in School C to be withdrawn from the lesson when they became very disruptive. The teachers also informed me that they had not been told whether these students were receiving proper psychological help as one of the students in School A had been taken off medication because his dad wanted that and since then his behavior has deteriorated. Some parents responded to the continuous complaint from the school about their son's bad behavior by keeping them away from school. The absence of a regular educational psychologist in the schools is a massive drawback in providing the continuous support needed. Poor behavior is a major issue amongst the boys than the girls and more needs to be done to help teachers with positive behavior management strategies, beginning from having a teaching assistant in all lessons to support the student.

The literature on inclusive education supports the theme on gaps in positive behavior management in the schools under study. Graham and Jahnukainen (2011) in their study in New South Wales, Alberta and Finland, assert that despite the moves towards inclusion, prompting changes in educational policies, school structures and pedagogic practices in the above three countries, exclusion through segregation of students with special needs especially students with challenging behavior has grown. In these communities, the effects of policy changes and school realities appear to have thwarted the development of inclusive schools. Challenging behavior is therefore perceived by school staff as a barrier to inclusive classrooms, a view shared by all the teachers in the sample across the three schools in the UAE.

4) Safety of Buildings

Lastly, when inclusive policies are in operation that will guarantee the construction of safe buildings, which will be accessible to all types of disabilities. All three schools maintain this and it was observed that the SEN students were able to play safely in the playground during break and lunch times in spite of the fact that several of them kept to themselves and spoke to no other student. The physical environment was adapted to enable access; for example, there were ramps, high visibility strips along the corridors and staircase handles to assist students with specific disabilities.

5.4.3   Inclusive Practices

Inclusive practices focuses on the day to day occurrences going on that reflect inclusive cultures and policies, ensuring that all the activities promote the participation of all the students and stakeholders. Booth and Ainscow (2011) state that 'school practices are about what is learnt and taught and how it is learnt and taught'. Four themes were generated following   the analysis of data from the findings; (1) Curriculum, (2) Modification & Accommodation, (3) Limited resources, (4) Limited collaborative learning:

1) Curriculum

The Abu Dhabi School Model is ADEC's curriculum in use in all its public schools. The curriculum is robust, diverse and balanced to cover as wide topics as possible that students encounter in their everyday lives. This curriculum allows for lifelong learning in a student centered model. It is an outcome based curriculum that covers 21st century skills of

collaboration, communication, critical thinking and problem solving. Activities around the core materials are all built round these 21st century skills commonly called the 4Cs. All the students are given the textbook which is their property and there is an accompanying teacher book to assist teachers. The curriculum gives lots of room for differentiated work which teachers have to tap into when supported in training workshops to promote inclusive practices. However, the common prevalent practice in the three schools is to modify the curriculum by crossing out the learning outcome that teachers deem as unachievable for the SEN students. This action brings into question the teachers' knowledge to know which outcomes are unsuitable as based on the students' current ability. As earlier stated, the challenge is that teachers are not experienced enough in identifying the specific needs of students with disabilities. The choice of deletion therefore is not scientifically based. Arif and Gaad (2008) validated this practice by stating in their study that:

> There is no special curriculum developed for special needs. The curriculum being delivered is simply the deletion of difficult lessons from the regular curriculum; they study the same books, just less in terms of chapter numbers. The choice of deletion of chapters is also not scientific; it is based on either the teacher's judgment or the willingness of the student.

2) Modification and Accommodation

On the second theme of modifications and accommodations, several teachers suggested that ADEC produce a modified curriculum for the SEN students however, the Head of SEN at ADEC declined this request that puts a huge burden on the curriculum writers to create a parallel curriculum, but it defeats the main idea of Abu Dhabi School Model – for teachers to use the existing curriculum and modify it as best fit. Teacher guides have been provided to all teachers for this purpose he added. However, in School A, the Head of the LST informed me that one of the main roles of her team is to modify the curriculum. She informed me during the data

collection at the interviews that, her team readily shared this modified curriculum with teachers who approached them for assistance. It should, however, be noted that the mainstream teachers did not share this view and I was unable to confirm her assertions during the lesson observations and interviews. I was also unable to confirm her statements in any documentation that was collected as part of the research instruments employed.

The challenges, nonetheless is that, in spite of the fact stated above that ADEC has provided guides, teachers are still unable to carry out these modifications by themselves due to their lack of knowledge. Consequently, their only recourse or solution is to cross off the students' learning outcomes within the curriculum, where they felt that such outcomes were too difficult for the SEN students to achieve. Teachers had no scientific basis for these deletions, however, that was the only choice at their disposal. Unfortunately, professional development had not provided the teachers with the necessary skills to use differentiation during lessons.

Notwithstanding, some teachers are using a variety of teaching strategies such as questions and answers, group work, pair work, individual activities, audio and visual input during lessons. However, the SEN students as earlier stated were still left out because none of the materials above were differentiated to meet their needs. Teachers confirmed that they had no time to prepare differentiated materials due to the heavy weight of the curriculum, in addition to the limited time to focus on SEN students to support their learning. Time management therefore presented problems. Time management issues also raised the urgent need for classroom assistant and this was highlighted by the teachers during the interviews, throughout the data collection period. Co-teaching, as evident in School A, provided a solution that could benefit other schools, when planned properly. Co-teaching requires the shared knowledge and skills, as well as a commitment from both teachers (Mitchell 2008).

Students could only benefit where the SEN teacher took them out of main lessons to the resource room to do in-depth work in Arabic, but not so in English. Consequently, progress for SEN students was completely dependent on the SEN teacher in their Arabic lessons. This felt like a form of segregation within inclusion going on. Flexible seating arrangements in classrooms helped some students who could cope with working within a team. Also the SEN students generally sat at the front of the room with easy access to the teacher to support them closely. As stated before, there was peer support as the able students generally assisted the weaker students when the teacher was busy with the other students. This, however, did not look planned and directed by the teacher. It should be noted that research in the field (Mitchell 2008) affirmed that, where peer tutoring is planned and students with higher abilities use their talents to support lower ability students, it boosts the confidence of both sets of students, as well as improves peer relationships. It was noticeable that other students were quite tolerant of the SEN students and regularly assisted them. However, this led to students with disabilities copying work off their peers in the absence of differentiated worksheets.

3) Limited Resources

The third theme on limited resources was stated by all the teachers and leadership. ADEC applications for targeted resources like a Braille teacher and visual books for the visually impaired was still being awaited. Differentiated teaching materials were not available to teachers although teachers used a variety of teaching materials such as visual multi sensory equipment and manipulatives. These, however, varied class by class. Access to high technology equipment was limited, as confirmed in Anati's (2012) study that described current practices in UAE schools in relation to the inclusion of students with disabilities. Also interesting was the fact

that, the Head of SEN in School A said that they had received several high technology equipment for the SEN students, but they could not use them because training had not yet been provided by ADEC on how to use these. Therefore, the resources had been locked away and were gathering dust inside a storeroom in School A. This presented a real challenge for school staff due to the lack of training on how to use the equipment, hence can be seen as a barrier to inclusion (Alghazo et al, 2003).

The deployment of teaching assistants presented big issues in all the three schools, although less so in School A. The teaching assistants in School B & C were no longer allowed to go into lessons. They were now to assist the teachers in Arabic lessons with administrative jobs like photocopying, cutting and printing material. Teachers found this quite frustrating. Those who were lucky enough to have student teachers doing teaching practice in their classrooms valued them highly.

One parent in School A overcame this shortfall by privately paying for a teaching assistant to be with her son all day, all the time in school. The teacher however questioned the SEN background of the teaching assistant as she tended to do all the work for the student than allow him do it by himself. This example from School A can be backed by the literature in the field which states that the disadvantage of having an unqualified teaching assistant can interfere with peer interactions, leading to social isolation for the student and total dependence (Gaingreco & Doyle 2007). The class teacher did not mind this arrangement because it was one less student she worried about and with no other help available; she was fine with the private teaching assistant's role.

4) Limited Collaborative Learning

Lastly, the fourth theme on teacher collaboration was evident in one school as earlier stated. School A, where co-teaching as an established model in the western home country of the teachers was used to good effect. The downside was when the co-teacher did not show up, which occurred occasionally, when the planning was jointly done with an Arabic co-teacher. In the other two schools, there was no co-teaching or collaboration taking place as teachers did not have the skills from in-house training to carry that out. Worthy of note was the fact that, the SEN teacher in Schools' B and C, supported only the Arabic medium teachers in their lessons, and not the English medium teachers. In Arabic, they worked with the students with disabilities on a one to one basis inside the classroom, or in the SEN resource room. Consequently, students who had to be withdrawn to work in the resource room were excluded from mainstream lessons and from interacting with their peers. Such a practice promoted exclusion for students with disabilities and needs to be avoided. Some of the teachers in Schools' A and B were unhappy with such practices that placed a limitation on peer interaction and class cohesion, as well as encouraging tolerance of students with disabilities towards their peers.

 In conclusion, there is an urgent need within the system in general, to develop in class collaborative supports between the SEN Arabic teacher and English teachers in both English and Arabic lessons. This could be in the form of co-teaching or other forms of co-delivery models. Teachers need to acquire team building skills that will enable them to share classroom responsibilities, as well as share the expertise of each other for the benefit of all the students (Mitchell 2008). This presents another opportunity for teachers to be able to work in teams to support each other within a successful inclusive setting. Such team work should act as an

opportunity for learning and growth as part of continuous professional development (Carrington & Robinson 2004).

5.5   Reflections on The Index for Inclusion use in the UAE context

The Index is a world known developmental self evaluation tool, relevant to this study because it is designed for the exact purpose to act as a form of quality assurance in evaluating and investigating ADEC's SEN policy as it concerns all pupils and students. The Index is not disability specific.

I had admired the Index some years back in the UK because it fulfilled and shaped my understanding of inclusive education. I particularly liked the feature of using the indicators as questionnaires to find out what students, parents and school staff feel about the realities of school life. It allowed schools the flexibility to modify and personalize the questions to suit their own specific contexts in a self reflective exercise when reviewing their development towards an inclusive school. Due to the above I felt confident that by using the tool and adapting it to my research in the UAE, it will be an effective approach. This is because the tool gives a sense of encouragement and recognition that schools will be at different starting points and this does not matter. Schools in the UAE are undergoing an educational reform; hence the tool can be adapted to assist them to reflect and begin to transform into an inclusive settings. The tool is also attractively presented and makes for ease to translate into Arabic or any other language. The Index is a potentially powerful tool for schools in promoting pupil participation and partnership working with families. It's a set of materials that support school planning, drawing in

all stakeholders to support the process of developing more inclusive schools. A possible starting point is for schools in Abu Dhabi to link the Inclusion Index to their School Improvement Plans (SIP) as a positive process for self reflection.

Furthermore, another benefit in using the Index in the UAE schools is because the Learning Support team is operational in many schools, and observations in the sample schools revealed that there was a preference for withdrawal teaching in small groups and for individual pupils by the SEN teacher. This strategy is currently favored for assisting students with learning difficulties. The learning support team collaborates with mostly Arabic teachers, advising on methods, the modification of subject content and the design and delivery of appropriate teaching and learning materials aimed at maximizing pupil potential. A way forward is to extend this collaborative work and joint planning to the English teams in the school which is currently lacking.

In a nutshell, an analysis of the data collected concerning the use of the Index for Inclusion to support the implementation of inclusive education reveals the following: Where schools do use the Index for inclusion as a form of self-evaluation to improve on their practice it will help in setting clear, relevant ongoing goals. It can also help schools look at possibilities, help set the agenda for discussions on various aspects in the school, will emphasize parental involvement, give a deeper understanding into how inclusive education develops, can create a better, structured dialogue on inclusive education, place emphasis on collaborative and cooperative learning with students and collaboration with stake holders/.

Schools in the UAE can only stand to benefit when impact development initiatives are driven from a distinct inclusion agenda. In so far as The Index leads to a dialogue that helps to 'put inclusive values into action, reduce barriers, mobilize resources and integrate initiatives' (Booth & Ainscow 2011, p. 52). Therefore the above gave me a boost to use the indicators and the questions supplied by the Index as a guiding tool in my investigation of the special needs inclusion policy implementation in the three case study schools in the UAE.

Furthermore, although the 'School For All' Initiative primarily focuses on the education of children with disabilities within mainstream settings, the Index relies heavily on the social model of disability where the change is not only to take in children with disability into mainstream, but welcomes all learners. It's a way of working, hence removing barriers and mobilizing resources to learning and participation. This is an approach that ADEC recognizes in its Guide Book to meet the needs of all students, not just those who have a disability label on them. This shift has been factored into this research.

The emphasis on inclusive education evident worldwide currently challenges special needs practitioners to reconsider their own thinking and practice. The great benefit in using The Index for Inclusion is that it's a 'social process within which those within a school learn how to live with differences and indeed learn from the differences' (Ainscow, 2016).

Notwithstanding, and in addition to some drawbacks that the Index is very lengthy and requires a lot of time commitment, the use of the Index going forward is possible in the UAE, given the shortfalls from the findings of this study into the current inclusive cultures, policies and practices

in public schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. These weaknesses can provide the stepping stone to adapting and using the Index for Inclusion indicators across schools in the UAE.

5.6 Conclusion

This research case study was intended to investigate Abu Dhabi Education Council's special needs inclusion policy implementation in UAE public schools. The study based its rationale on UAE Law 29 of 2006, pertaining to the 'Rights of People with Disabilities'. This Law guarantees the right to equitable educational opportunities to all school students (Farouk 2008). The Law also aligned to UNESCO's Salamanca Convention Framework for Action Statement (1994) which accommodates all children in mainstream schools, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social and emotional condition. The UAE government did affirm that all students will become part of the school community irrespective of their strengths and weaknesses. This government stance is significant because it reveals that the UAE is at the same level of advanced thinking as the vast majority of countries globally who believe in the merits of education for all, free from any barriers society imposes on people with disabilities.

The investigation into the special needs inclusion policy and its implementation in three primary schools in Abu Dhabi has been the rationale for this study. The focus is to gain a better understanding of how teachers and school administrators describe their practice of inclusion on their daily routines at work. In looking for the evidence for these practices, the four indicators of curriculum, accessibility, assessment and professional development have been examined in order to answer the first research question.

Additionally, the responses to Research Question 2 on what recommendations should be made to improve inclusive practices using the internationally recognized evaluation tool of The Index for inclusion by Booth and Ainscow (2011) was utilized with its three dimensions of inclusive cultures, inclusive policies and inclusive practices. An analysis of the findings resulted in the emergence of themes that would promote positive change when applied to create an inclusive setting. The following themes, all in the early stages of taking root in the sample schools emerged from the study; improving communication for all stakeholders, creating and extending more collaborative partnerships among staff within schools and also between policy makers, ADEC zone offices and schools and lastly liaising with parents regularly. These themes aligned with existing research in the field where Bricker (1995) described three factors that influence the success of inclusion: 'attitudes (views about inclusion), resources (access to specialists; collaborative planning), and curricula (activity-based; promoting interaction)'.

The findings also reveal that the belief in valuing all students by putting in place modifications to enable them access the curriculum and remove any barriers is at the beginning stages of implementation. Furthermore, improving on the resourcing given to schools in the form of assistive technology, modified materials, qualified personnel who have the knowledge and skills to use the resources effectively in driving forward the inclusive agenda is proposed.

In addition, another theme that came to light is to actively promote professional development and training workshops that will empower teachers and provide them with hands-on, practical, less theoretical strategies to support inclusion and improve collaboration. This will be in addition to the professional development modules currently being delivered in the schools. These additional trainings on current SEN best practice will give teachers the skills to be able to provide differentiated instruction. As earlier stated in this study, training does change attitudes

into positive ideas so that teachers will enable students to meet and exceed their IEP goals due to tailored programs that can be adapted to their needs. Another positive finding that emerged in the study is the beginnings of creating awareness programs as seen in School C where teachers attended a workshop facilitated by the Zayed Organization on autism and ways to write intervention plans. These awareness programs will support staff and the community to better appreciate different types of disability and realize that it is alright to be different and these differences can be acknowledged and celebrated. Consequently, there is a great need for teacher awareness.

However, on the opposite side, the study also identified gaps in practice that needed improvement within the schools and at the level of ADEC to address. Some examples of these are the lack of quality personnel who are familiar with diagnostic testing and developing remedial plans for SEN students. Also, training modules and workshops given to staff need to be context relevant for the UAE classroom. Due to the absence of this bespoke professional development, teachers carried on harboring negative attitudes towards inclusion which subsequently led them to questioning the rationale for inclusion and maintained that inclusion can work only in cases of mild disability and where students had intellectual, mental and behavioral disorders, inclusion was futile. A well-structured professional development program would give the opportunity and platform to challenge and influence their beliefs towards positive change. Equally, the study brought to the surface a weakness in the system on the acute shortage of teaching assistants whose role is important in supporting SEN students on a one to one basis. Besides, the limited availability of educational psychologists presents a challenge for schools. In addition, the inconsistency in managing bad behavior observed in the sample schools where there was not a structured positive behavior plan being pursued with positive

strategies and outcomes to support students present a challenge to teachers who have not fully

bought yet into the notion of inclusion.

Lastly, the rigors of the ADSM curriculum presented a test to teachers who found the curriculum

heavy and extremely dense, with the English medium teachers having thirty five teaching

periods a week, leaving them no time to prepare and plan for differentiated instruction. Besides,

the assessment students do does not allow for participation by all as the national tests do not

yet have a modified version that allows SEN students to write them. Withdrawing them from

these exams is counterproductive within a policy that advocates full inclusion for all. Another

existing barrier is to so with limited direct parental contact with the teachers of students who

have disabilities. This proves to be a big setback where teachers are not able to meet with

parents to discuss any issues that their children may have. Parents are key partners within an

inclusion setting because they know their children best and are better than anyone else and

best placed to offer their support and advice. This is particularly useful where the student has

behavioral disorders. Research has shown that where parents are actively involved, the results

are very positive and students improve in their behavior.

This study has revealed a detailed up to date account and analysis of the understanding and

application of ADEC's special needs inclusion policy in public schools. Data from their findings

were analyzed to present an accurate picture of where the schools are at in terms of applying

inclusive cultures, policies and practices. Some positive beginnings and areas of growth have

been identified in the study. Despite the shortfalls, it is worth noting that having committed

principals like the one in School A and keen teachers who are prepared to go on the journey

into inclusive environments if the right supports are in place, the future looks bright and

promising. The dreams and aspirations of the leaders of the UAE to provide an equitable

education to all its citizens irrespective of their differences will become a reality with the

emergence of fully inclusive schools. This assertion then leads to some recommendations that

will begin to address some of the shortcomings and barriers currently existing.

Conclusively, this study has fulfilled the research aims stated in the introductory section of

Chapter One. The research aims were to assess the three sample schools' execution of

ADEC's SEN Policy, in its fifth year of implementing inclusive practices across schools in Abu

Dhabi. An evaluative approach explored the effective application of policy in schools that

promote inclusion. Also, using the three qualitative research methods of document analysis,

interviews and observations, the findings revealed the extent to which policy implementation

supports students with disabilities or not in mainstream classrooms. Data collected in the

interviews and observations furthermore, described the vivid, real life experiences of the

teachers and administrators in their attempt to implement the policy. These interactions

revealed the impact of their practices and effects of inclusion on the school culture. Overall, the

recommendations have attended to the gaps in the school procedures, processes and

practices. The research problem offers suggestions for follow up, to close the gap between

policy and practice, that requires tackling at the level of the school and ADEC Headquarters, so

that inclusion can move from its current beginning stages, to become part of the school culture

in meeting the needs of all the students.

5.7   Recommendations

The UAE, although a young country, has already made great improvements in adopting

inclusive environments for all its students. The findings from this study has identified the

concerns about Abu Dhabi schools' ability to offer differentiated instruction in mixed-ability

classrooms, a proven 21st century teaching approach that benefits both disabled and students without disabilities, within a continuous proactive cycle that responds to promoting an inclusive educational setting. The outcomes of this study is to offer suggestions and recommendations to policy makers towards improving staff capacity to support the intricate needs of an inclusive classroom, as well as extend the literature of inclusion in Abu Dhabi, whilst expanding on future research across the other Emirates. The Index for Inclusion can be adapted to an Abu Dhabi context in order to effectively evaluate the impact of an inclusion policy in schools.

Several implications for the special needs inclusion policy are evident in bridging the gap between policy and practice. Firstly, ADEC, as the policy maker, needs to ensure that all schools have a copy of the policy guide and provide each school with training on it contents such that staff are aware of the processes, the rationale behind the processes, the roles and responsibilities of personnel in schools and at headquarters and the zone offices who are available to support policy implementation. Additionally, the suggested templates in the policy guide will provide teachers with a framework to work from, not re-invent the wheel and reduce anxieties and frustrations due to lack of knowledge and skills on SEN matters. A well managed system based on training on the content of the inclusion policy is required, to ensure full understanding and buy-in by end users

Although the findings reveal that inclusion is still in the initial stages and understood differently still in Abu Dhabi by both school staff and other stakeholder as confirmed by the Head of SEN Division, opportunities are available where teachers are/will be equipped with adequate knowledge and understanding of inclusive practices and the implementation of such practices within schools. Several school staff were requesting professional development training to prepare them better to meet the needs of a diverse classroom with a wide range of student's

needs (Crombie, 2002; Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie-Richmond 2009). Hence, it is highly recommended that, training opportunities be provided at improving instruction when working with learners of different learning needs. ADEC has the responsibility to ensure that properly qualified staff is hired to work in the schools. This has policy implications on creating and monitoring the process of teacher admissions that meet the required criteria and standards. This begins from hiring more educational psychologists into schools, who can develop accurate IEPs for needy students, with realistic and achievable targets for students with special educational needs. Furthermore, the special needs inclusion policy needs to emphasize that mainstream teachers are required to show evidence of some background training on SEN teaching. This will evidently lead to policy makers liaising with the federal teacher training colleges and universities to ensure that their programs meet the agreed standards of an inclusive education environment. This will eventually bridge the gap between policy and practice and provide answers to Research Question 2.

Also, the presence of an effective running Learning Support Team in a school led by a visionary leader will add value to the inclusion experience. Secondly, pre-service teacher training programs need to work with ADEC in sharing the ADSM curriculum so that the institutions can develop special needs education modules that will incorporate best practices in the field for mainstream teachers to adequately prepare them for inclusive classrooms. The content of teacher education programs has significant implications on the attitudes that newly qualified teachers bring into the job. Such programs can influence teacher attitude on inclusion and diversity as stated by Beacham and Rouse (2012). Also, it will alleviate the shortage of SEN teachers which is not only a UAE problem, but a worldwide one as well. It was clear during the school visits that having only one SEN teacher in each of the three schools was hardly

adequate when compared to the ratio of students with a range of disabilities. Several researchers who have worked on inclusive studies in the UAE have all confirmed the acute shortage of SEN teachers, Alghazo and Gaad 2004; Bradshaw et al, 2004; Gaad and Thabet 2009; Anati 2012. The Head of SEN in ADEC also confirmed this issue in their schools as well as stating that ADEC is currently engaged in cooperative talks with the federal universities who are responsible for the delivery of teacher training programs to ensure that their courses are being updated to reflect the provisions of the 'School for All' initiative and subsequently the realities of diverse mixed ability classes. The policy on teacher recruitment having an impact on practice cannot be underestimated here.

Additionally, providing more in-service training for existing teachers is of paramount importance. Other studies which have been done locally have also addressed this issue of providing an inclusive education agenda to pre-service teachers (Sharma et al 2007). In another study by Alzyoudi et al (2011) she reinforces this 'push' to provide trainee teachers the knowledge and skills to be able to work with students with disabilities using tested and approved successful strategies to meet their unique and varied needs. This is also echoed in the UK by Ainscow and Miles (2008) who maintained that teachers are the key to the development of more inclusive forms of education.

Another recommendation that answers Research Question 2, and will have a big impact on the promotion of inclusion is in-service teachers' professional development opportunities. This requires a key change on the approach to policy. This is in order to ensure the effective management of available resources between the SEN and Professional Development (PD) Divisions. Policy makers at ADEC and its other relevant departments, for example, the PD

Division, need to recognize and deliver strategies on the content of in-service trainings provided to schools. This is key to the development of inclusive education where the content is robust, with hands on practical activities for teachers to easily transfer into their classrooms. Similar to pre-service teacher programs, in-service training programs and short courses should also have a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical strategies that can immediately be implemented. Also, professional development facilitators should also be able to facilitate workshops and follow up on the strategies learnt with teachers in their classrooms, modeling to them those active approaches. Professional development should be made 'alive' in the classroom following delivery and the impact of the new strategies reflected upon and further planning made to inform the learning taking place. This model of professional development can eventually lead to a bank of differentiated resources that teachers can delve into and adapt for their use at any time. When professional development shapes into active and reflective exercise, teachers' confidence begins to grow. This will necessitate collaborative relationships with peers sharing their own practice as well. Such collaboration will inadvertently 'strengthen their ability to respond to diversity' (Ainscow & Miles 2008). The use of the Index for Inclusion then becomes a useful evaluation self review tool. Also increased confidence amongst teachers will get them sharing their resources to all the students across their classes and not just for the SEN students. The SEN teacher will then be able to work within the classroom as a co-teacher when she is not timetabled for withdrawal lessons.

Also, the content of the professional development needs to evolve into 21st century teaching by incorporating ICT. Developing ICT skills will respond to the students who live in the digital age with their knowledge and capabilities in modern technologies to support teaching in an inclusive classroom using a variety of digitized multimedia resources as well as worksheets. ADEC

following the Tamkeen professional development project created a massive online library of training modules. This same process can be duplicated for the storage of digitized differentiated materials following the bespoke professional development SEN session sand stored in a central location that can be easily accessible for school staff.

A further recommendation is for schools to be provided with assistive technology and for ADEC to train the staff on using these resources in order to cater for all the students in the classroom. Awareness campaigns within the school and in the community as stated earlier needs to carry on dispelling the remnants of stigmatization towards disability still prevalent in some sections of the UAE population. These campaigns through meetings, distributing flyers and leaflets, holding talks and workshops will aim to sensitize the community of the benefits of inclusion to both the student with disability, their non-disabled counterpart and other members of society. In order to support the aforementioned recommendations, the literature in the field supports these views. UNESCO (1999) conducted an action research and recorded the voices of teachers in fifteen schools from different countries depicting communities, teachers and students working together to minimize barriers to learning and promote inclusion for all. These teachers from the fifteen schools shared their experiences, successes and challenges as they welcomed students and made their classrooms more inclusive. This article highlighted the fact that in order for communities to respond positively to diversity, classroom practices have to reflect on the understanding of diversity so as to prepare students to be active participants in their communities. Students need to be taught these values that are needed to create 'welcoming environments and welcoming curriculum' which will make learning in schools conducive for everyone. The document clarifies the need for full comprehension of the term 'special needs' which is commonly seen as a deficit and a problem.

This work from UNESCO reiterates the fact that students with disabilities are not a homogenous group, stating that 'they are as different from one another as any student is different from and similar to the other'. It further states that Inclusion calls for a respect of differences to break down the barriers in attitude, similar to what the Head of SEN in School A stated about some regular teachers in the school who still showed some resistance to inclusive ideas and practices. Referring to such learners using the same term of a disability label leaves a false perception of them as being similar. The UNESCO action research, which aligns to my personal beliefs and the recommendations I have proposed, concludes that in order to develop a 'welcoming curriculum', the practice in classrooms will have to focus on differentiated instruction. This will ensure full participation by all the students to meet their individual needs. examples of activities within a 'welcoming curriculum' framework include cooperative group learning, peer teaching and support, parental input, planning using multiple intelligences, a negotiated curriculum that ensures that students have a voice, ongoing assessment practices that are integrated, use of technology and assistive technology. This conclusion from UNESCO therefore fully supports the indicators of inclusive cultures and inclusive practices in Booth and Ainscow's (2011) Index for Inclusion, giving credibility to the use of this tool as an evaluative measure for schools to reflect on their practices in the journey towards inclusion.

Finally, ADEC, being the policy maker and regulatory body in education, has been pushing forward several activities to promote the implementation of inclusion in their schools, including on the Tamkeen training program on special educational needs to all its leaders and teachers. One such action was organized by the SEN Division on 'Sharing Best Practices in SEN' in 2016. This was a good initiative to see how implementation was going on and to share best practices across the schools. Seven schools in Abu Dhabi took part from all cycles from Kindergarten to

Cycle three male, female and a co-educational school. The Head of SEN Division introduced the focus of the day summarizing the history of SEN globally to put proceedings in context, highlighting the major paradigm shift inclusive thinking. Schools were encouraged to begin reviewing continuously their systems through holding regular meetings to talk about students and the opportunities available for them to advance in their learning. Teachers were also encouraged to practice peer observations as a way of personal commitment to improve whilst collectively identifying the support they need. Also, the idea of teachers working with the special education teacher collaboratively in co-planning together and co-teaching and differentiating instruction will support the creation of an inclusive culture.

Activities such as having capstone projects in every grade will encourage participation for all students who can then present their final products. One of the school Cluster Managers present confirmed that such projects are happening in 'pockets' in Abu Dhabi schools, however, these need to be systemic across all schools. Staff were also reminded that professional development training module on differentiation was currently being delivered by the Tamkeen training specialists so staff should avail themselves of the trainings.

The seven schools gave presentations on interesting topics on SEN activities going on in their schools, for example, 'Multi-Tier System of Supports, Module Station Lessons, Visual Schedules, SEN Strategies/Selective Mute' were some of the topics that were presented. The Head of SEN concluded the day by asking a rhetorical, open-ended question 'Where do we go from here?' He was keen to get responses from participants on what ADEC needs to give to schools to make SEN work better. Participants found the day extremely useful and expressed

that such events should be encouraged and occur regularly to act as a boost to teachers with inclusion taking root across schools in the UAE.

5.8   Further Research and Final Thoughts

From the findings and discussions, in seeking a truthful account from the field to the reader, Research Questions One and Two have been answered through data collection, utilizing the three qualitative instruments of document analysis, semi-structured interviews and observation across the three schools. Recommendations were derived to further extend this research and enable the study to be a working document to guide policy improvements. My contribution to knowledge is to bridge the gap between policy and practice, by offering the aforementioned recommendations. My hope, as an employee at ADEC, is to ensure that this study remains a 'Live document' to primarily serve the needs of children with disabilities by fully creating an inclusive environment for them to thrive in, as well as improving the SEN policy document. Policy is about creating opportunities that should not be missed.

Furthermore, in bridging the gap between policy and practice, policy makers should be cognizant of the current debates and direction that inclusion is moving towards, as stated in the literature review section. There are now several calls addressing competing policy demands as the way forward for the future. Proponents of current debates emphasize on the fact that policy makers need to listen to and learn from students with disabilities and their parents on their experiences of inclusion and exclusion. More inclusive research studies needs to be done on the student voice, parental voice, as well as teacher education programs engaging more with inclusive approaches. Current inclusive debates discuss a shift when responding to children with disabilities. The common practice of using remediation and intervention programs as the

first steps to identifying needs is now seen as another form of segregation where the defect is highlighted. More calls from recent research (Allan 2014) are being made to respond with equity and respect towards persons with disabilities, than focus on a set of competences and ticking boxes for inspectors to see that the competences have all been met or not.

The results from this research open up the debate and need to move towards more inclusive ways of working. 'There needs to be a focus on the identification of factors that help to generate a momentum for change' (Ainscow 2016, p. 86). The scope of this study could be extended to kindergarten, cycle two and three and be in the form of an action research or collective research inquiry using the Index for inclusion as the next step for schools to investigate their own situations and practices with a view to bringing about improvements. The connections between policies, practice and cultures is pivotal in the development of inclusive schools and this underpins the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow 2000). Ainscow (2016) states that using the Index is concerned with improving educational attainment for all students through inclusive practices which will redress the imbalance of focusing on just high scores at the expense of developing a supportive school community. This is because focusing on the process within the Index encourages staff to share and build on their existing knowledge and skills about what impedes learning and participation. Ainscow (2016) goes on to affirm that:

> It assists schools in a detailed examination of the possibilities for increasing learning and participation in all aspects of their school for all pupils. This is not to be seen as an additional initiative for schools but rather as a systematic way of engaging in school development planning, setting priorities for change, implementing developments and reviewing progress.

Based on the data generated in this study, further research could also be carried on to investigate the students' perspective of how they feel included or not at every level at school which will assist in improving the services for them   as end users. In carrying out further

research, the UNESCO support materials referenced that I researched for this study will be able to assist school staff, administrators and decision makers in their different roles in promoting inclusive education and for policy makers to bring about the changes needed that will make inclusion a reality.

As a final thought, what I have tried to research and illustrate in these five chapters reveal that, government policies and professionals should ideally work closely with school practitioners including parents and students. Their voices need to be an integral part of developing policies and in reviewing inclusive practices. This approach will lead to impact change on the thinking, understanding and practice in the field. It is pivotal for all staff in all the public schools to get familiar and in-depth knowledge of the SEN policy guide. Knowledge of its content will begin to give teachers a better understanding of disabilities and what to do, who to approach and talk to when these students arrive in their classes. Such an approach is important in the development of inclusive practices. As seen in the conclusion, engaging with the contents of the policy may essentially require school staff within their specific school context to work together to identify and address barriers to participation and learning experienced by the students. This will also require some form of increased collaborative discussions between ADEC, the education zone offices, the schools, parents and other relevant stakeholders. This study therefore contributes theory, by offering a more contemporary, robust practice to be an inclusive school, advocates for the use of innovative structures in school management. Consequently, the positive changes brought about by valuing the education of students with disabilities, and the worthy contributions they can bring into their communities and the wider world can be harnessed.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: ADEC Special Education Policy & Procedures Handbook

ABU DHABI EDUCATION COUNCIL
POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

1.1 CONTEXT FOR THE POLICY

UAE Federal Law 14/2009

This is an amendment of the original UAE Federal Law 29, Article 12 (2006), which described entitlements for people with disabilities. This has now been replaced by entitlement for people with Special Needs. (see definitions)

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

This is supported by the Ministry of Education document 'School for All': General Rules for the Provision of Special Education Programs and Services (Public and Private Schools), 2010

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students with special educational needs, including those who are gifted or talented, are able to reach their full potential within a supportive educational environment that prepares them well for adult life. This will allow them to:

- Participate as equally as possible in the available educational opportunities
- Make progress and achieve an age appropriate accredited education
- Make a positive contribution to their local and wider communities
- Develop and maintain their physical, mental and emotional health
- Achieve economic well-being through access to educational and vocational opportunities beyond school

POLICY

All schools have students with special educational needs. Schools will meet special educational needs through the following approaches:

1. Schools will adopt a staged approach as part of the continuum of educational services provided to meet the individual needs of students with special educational needs. (Refer Section 2.1)

2. Admission of students with special educational needs to schools is supported by ADEC. The first consideration for the placement of a student with special educational needs will be an inclusive one. Inclusion means that the primary instruction and provision of special education services to a student with special needs are delivered in an age appropriate general education class, close to the student's home with supports to both teacher and student. (Refer Section 4.2)

3. Learning support teams will be established in all schools as part of providing academic support services. (Refer Section 2.2)

4. Academic learning support services within schools will be available to assist any student who experiences learning difficulties in general education (see definitions below). These services will be a first step toward addressing such difficulties and will eliminate unnecessary referrals to special education services by identifying instructional strategies and alternative educational methods for teachers in order to improve learning outcomes for these students. (Refer Section 2.3)

5. When a student is identified as having a documented disability through the completion of a multi-disciplinary evaluation, additional educational services will be made available based on individual needs via the regional Special Education Support Services. (Refer Section 1.3)

6. Students with special or advanced learning plan needs will be offered the opportunity to engage in all aspects of the school program, including extra-curricular activities, to the maximum extent appropriate to their needs. Where necessary, appropriate accommodations and modifications will be put into place to assist with this engagement. (Refer Section 2.5)

7. When a student with special educational needs is placed in a separate setting because of individual needs, transition to a general education placement will be planned when appropriate. The Regional Special Services Team leads this process.

IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY IN SCHOOLS

These are the actions that schools will need to take in order to meet the requirements of this policy:

1. Adopt a staged approach to meeting student needs
2. Establish the school Learning Support Team (LST)
3. Admit students with special needs to age appropriate classes through specified registration process
4. Identify the special needs of students within the school context
5. Involve parents
6. Identify staff development needed to achieve inclusive classroom practice
7. Develop, implement and review individual plans
8. Assess progress from student's own baseline
9. Apply effective academic modifications, adaptations and exemptions where needed (day to day and for tests/exams etc)
10. Refer to external support services where needed

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS – DEFINITIONS

Special Educational Needs

The overall description for any disability, disorder, difficulty, impairment, exceptionality or other additional need that affects a student's access to learning and their educational performance. These students require additional provision beyond that provided in general classrooms in order to achieve greatest benefit from the curriculum. This term is used throughout this document to encompass effective academic progress to all such needs, including students who are gifted and talented.

Special Education

Describes the additional provision that is made to meet special educational needs to ensure that all students, including those who are gifted and talented, can reach their full potential.

'Disability', 'Impairment' and 'Disorder'

Medical terms used to describe a diagnosis of an organic disorder or pathology. Educational needs arise from problems that result from the disability, impairment or disorder. Such needs are long term or permanent, and where they are significant the student is entitled to special education support services via referral to the regional Special Education Services Team. (Refer Section 4.3)

Appendix 2: Ministry of Education 'School For All' Policy Excerpt

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful!

The people of the United Arab Emirates have an enormous amount of concern for the needs of individuals with special needs which stems from our traditional cultural beliefs that emphasize a philosophy of social responsibility for the needs of all members of society. Therefore, having concern for the needs of individuals with special needs and being committed to helping them develop to their fullest potential is not only the responsibility of families of individuals with special needs. It is a duty for all members of society. Education is a resource which all members of society may utilize to develop to their maximum potential, therefore ensuring that individuals with special needs have equal access to a quality inclusive education is a priority for all members of society and requires that government authorities unite in our efforts to utilize our resources to meet the educational needs of individuals with special needs.

The philosophy of inclusive education in schools in the United Arab Emirates was envisioned by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and his brothers, the rulers of Emirates - May Allah protect them all - and supported by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy President of the UAE and Head of the Ministerial Council - May Allah protect him - and was transformed into Federal Law 29/2006 Regarding the Rights of Individuals With Special Needs. The law stipulates that "special needs in themselves are not an obstruction to joining or getting admission into an educational institution, no matter whether it is a public or private institution". This law shows the great compassion and concern that our noble leaders have for the needs of others and their belief that equal access to a quality education will help individuals with special needs develop to their full potential.

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

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all individuals and organizations involved as we continue to unite together and strive to meet the challenges that lie ahead as we embark on this exciting journey of putting the philosophy of inclusion into practice in the United Arab Emirates.

Hameed Mohammed Al Qatamy
Minister of Education

School for All — 7

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Appendix 2 Cont'd: Ministry of Education 'School For All' Policy Excerpt

Philosophy, Vision and Mission for Special Education in the UAE

Philosophy for Special Education

Each student is unique in his own way and needs to be provided with a safe, caring and stimulating environment to grow and mature emotionally, intellectually, physically and socially. Educators demonstrate a commitment to teach all students and provide them with a safe and supportive environment to develop to their maximum potential based on their individual strengths and challenges.

Vision for Special Education

Our vision is to provide educational programs and related services to students with special needs and gifts and talents in public and private schools in the UAE that reflect the best international standards and practices to prepare them to be productive members of society.

Mission for Special Education

Use all available resources to plan, implement, and monitor the provision of special education programs and related services to students with special needs and gifts and talents and ensure that they receive an Individual Education Program (IEP) or Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) based on their strengths and needs to enhance their social competence and enable them to maximize their contributions to their communities.

Philosophy of Inclusive Education

The provision of support and equal access to educational programs and services for students with special needs and gifts and talents are the priorities of the educational policy in the United Arab Emirates and reflect the philosophy of inclusive education. Inclusive education means that all students have the right to be educated to the extent possible with their age-appropriate peers who do not necessarily have disabilities in the general education setting of their neighborhood school with support provided. Inclusive education is not intended to limit the participation of students with special needs to regular education programs and services. Rather, inclusive education means that students with special needs have the opportunity to participate in educational programs and services in the least restrictive environment that is commensurate with their individual strengths and needs. In many cases, the least restrictive environment is the regular education classroom, though not all the time.

'School for All

Appendix 3: Individual Education Plan template

Individualised Education Plan

مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم

خطة التعليم الفردية

مدرسة الأصالة للبنات اح/1

Part I. Student Information

الجزء الأول – بيانات الطالبة

Student Name اسم الطالبة	رقم الطالبة Student Number	تاريخ اجتماع خطة التعليم الفردية Date of IEP Meeting
Attending School الملتحق بمدرسة الأصالة للتعليم	الصف Grade	تاريخ الميلاد Date of Birth
Parent/Guardian الأهل/ ولي الأمر سيف عبد الله الغافري	رقم هاتف المنزل Home Phone:	رقم هاتف الجوال Mobile:
	البريد الإلكتروني Email:	البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بالعمل Work Email:
Parent/Guardian الأهل/ ولي الأمر	رقم هاتف المنزل Home Phone:	رقم هاتف الجوال Mobile:
	البريد الإلكتروني Email:	البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بالعمل Work Email:
Student Address عنوان الطالبة		

Part II. Eligibility

الجزء الثاني — الأهلية

Area(s) of Eligibility (Specify Disability)	جانب/ جوانب الأهلية (تحديد حالة الأعاقة) تأخر عقلي بسيط
Date of this IEP Meeting تاريخ إجتماع خطة التعليم الفردية هذه	تاريخ مراجعة خطة التعليم الفردية هذه Date this IEP will be Reviewed
Date of *Initial Referral* تاريخ الإحالة المبنية	تاريخ استلام الموافقة على عمل التقييم Date of *Consent to Evaluate Received*

نوع الإجتماع Type of Meeting	الإجتماع المبدئي ☐ Initial Meeting	المراجعة المطلوبة ☐Requested Review	مراجعة سنوية ☐Annual Review	إعادة التقييم ☐Re –evaluation

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Appendix 3 Cont'd: Individual Education Plan template

Individualised Education Plan	مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم
خطة التعليم الفردية	مدرسة اللأصالة للبنات \ح1

Part III. IEP Team Participants
الجزء الثالث- الفريق المشارك في خطة التعليم الفردية

فريق خطة التعليم الفردية: من شارك في اجتماع خطة التعليم الفردية هذه؟ IEP Team: *Who participated in this IEP Meeting?*	التاريخ Date
Parent/Guardian الأهل / ولي الأمر	
Parent/Guardian الأهل / ولي الأمر	
Student الطالب	
Principal/Designee مدير المدرسة/المكلف	
Special Education Teacher, SENCO مدرس التعليم الخاص، منسق ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة	
General Education Teacher مدرس التعليم العام	
General Education Teacher مدرس التعليم العام	
المسمى الوظيفي لعضو الفريق المسؤول عن مشاركة المعلومات في خطة التعليم الفردية مع جميع مقدمي الخدمات: **Title of Team Member Responsible for Sharing Information in the IEP with All Service Providers:**	

Other أخرى	
Other أخرى	
Other أخرى	
Other أخرى	

Information Related to Current Levels of Educational Performance

Results of Recent Evaluation(s)	نتائج آخر تقييم (تقييمات)

Appendix 3 Cont'd: Individual Education Plan template

	Individualised Education Plan خطة التعليم الفردية	مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم مدرسة الأصالة للبنات \ح1

Current Levels of Functioning	مستويات الأداء الحالية
Academic: الأكاديمي	
Environmental: البيئي	
Behavioural: السلوكي	
Social Emotional الإحساس الاجتماعي	
Medical: الطبية	

Parental Concerns مخاوف لدى الأهل
Please Note any Parental Concerns: الرجاء كتابة أي مخاوف من قبل الأهل

Individualised Education Plan

مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم

خطة التعليم الفردية

مدرسة الأصالة للبنات \ح1

التاريخ: _____   رقم الطالبة: _____   اسم الطالبة: _____

Student Name _____ _____ ID#_____ Date _____

الأهداف السنوية وقصيرة المدى

Annual and Short Term Goals

Area of Need:	جانب الإحتياج:
Present Level of Performance	مستوى الآداء الحالي

Strengths:	نقاط القوة:	Needs:	الإحتياجات:
			1- تحتاج الطالبة لضبط سلوك أكثر داخل وخارج الصف 2- لاتستطيع الطالبة تسمية الاشياء والصور المحيطة من خلالها بشكل مباشر 3- تحتاج لتكرار الاوامر عليها عدة مرات حتى تستجيب

كيف يؤثر هذا الجانب من الإحتياج على مشاركة الطالبة/ تقدمها في منهاج التعليم العام أو في بعض الحالات الأنشطة المناسبة للفئة العمرية؟

How does this area of need impact this student's participation/progress in the general education curriculum or in some instances, age-appropriate activities?

Appendix 3 Cont'd: Individual Education Plan template

الأهداف السنوية: ماذا ينبغي على هذه الطالبة أن تعرف أو أن تكون قادرة على عمله؟			
Annual Goal: What does this student need to know or be able to do?			

الأهداف قصيرة المدى: ما هي الخطوات القصيرة لتحقيق الهدف؟	التقدم: متى سيتّم تقييم التقدم نحو الهدف؟			
Short Term Objectives: What are the small steps to get there	**Progress:** When will progress towards goals be evaluated?			
	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم
	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ
	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم

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Appendix 3 Cont'd: Individual Education Plan template

	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ
	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم	Progress التقدم
	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ	Date التاريخ

كيف سيتّم قياس التقدم نحو هذا الهدف السنوي؟ (ضعي علامة على كل ما ينطبق)

How will progress towards this annual goal be measured? (Tick all that apply)

Classroom Participation المشاركة الصفية   Observation الملاحظة √   Written Reports √ التقارير المكتوبة

Class work الأعمال الصفية √   Special Projects مشاريع خاصة   Portfolios ملف الإنجازات

Homework الواجبات المنزلية   Tests and Quizzes الإمتحانات والإختبارات القصيرة   Other: أخرى

Appendix 3 Cont'd: Individual Education Plan template

اسم الطالبة: _____   رقم الطالبة: _____   التاريخ: _____

Student Name _____ _____   ID# _____ Date _____

Curriculum / Classroom Accommodations and Modifications
المنهاج/ ملائمة الصف وتعديلاته

ما هي عملية الملائمة والأدوات المساعدة التكميلية المستخدمة في التعليم العام أو التغييرات في المنهاج العام والتي تحتاجها هذه الطالبة بسبب جوانب احتياجاتها الخاصة؟

What accommodations and supplementary aids and services, supports in general education, or modifications to the general curriculum does this student require because of his/her area(s) of need?

Flexible Schedule جدول مرن

☐ Extended Time زمن إضافي

☐ Frequent Breaks أوقات إستراحة متكررة

☐ Other أخرى

Visual Aids مساعدات بصرية

☐ Place Keeper أداة التتبع

☐ Magnifying Glass عدسة مكبرة

☐ Graphic Organisers منظم الرسم

Alternate Written Response إجابة مكتوبة بديلة

☐ Respond using a Word Processor الإستجابة باستخدام برنامج معالجة الكلمات

☐ Respond using a Brailler الإستجابة باستخدام جهاز بريل

☐ Keyboard Modification (*if available) تغيير في لوحة المفاتيح (*إن وجد)

☐ Use of Tape recorder for Pre-Writing activities? استخدام مسجل الصوت لأنشطة ما قبل الكتابة

☐ Dictation to a Scribe الإملاء على الكاتب

☐ Voice Activation Software برنامج تفعيل الصوت

☐ Other أخرى

Amplification Equipment معدات تضخيم الصوت

☐ Assistive Listening Device (FM System) جهاز السمع المساعد (نظام أف أم سيستم)

☐ Acoustic Accessibility مضخم الصوت

Spelling Aids مساعدات التهجئة

☐ Spell Checker مصحح الإملاء

☐ Spelling/Bilingual Dictionary قاموس ثنائي اللغة

Increased Size of Answer Sheet الحجم المكبر لورقة الإجابة

☐ Enlarged Answer Document ورقة الإجابة المكبرة

☐ Enlarged Test Booklets كتيب الإمتحان المكبر

Math Aids أدوات مساعدة في الرياضيات

☐ Abacus المعداد

☐ Number Line خط الأرقام

Reading in Arabic/English of Directions/Assignments قراءة التعليمات/ الواجبات باللغة العربية/الإنجليزية

☐ Reading in Arabic/English of Directions قراءة التعليمات باللغة العربية/ الإنجليزية

☐ Fraction Bar/Circle شريط الكسور/الدائرة

☐ Reading in Arabic/English of Assignments قراءة الواجبات باللغة العربية/ الإنجليزية

☐ Multiplication Chart جدول الضرب

☐ Read on Student Request القراءة عند طلب الطالب

☐ Calculator or Arithmetic Tables آلة حاسبة أو جداول حاسبة

Appendix 3 Cont'd: Individual Education Plan template

Individualised Education Plan

خطة التعليم الفردية

مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم

مدرسة الأصالة للبنات 1ح\

مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council

Alternate Means of Responding   الوصول للنص / وسائل بديلة للإجابة   أخرى Other

☐ Opportunity to Respond Orally   فرصة للإجابة شفهياً   ☐ Oral Administration الطريقة الشفهية

☐Mark in Assignment Document وضع علامة على ورقة الواجب   ☐ Shortened Assignments مهمات مختصرة

☐ Student Records Answers on Tape الطالب يسجل إجابته على شريط

☐Clearly Defined Limits/Expectations حدود/ توقعات محددة وواضحة

☐Electronic Text نص إلكتروني   ☐Positive Reinforcement System نظام التعزيز الإيجابي

☐Large Print طباعة كبيرة   ☐Behaviour Intervention Plan خطة الدعم السلوكي

☐Braille لغة بريل   ☐Reduced Paper and Pencil Tasks التخفيف من الواجبات الكتابية

☐Access to Audio Materials الوصول الى المواد المسموعة   ☐Highlighted Text/Materials تظليل النص/ المواد

☐Assistive Technology تقنيات مساعدة

☐Peer Tutoring/Paired Working Assignments التعليم بين الأقران/ الواجبات الثنائية

☐Other أخرى   practical support in science
الواجبات   ☐Assignment Notebook دفتر

☐Other أخرى   planned activities in PE

☐Otherأخرى all lessons timetables on ground floor   ☐Group Size حجم المجموعة

Other actions by Learning Support Team:

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Appendix 4- Index for Inclusion

QUESTIONNAIRE 1: INDICATORS

Please tick the boxes for the the groups below which describe your involvement with the school:

☐ teacher ☐ teaching assistant ☐ other member of staff ☐ parent/carer

☐ child or young person ☐ governor ☐ other (please specify) _____

Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ▶

			Agree	Agree and disagree	Disagree	Need more information
Dimension A – Creating inclusive cultures						
A1: Building community	1	Everyone is welcomed.				
	2	Staff co-operate.				
	3	Children help each other.				
	4	Staff and children respect one another.				
	5	Staff and parents/carers collaborate.				
	6	Staff and governors work well together.				
	7	The school is a model of democratic citizenship.				
	8	The school encourages an understanding of the interconnections between people around the world.				
	9	Adults and children are responsive to a variety of ways of being a gender.				
	10	The school and local communities develop each other.				
	11	Staff link what happens in school to children's lives at home.				
A2: Establishing inclusive values	1	The school develops shared inclusive values.				
	2	The school encourages respect for all human rights.				
	3	The school encourages respect for the integrity of planet earth.				
	4	Inclusion is viewed as increasing participation for all.				
	5	Expectations are high for all children.				
	6	Children are valued equally.				
	7	The school counters all forms of discrimination.				
	8	The school promotes non-violent interactions and resolutions to disputes.				
	9	The school encourages children and adults to feel good about themselves.				
	10	The school contributes to the health of children and adults.				
Dimension B – Producing inclusive policies						
B1: Developing the school for all	1	The school has a participatory development process.				
	2	The school has an inclusive approach to leadership.				
	3	Appointments and promotions are fair.				
	4	Staff expertise is known and used.				
	5	All new staff are helped to settle into the school.				
	6	The school seeks to admit all children from its locality.				
	7	All new children are helped to settle into the school.				
	8	Teaching and learning groups are arranged fairly to support all children's learning.				
	9	Children are well prepared for moving on to other settings.				
	10	The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people.				
	11	The buildings and grounds are developed to support participation of all.				
	12	The school reduces its carbon footprint and use of water.				
	13	The school contributes to the reduction of waste.				

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Appendix 4 Cont'd - Index for Inclusion

		Please tick the box that best reflects your opinion ▶	Agree	Agree and disagree	Disagree	Need more information
B2: Organising support for diversity	1	All forms of support are co-ordinated.				
	2	Professional development activities help staff to respond to diversity.				
	3	English as an additional language support is a resource for the whole school.				
	4	The school supports continuity in the education of children in public care.				
	5	The school ensures that policies about 'special educational needs' support inclusion.				
	6	The behaviour policy is linked to learning and curriculum development.				
	7	Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased.				
	8	Barriers to attendance are reduced.				
	9	Bullying is minimised.				
Dimension C – Evolving inclusive practices						
C1: Constructing curricula for all	1	Children explore cycles of food production and consumption.				
	2	Children investigate the importance of water.				
	3	Children study clothing and decoration of the body.				
	4	Children find out about housing and the built environment.				
	5	Children consider how and why people move around their locality and the world.				
	6	Children learn about health and relationships.				
	7	Children investigate the earth, the solar system and the universe.				
	8	Children study life on earth.				
	9	Children investigate sources of energy.				
	10	Children learn about communication and communication technology.				
	11	Children engage with, and create, literature arts and music.				
	12	Children learn about work and link it to the development of their interests.				
	13	Children learn about ethics, power and government.				
C2: Orchestrating learning	1	Learning activities are planned with all children in mind.				
	2	Learning activities encourage the participation of all children.				
	3	Children are encouraged to be confident critical thinkers.				
	4	Children are actively involved in their own learning.				
	5	Children learn from each other.				
	6	Lessons develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between people.				
	7	Assessments encourage the achievements of all children.				
	8	Discipline is based on mutual respect.				
	9	Staff plan, teach and review together.				
	10	Staff develop shared resources to support learning.				
	11	Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all children.				
	12	Homework is set so that it contributes to every child's learning.				
	13	Activities outside formal lessons are made available for all children.				
	14	Resources in the locality of the school are known and used.				

Appendix 4 Cont'd - Index for Inclusion

A1.1 Everyone is welcomed.

> A2.9 The school encourages children and adults to feel good about themselves;
> B1.6 The school seeks to admit all children from its locality.

a) Is the first contact that people have with the school welcoming?

b) Do staff, children and families create a sense of community at the school?

c) Is the school welcoming to all parents/carers and other members of its local communities?

d) Is the school welcoming to those who have recently arrived from elsewhere in the country or other countries?

e) Do staff, children and parents/carers greet each other in a polite and friendly way?

f) Do staff, children, parents and governors make an effort to learn each other's names?

g) Are people's spirits lifted by a visit to the school?

h) Is the quality of relationships seen to be more important for making people feel welcome than the quality of buildings and equipment?

i) Is the school welcoming to all children from its local communities, irrespective of financial circumstances, family arrangements, heritage and attainment?

j) Is the school concerned to welcome those who may have faced exclusion and discrimination such as travellers, refugees, asylum seekers and children with impairments?

k) Do documents, notices and displays demonstrate that the school welcomes people with heritages and identities not currently represented in the school?

l) Does information provided to parents/carers and job applicants make clear that having children and staff with diverse backgrounds and interests is important to the school?

m) Is school information made accessible to all, for example by being translated, Brailled, audio recorded, or in large print when necessary?

n) Are sign language and other first language interpreters available when necessary?

o) Does the entrance hall reflect all members of the school and its communities in signs and displays?

p) Do displays link the school to other parts of the country and the world?

q) Is the entrance designed for the enjoyment of adults and children connected to the school rather that to impress inspectors?

r) Do signs and displays avoid jargon and clichés?

s) Are there positive rituals for welcoming new children and staff and marking their leaving whenever this happens and whoever it involves?

t) Do children feel ownership of their classrooms or tutor room?

u) Do children, parents/carers, staff, governors and community members all feel ownership of the school?

v) _____

w) _____

x) _____

Appendix 4 Cont'd - Index for Inclusion

C2.2 Learning activities encourage the participation of all children.

C2.1 Learning activities are planned with all children in mind.

a) Do learning activities involve shared experiences that can be developed by children in a variety of ways?

b) Do teachers avoid specifying expectations for learning as lesson objectives?

c) Do lessons regularly take the form of enquiries guided by open-ended questions?

d) Do teachers limit asking questions to which they expect a single right answer?

e) Do lessons build on the experience, knowledge and skills children have acquired outside school?

f) Do lessons involve children emotionally?

g) Do lessons convey a sense of excitement and pleasure in learning?

h) Do teachers demonstrate their own love of learning?

i) Is the spoken and written language used in lessons made accessible to all children?

j) Is technical vocabulary only used where necessary and explained and practised during lessons?

k) Are children encouraged to say when they do not understand something?

l) Can children record their work in a variety of ways, using drawings, photographs, video-recording and sound recording as well as writing?

m) Do lessons encourage dialogue between staff and children and between children?

n) Do children learn how to question each other in order to support each other's learning?

o) Do lessons encourage children to talk about the processes of thinking and learning?

p) Do children initiate further independent work when they have finished a task suggested by a teacher?

q) Do adults and children improve their Internet skills to assist learning at school and home?

r) Are any worksheets clearly written so that they extend the learning of children?

s) Do children learning English as an additional language have opportunities in lessons to speak, write or sign in their first language and use their skills of translation?

t) Do staff make the adjustments necessary for the participation of children with impairments?

u) Do staff recognise the physical effort expended on tasks by some children with impairments or chronic illness, and the tiredness that can result?

v) Do staff recognise the mental effort involved in lip-reading and using aids to vision?

w) Are technological advances exploited, such as speech recognition programmes to support children who experience severe difficulties in writing?

x) _____

y) _____

z) _____

Appendix 5 – ADEC Checklist for Class Observation

Appendix 5 – Checklist for Class Observation

Teacher Observed:		ERP#		Observer:
Date of Observation:	Time:	Length of Observation:		Title:
Subject (Math/English/Arabic/etc..)		Topic:		

Area	Did the teacher:	Observed Yes No	Comments
Lesson planning and organization	a) Communicate a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at its start. b) Have the necessary materials and resources ready for the class. c) Is there a clear connection between the lesson objectives and the school curriculum (ADEC/MOE)? d) Review what students have learned at the end of the lesson. Ensure practical activity has a clear purpose in improving students' understanding or achievement.		
Engagement of students and behavioral management.	a Keep all students engaged (doing the intended exercise) throughout the lesson b Correct unnecessary behavior immediately? c Praise good achievement and effort. d Treat all students equitably and with respect. e Follow the ADEC Guidelines for managing positive student behavior. Create an environment that encourages constructive student Involvement. Encourage the students to use a variety of problem solving techniques. f Listen and respond to pupils.		
Differentiation	a Adjust lessons appropriately to challenge all students in the class based on their prior learning or ability. b Vary motivational strategies for different individuals. Use effective prompts depending on level of disability.		
	c Allow students to take responsibility for their own learning by working independently. d Teach to different learning styles (Visual/Aural, etc....) e Use a range of strategies for learning, i.e. Whole class, group, independent. etc... f Facilitate participation in discussions/ check understanding of instructions		

. **Assessment for learning**	a	Use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding		
	b	Explain to students how they will be assessed and the criteria for their grade.		
	c	Focus on understanding and meaning more than actual memory; skills mastery.		
	d	Use a variety of assessment strategies.		
	e	Provide evidence of student' written work having been marked or otherwise assessed through constructive feedback		
. **Inquiry /exploration /application of understanding**	a	Provide opportunity for or examples of applications in real-life settings.		
	b	Encourage creativity by allowing students to develop unique responses to questions and prompts.		
Conclusions (optional)		Did anything stand out in this lesson? Did the teacher show growth from previous observations or address any recommendations?		

; the classroom an inclusive learning environment?	Observed	
	Yes	No
he overall classroom environment is conducive to learning		
tudent list of names visible (for safety protocols)		
he room is arranged appropriately for the lesson observed, enabling adult and peer		
tudent work on display reflects current unit and shows differentiation		
; there adequate space to freely maneuver?		
uitable adjustable chairs and tables		
:esources readily accessible to students- visuals		
:esources to support independent learning, e.g. memory cards, wall charts, posters,		
.ccommodations' resources evident, e.g. Braille, magnifying glass, enlarged texts, scribe,		
:lass rules and consequences displayed focusing on positive behavior models		
:lassroom complies with Workplace Health and Safety Guidelines – e.g. Bags are safely		
eacher uses varied learning styles, effective prompts to accommodate varying attention		
ctivities encourage the use of gradual release teaching approaches on a practical level		
:ontinuous positive feedback is evident to keep students motivated and suitably challenged		
uddying systems and peer support encouraged and facilitated		
tudents are encouraged to work in collaborative ways in flexible groups		
upport teacher in classrooms know the students well		
xtra time given in assessments as well as alternative assessments available		

Appendix 6 – Non classroom Observation Checklist

Observation Questions	Observed Yes/No	Comments and Evidence
Is student playing with peers?		
Is play being facilitated and by who?		
Have accommodations been made to facilitate peer participation, e.g. tools, aids, ramps,		
Is student communicating and sharing with peers?		
Do they have access to the same resources at play or extracurricular activity?		
Is student accepted into the group and following group rules?		
What positive motivational strategies are being used by staff to encourage student participation?		
How are students encouraged to collaborate and share?		
Is there evidence of buddying schemes in operation?		
How are students encouraged to express themselves?		
Is there eye contact maintained with student at all times?		
Is there a qualified adult who knows the student available at all times?		

Appendix 7 – Guide questions for interview

Semi - Structured Interview Questions- Initial pilot study and final Questions

A: Interview questions to Head of ADEC, Special Education Division

1) Why did ADEC decide to embrace inclusion?
2) Do you feel you have a robust policy for students with individual education needs that successfully meet world class standards?
3) How has ADEC SEN Department shared their vision of inclusive education with parents and the wider community?
4) What is the admission policy for students with disabilities into Cycle one in ADEC schools?
5) What is the exact process followed to accept a student in an inclusive primary school?
6) What kind of referral is needed to accept a student? Do you require a specialist diagnosis report?
7) To what extent are school staff and students engaging with the policy?
8) How would you envisage better inclusive practices in the future?
9) What types of students with disabilities are accepted in ADEC schools and what is the acceptable ratio in mainstream classes?
10) Do parents take an active role in developing education plans for their children?
11) What are the provisions currently provided by ADEC to assist schools to become inclusive?
12) What teacher training is provided by ADEC?
13) Does ADEC provide a modified curriculum to students with disabilities?
14) Who carries out these modifications and are students with disabilities given the opportunity for alternative assessments that meet their needs?
15) Do you have mechanisms for parents or teachers to voice their concerns?
16) What evaluative measures does ADEC SEN Section use to monitor the policy progress of schools operating within functional inclusive systems?

Appendix 8: Interview questions to Principals

1) What is the vision and mission statement in your school to promote an inclusive culture?

2) How do you share the Abu Dhabi 2030 Vision on an inclusive school with staff?

3) What is your understanding of the 'School for All' initiative and how does your practice reflect this?

4) How do your leadership skills foster a philosophy and belief in inclusion for all students?

5) Do you have qualified staff who can meet the needs of SEN students?

6) Do the staff receive continuous professional development to increase their knowledge and skills in working within inclusive classrooms?

7) Do you feel the school has fully adopted the Initiative? Are there any signs of progress made, where and how – please give some examples.

8) What processes are being followed to make these school inclusive, e.g extracurricular activities?

9) What categories of children with SEN are present in your school?

10) Do you have students with the following SEN in your classroom: Learning Difficulty, Behavioral Disorders, Physical Disability, Hearing Impairments, Visual Impairments, Communication Disorders, Health Impairments, Intellectual Challenges, (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)?

11) What are your goals for all your staff and students?

12) What steps have you taken in your school to include students at an individual level so they can access the curriculum? (modifying the curriculum and teaching aids used) Any benefits seen?

13) What do you see as your role/responsibility to the students with disabilities who are included in your school?

14) Describe your leadership style.

15) Do you use collaborative partnerships in your school, such as peer buddy systems?

16) What examination accommodations do you make for children with any form of disability?

17) Should students with special needs be given every opportunity to function in the general classroom where possible? Why?

18) Do you feel the inclusion of students with special needs can be beneficial for students without disabilities?

19) Teaching children with special needs is likely to create confusion in the general education classroom. What are your views about this statement?

Appendix 8 cont'd: Interview questions to Principals

20) Inclusion promotes self-esteem among children with special needs. Do you agree or not. Explain.

21) Who benefits from inclusive education – all students, teachers, parents, community? How?

22) What is your understanding of ADEC's 4 Staged Approach to intervention?

23) How are SEN children diagnosed? Are there any early intervention policies in this school for children with special needs?

24) Do parents take an active role throughout the intervention process?

25) What systems are in place for parents to voice their concerns?

26) Who is responsible for special educational needs in the school?

27) What do you see as your greatest challenge as a school leader?

28) What are some of your emotions that you have felt through the inclusion process? (Frustration? Excitement? Joy? Exhaustion?)

29) How was inclusion introduced to you at this school?

30) If you could ask for three things to improve inclusion and your practices as a successful inclusive leader, what would they be?

31) Do you feel like it would be more helpful to know more about the policies and special education systems and what drives supports? How comfortable are you with the terminology?

32) What do you think is the most important thing to make an inclusive school culture work?

Appendix 9 - Interview questions to teachers, social workers and educational
Psychologists.

1) What are your qualifications and how long have you been teaching/supporting students with needs?

2) What is your teaching philosophy?

3) What is your understanding of the 'School for All' Initiative and how does your practice reflect this?

4) How do you share the Abu Dhabi 2030 Vision on an inclusive school with colleagues?

5) Do you feel the school has fully adopted the Initiative? How – give examples.

6) Have you ever taught in an inclusive school before? Where?

7) What processes are being followed to make this school inclusive?

8) What categories of children with SEN are present in your classroom and school?

9) Have you received any training on teaching children with special needs in mainstream classroom? What type of training did you receive?

10) Do you have students with the following SEN in your classroom/school: Learning Difficulty, Behavioral Disorders, Physical Disability, Hearing Impairments, Visual Impairments, Communication Disorders, Health Impairments, Intellectual Challenges, (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)?

11) What are your goals for all the students?

12) What steps have you taken in your lesson/school to engage students at an individual level so they can access the curriculum? (modifying the curriculum and teaching aids used) Any benefits seen?

13) What do you see as your role/responsibility as to the students with disabilities who are included in your classroom/school?

14) Describe your teaching and support style.

15) Do you use collaborative partnerships in your classroom/school, such as peer buddy systems?

16) What examination accommodations do you make for children with any form of disability?

17) Should students with special needs be given every opportunity to function in the general classroom where possible? Why?

18) Do you feel the inclusion of students with special needs can be beneficial for students without disabilities?

19) Teaching children with special needs is likely to create confusion in the general education classroom. What are your views about this statement?

20) Inclusion promotes self esteem among children with special needs. Do you agree or not. Explain.

21) Who benefits from inclusive education – all students, teachers, parents, community? How?

22) Are you ready to teach students with disabilities in your classrooms/school in future? Give reasons for or against the idea.

23) What is your understanding of ADEC's 4 Staged Approach to intervention?

24) How are SEN children diagnosed? Are there any early intervention policies in this school for children with special needs?

25) Do parents take an active role throughout the intervention process?

26) What systems are in place for parents to voice their concerns?

27) Who is responsible for special educational needs in the school?

28) What do you see as your greatest challenge as a teacher?

29) How often do you collaborate with the special education inclusion teacher?

30) Describe your experience with students with disabilities as part of your classes/school duties over the years.

31) Do you always plan on teaching and working in inclusive classrooms? Why? Or Why not?

32) What is the best part about working in an inclusive classroom/school?

33) What would you say/advice would you give to general education teachers against or worried about teaching in an inclusive classroom or school?

34) How are you able to prevent students with disabilities from simply being "helped" by peers and instead thought of as an equal, competent member of the class/school and friend to others?

35) Could you please talk about your decision to embed choices throughout your activities and duties?

36) What are some of your emotions that you have felt through the inclusion process? (Frustration? Excitement? Joy? Exhaustion?)

37) Did you have conversations with the mainstream, SEN teacher, social worker or psychologist about your feelings and frustrations? Trying times?

38) How was inclusion introduced to you at this school?

39) What type of student do you think would not be able to be successfully included in your classroom? Why?

40) If you could ask for three things to improve inclusion and your practices as a successful inclusive teacher/professional, what would they be?

41) Do you feel like it would be more helpful to know more about the policies and special education systems and what drives supports? How comfortable are you with the terminology?

42) What do you think is the most important thing to make an inclusive classroom work?

43) Would it be more helpful if the special education teacher spent more time in and outside the classroom collaborating with you?

44) Can you evaluate the cooperation between the learning support team, the school and the parents?

Appendix 10 – BUiD Permission Letter

الجامعة
البريطانية في
دبي

The
British University
in Dubai

19 March 2015

Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC)
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

This is to certify that Ms Jacqueline Lottin with ID Number 2013121008 is a registered student in the Doctor of Education programme in The British University in Dubai, since September 2013.

Ms Lottin is currently working on her research and the title is "'A Case Study Investigation of Special Needs Inclusion Policy Implementation in UAE Public Schools". Her research requires gathering data through a questionnaire, interviews and classroom observations. Your permission to conduct her research in your organisation is hereby requested. Further support provided to her in this regard will be highly appreciated.

This letter is issued on Ms Lottin's request.

Yours sincerely,

Amer Alaya
Head of Student Administration

www.buid.ac.ae | P O Box 345015, Block 11, 1st & 2nd Floors, Dubai International Academic City, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Tel. +971 4 391 3626, Fax +971 4 366 4698

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Appendix 11 – ADEC Permission Access into Schools Letter

مجـلـس أبـوظـبـي للـتعـلـيـم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education first التعليم أولاً

Date: 13th May 2015	التاريخ: 13 مايو 2015
Ref:	الرقم:
To: Public Schools Principals,	السادة / مديري المدارس الحكومية
Subject: Letter of Permission	الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة باحثين
Dear Principals,	تحية طيبة وبعد،،،
The Abu Dhabi Education Council would like to express its gratitude for your generous efforts & sincere cooperation in serving our dear students.	يطيبُ لمجلس أبوظبي للتعليم أن يتوجه لكم بخالص الشكر والتقدير لجهودكم الكريمة والتعاون الصادق لخدمة أبنائنا الطلبة.
You are kindly requested to allow the researcher/ **Jacqueline Mattio Lottin**, to complete her research on:	ونود إعلامكم بموافقة مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم على موضوع الدراسة التي ستجريها الباحثة/جاكولين ماتيو لوتين ، بعنوان:
A Case Study Investigation of Special Needs Inclusuion Policy Implementation in 3 in Abu Dhabi Public Schools	**A Case Study Investigation of Special Needs Inclusuion Policy Implementation in 3 in Abu Dhabi Public Schools**
Please indicate your approval of this permission by facilitating her meetings with the sample groups at your respected schools.	لذا، يرجى التكرم بتسهيل مهمة الباحثة ومساعدتها على إجراء الدراسة المشار إليها.
For further information: please contact **Mr Helmy Seada** on 02/6150140	للاستفسار: يرجى الاتصال بالسيد/ **حلمي سعدة** على الهاتف 02/6150140
Thank you for your cooperation.	شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم
Sincerely yours,	وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير،

محمد سالم محمد الظاهري
المدير التنفيذي لقطاع العمليات المدرسية

Appendix 12 (a) Participant Consent Form - Principal

April 2015
Principal
School A, B, C
Abu Dhabi Emirate

Dear Principal,

My name is Jacqui Lottin. I am currently a doctoral student at The British University in Dubai (BUiD). The research focus for my thesis is to investigate inclusive practices in ADEC schools since the inception of the Special Educational Needs Policy by Abu Dhabi Education Council. The premise of this study emanates from the UAE government's commitment to inclusive education with its 'School for All' Initiative backed by UAE law to educate all students in mainstream classrooms, together with their peers of the same age irrespective of their disability. The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of general education primary teachers on inclusion and provide recommendations that will foster, promote and achieve effective inclusive education. Data collection will be done through in-person; audio taped interviews as well as classroom observations of two teachers, social worker and a learning support team member. Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews will be recorded with the permission of the interviewee and transcribed. Transcripts will be given to the interviewee to check for accuracy.

The interviews and observations will be coded to ensure anonymity; all audio tapes will be destroyed after they are coded. Additionally, samples of student work, Intervention Plans, Individualized Education Plans and other relevant documents will also be examined.
The above information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this researcher or the university.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study before or during the research. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. A pseudo name will be

used to protect your identity and that of the school in the findings so your anonymity is assured in line with the British University in Dubai's ethical code of conduct. There is no perceived risk for your school taking part in this study. The anticipated benefits will be raising a greater awareness of where your teachers are with respect to implementing inclusive education to meet the needs of all the students. I attach ADEC and British University in Dubai letters requesting your permission to conduct a study in your school. A copy of this form will be given to each participant taking part in the study to keep. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. You can talk to me by phone or email. I am more than happy to provide further information on the study if required. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Jacqui Lottin
MA in Education and Teaching
Research Assistant at British University in Dubai
Mobile: +971508387759
Email: 2013121008@student.buid.ac.ae

Appendix 12(b) Cont'd: Participant Consent Form – School Staff

April 2015
Principal
School A, B, C
Abu Dhabi Emirate

Dear Teachers, Social Workers, Educational Psychologists,

My name is Jacqui Lottin. I am currently a doctoral student at The British University in Dubai (BUiD). The research focus for my thesis is to investigate inclusive practices in ADEC schools since the inception of the Special Educational Needs Policy by Abu Dhabi Education Council. The premise of this study emanates from the UAE government's commitment to inclusive education with its 'School for All' Initiative backed by UAE law to educate all students in mainstream classrooms, together with their peers of the same age irrespective of their disability. The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of general education primary teachers on inclusion and provide recommendations that will foster, promote and achieve effective inclusive education. Data collection will be done through in-person; audio taped interviews as well as classroom observations of two teachers, social worker and a learning support team member. Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews will be recorded with the permission of the interviewee and transcribed. Transcripts will be given to the interviewee to check for accuracy.

The interviews and observations will be coded to ensure anonymity; all audio tapes will be destroyed after they are coded. Additionally, samples of student work, Intervention Plans, Individualized Education Plans and other relevant documents will also be examined.
The above information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this researcher or the university.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study before or during the research. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. A pseudo name will be

used to protect your identity and that of the school in the findings so your anonymity is assured in line with the British University in Dubai's ethical code of conduct. There is no perceived risk for your school taking part in this study. The anticipated benefits will be raising a greater awareness of where your teachers are with respect to implementing inclusive education to meet the needs of all the students. I attach ADEC and British University in Dubai letters requesting your permission to conduct a study in your school. A copy of this form will be given to each participant taking part in the study to keep. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. You can talk to me by phone or email. I am more than happy to provide further information on the study if required. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Jacqui Lottin
MA in Education and Teaching
Research Assistant at British University in Dubai
Mobile: +971508387759
Email: 2013121008@student.buid.ac.ae

Appendix 12(c) Cont'd: Participant Consent Form - Parents

April 2015
Principal
School A, B, C
Abu Dhabi Emirate

Dear Parents,

My name is Jacqui Lottin. I am currently a doctoral student at The British University in Dubai (BUiD). The research focus for my thesis is to investigate inclusive practices in ADEC schools since the inception of the Special Educational Needs Policy by Abu Dhabi Education Council. The premise of this study emanates from the UAE government's commitment to inclusive education with its 'School for All' Initiative backed by UAE law to educate all students in mainstream classrooms, together with their peers of the same age irrespective of their disability.

The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of general education primary teachers on inclusion and provide recommendations that will foster, promote and achieve effective inclusive education. Data collection will be done through in-person; audio taped interviews as well as classroom observations of two teachers, the social worker and a learning support team member and parents. Additionally, samples of student work, Intervention Plans, Individualized Education Plans and other relevant documents will also be examined. As a parent, it is vital to record your views as parents play a significant role in the process of implementing inclusive education. Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study before or during the research. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. Your anonymity is assured in line with the British University in Dubai's ethical code of conduct. The anticipated benefits will be raising a greater awareness of where the school is with respect to implementing inclusive education to meet the needs of all the students. I wish to request your participation in this study through a phone interview and look forward to hearing from you with a favorable reply.

Yours faithfully

Jacqui Lottin

MA in Education and Teaching

Research Assistant at British University in Dubai

Mobile: +971508387759

Email: 2013121008@student.buid.ac.ae

Appendix 13: ADEC SEN 4 Staged Approach

Staged Approach for Academic Learning Support

ADEC Staged Approach to Intervention

Stage	Descriptor of Stage
Stage 1	Good quality support in general education classrooms, which will include differentiation of the curriculum to meet different learning needs. Teachers will submit a pre-referral to the Learning Support Team.
Stage 2	Is referred by the teacher to the Learning Support Team to receive the process of an Intervention Plan, while the student is in the general education classroom. The student may access the Resource Room services in some schools, where individual or small group support is provided for periods throughout the day. All students at this stage will have an Intervention Plan.
Stage 3	Has gone through the Intervention Plan process and been referred for further testing and Special Needs Assessment. The student may access the Resource Room services in some schools where individual or small group support is provided. And/or a placement in a special class of a smaller group of students all of whom have special education needs. Such classes may support general special needs or specialize in a particular disability. All students at this stage will have an IEP or ALP.
Stage 4	A Student who have severe or complex special educational needs that cannot be met in public schools and so requires placement in a more restrictive specialized setting. All students will have an IEP.

The Policy has been updated for 2015.

Appendix 13 Cont'd: ADEC SEN Staged Approach

النهج المتدرج
A Staged Approach

Stage 1
المرحلة الأولى

- دعم ذو جودة جيدة في الصفوف الدراسية – مراعاة الفروق الفردية
- Good quality support in general classrooms – differentiation.
- ربما يوصي فريق الإدارة العليا بعمل خطة تدخل لبعض الطلبة
- LST may recommend an intervention plan for some students

Stage 2
المرحلة الثانية

- يتم تقييم جميع الطلبة ولديهم خطة تعليم فردية وخطة تعلم متقدمة
- All students are assessed and have an IEP or ALP
- يبقى الطالب في الصف لبعض أو كل الوقت (معلم الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة)
- Student remains in class for some or all of the time (SEN teacher)

Stage 3
المرحلة الثالثة

- يتم وضع الطالب داخل صف خاص ضمن مجموعة صغيرة من الطلبة جميعهم لديهم احتياجات تعليمية خاصة – جميع الطلبة لديهم خطة تعليم فردية
- Student is placed in a special class in a smaller group of students all of whom have special educational needs. All students have IEPs.

Stage 4
المرحلة الرابعة

- طالب لديه احتياجات تعليمية شديدة والتي لايمكن تلبيتها في المدارس العامة العادية ويتطلب وضعه في بيئة متخصصة
- Student has sever special educational needs that cannot be met in public schools. Student requires placement in a specialist setting.

Appendix 14: Sample Intervention Plan

LEARNING SUPPORT TEAM INTERVENTION PLAN – STAGE 1				
STUDENT INFORMATION				**AREA OF NEED and LONG TERM AIMS**
School:	Name:			
	DOB:			
Date:	Class:		Grade:	
TARGET	**SUPPORT STRATEGIES**	**HOW/WHERE /WHO?**	**SUCCESS CRITERIA**	**REVIEW**
Parent and student comments:	Additional information / further action required:			Staff involved:
				Next review:

خطة التدخّل لفريق دعم التعلّم - المرحلة الأولى				
LEARNING SUPPORT TEAM INTERVENTION PLAN – STAGE 1				
محال الاهتمام والأهداف طويلة الأجل: **AREA OF NEED and LONG TERM AIMS**	بيانات الطالب **STUDENT INFORMATION**			مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم Abu Dhabi Education Council
			الاسم: **Name:**	المدرسة **School:**
			تاريخ الميلاد: **DOB:**	
	الصف: **Grade:**		الفصل: **Class:**	التاريخ: **Date:**
المراجعة **REVIEW**	معايير النجاح **SUCCESS CRITERIA**	كيف/ أين/ من؟ **HOW/WHERE /WHO?**	إستراتيجيات الدعم **SUPPORT STRATEGIES**	الهدف **TARGET**
الموظفين المعنيين: **Staff involved:**	معلومات إضافية/ الإجراءات اللازمة: **Additional Information / further action required:**			ملاحظات أولياء الأمور والطلاب: **Parent and student comments:**
المراجعة التالية: **Next review:**				

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ADEC Policy Summary

4.1 Academic Learning Support Model
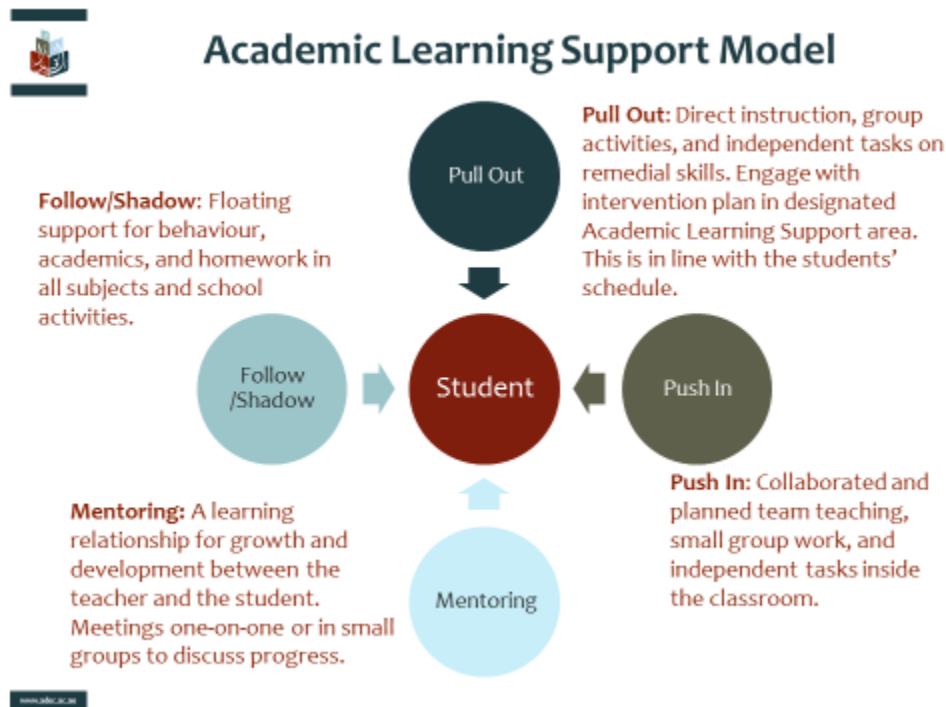
The Academic Learning Support Model is to support the students through a Staged Approach to Intervention. This model will support the whole-child. The model can be applied differently at each school to accommodate different student needs and staffing needs.

1. Pull Out- Direct Instruction, group activities, and independent tasks on remedial skills. Engage with intervention plan in designated Academic Learning Support area. This is in line with the students' schedule.

2. Push In- Collaborated and planned team teaching, small group work, and independent tasks inside the classroom.

3. Mentoring- A learning relationship for growth and development between the teacher and the student. Meetings one on one or in a small groups to discuss progress.

4. Follow/Shadow- Floating support for behavior, academics, and homework in all subjects and school activities.

Appendix 15 Cont'd: Academic Learning Support Team

	LEARNING SUPPORT TEAM INTERVENTION PLAN				
[logo] أبو ظبي مجلس التعليم Abu Dhabi Education Council	STUDENT INFORMATION				AREA OF NEED and LONG TERM AIMS
School:	Name: ESIS:				
	DOB:				
Date:	Class:		Grade:		
TARGET	SUPPORT STRATEGIES	HOW/WHERE/WHO?	SUCCESS CRITERIA		REVIEW
Parent and student comments:	Additional information / further action required:				Staff involved:
					Next review:

Student's skills, strengths, preferences, abilities and motivation:
Academic performance- general remarks regarding overall strengths and areas for development:
Social skills and relationships:
Attendance and engagement: (level of attendance- regular, irregular, non-attendance and level of engagement in school activities)

Appendix 15 Cont'd: Learning Support Team

المدير أو أحد أفراد العليا المُكلف
Principal or designated Senior Manager

الأخصائي الاجتماعي
Social Worker

ممثل عن المعلمين
Teacher Representative

مدرس التربية الخاصة
Special Education Teacher

الأخصائي النفسي بالمدرسة
School psychologists

فريق دعم التعلم
Learning Support Team

مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council

Appendix 15 Cont'd: Learning Support Team

مسؤوليات فريق دعم التعلم
LST Responsibilities

* وضع إجراءات لتحديد الطلبة
✓ Develop procedures for identifying students

* تنسيق عملية الحصول على المصادر داخل وخارج المدرسة
✓ Coordinate resource access inside/outside school

* خطة التعليم الفردية/ خطة التعلم المتقدمة
✓ IEP / ALP writing

* تنسيق مشاركة أولياء الأمور في عملية الاحتياجات التعليمية الخاصة
✓ Coordinate involvement of parents in SEN process

* توفير الدعم لمعلم الصف
✓ Support classroom teacher provision

Appendix 16: School A, Student Sample IEP

Individualised Education Plan	مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم	
خطة التعليم الفردية	مدرسة الأصالة للبنات\ح1	

الجزء الأول – بيانات الطالبة **Part I. Student Information**

رقم الطالبة **Student Name** اسم الطالبة	رقم الطالبة **Student Number**	تاريخ اجتماع خطة التعليم الفردية **Date of IEP Meeting** 2012/ 10/ 18
الملتحق بمدرسة **Attending School**	الصف **Grade** الخامس	تاريخ الميلاد **Date of Birth** 2006/2/14
ولي الأمر / الأهل**Parent/Guardian**	رقم هاتف المنزل Home Phone:	رقم هاتف الجوال Mobile:
	البريد الإلكتروني Email:	البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بالعمل Work Email:
ولي الأمر / الأهل **Parent/Guardian**	رقم هاتف المنزل Home Phone:	رقم هاتف الجوال Mobile:
	البريد الإلكتروني Email:	البريد الإلكتروني الخاص بالعمل Work Email:
		عنوان الطالبة **Student Address** ابوظبي / الشامخة

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Appendix 16 Cont'd: School A, Student Sample IEP

الجزء الثاني - الأهلية Part II. Eligibility

	Area(s) of Eligibility (Specify Disability) جانب/ جوانب الأهلية (تحديد حالة الإعاقة)
	الطالبة تعاني من صعوبات تعلم
Date of this IEP Meeting تاريخ إجتماع خطة التعليم الفردية هذه 2012/10/21	تاريخ مراجعة خطة التعليم الفردية هذه Date this IEP will be Reviewed 2012/10/ 30
Date of *Initial Referral* تاريخ الإحالة المبدئية 2015- 2014 – 2013- 2012 – 2011/10/21	تاريخ استلام الموافقة على عمل التقييم Date of *Consent to Evaluate Received*
نوع الإجتماع Initial Meeting	الإجتماع المبدئي √☐Requested Review	المراجعة المطلوبة ☐Annual Review	مراجعة سنوية ☐Re -evaluation ☐	إعادة التقييم Type of Meeting

الجزء الثالث- الفريق المشارك في خطة التعليم الفردية Part III. IEP Team Participants

التاريخ Date		فريق خطة التعليم الفردية: من شارك في إجتماع خطة التعليم الفردية هذه؟ IEP Team: Who participated in this IEP Meeting?
		Parent/Guardian الأهل / ولي الأمر
		Parent/Guardian الأهل / ولي الأمر
		Student الطالب
		Principal/Designee مدير المدرسة/ المكلف
		Special Education Teacher, SENCO مدرس التعليم الخاص، منسق ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة
		General Education Teacher مدرس التعليم العام
		General Education Teacher مدرس التعليم العام

المسمى الوظيفي لعضو الفريق المسؤول عن مشاركة المعلومات في خطة التعليم الفردية مع جميع مقدمي الخدمات:

Title of Team Member Responsible for Sharing Information in the IEP with All Service Providers:

	أخرى Other	
	أخرى Other	
	أخرى Other	
	أخرى Other	

Information Related to Current Levels of Educational Performance

نتائج آخر تقييم (تقييمات) Results of Recent Evaluation(s)

مستويات الأداء الحالية (العمر العقلي، الذكاء، التطور، الطبي)

الطالبة تعاني من إعاقة عقلية بسيطة

Appendix 16 Cont'd: School A, Student Sample IEP

Current Levels of Functioning مستويات الأداء الحالية	
Academic: الأكاديمي	
الطالبة تعاني من تدني مستوى التحصيل لوجود إعاقة لديها	
Environmental: البيئي	
الطالبة لاتعاني من مشاكل بيئية سواء بالمدرسة او بالبيت	
Behavioral: السلوكي	
سلوك الطالبة سوي	
Social Emotional الإحساس الاجتماعي	
تعاني الطالبة من وضع اسري صعب قليلا نتيجة وفاة الاب	
Medical: الطبية	
لا يوجد تاريخ طبي للطالبة من انها تعاني من اي مرض	
Parental Concerns مخاوف لدى الأهل	
ياملون من ان تصبح الطالبة افضل دراسيا و سلوكيا حيث ان الام لاتستطيع مجاراة منهاج الطالبة	

Appendix 16 Cont'd: School A, Student Sample IEP

_____ Date _____ Student Name _____ _____ ID#

الأهداف السنوية وقصيرة المدى

Annual and Short Term Goals

	جانب الإحتياج: **Area of Need:**

Present Level of Performance مستوى الأداء الحالي

نقاط القوة: Strengths:	الإحتياجات: Needs:
1- عندها محصول قليلة من الحروف الابجدية	1- لاتستطيع كتابة اسمها بالشكل الصحيح
2- تقوم بعملة النسخ فقط بشكل بسيط	2- عدم القدرة على معرفة مجموعة كبيرة من الحروف الابجدية
3- تبدي اهتماما بمعرفة الكلمات البصرية الجديدة	بصريا او سمعيا
4- تستطيع فهم بعض الاسئلة الشفهية و الاجابة عليها و لكن	3- لاتوجد لديها القدرة على التفريق بين (الضمة و الفتحة و
بطريقة شفهية بسيطة	الكسرة او اي نوع من المدود
	4- لاتستطيع التفريق بين الاسم و الفعل او الفاعل حتى لو شفهيا
	5- لاتستطيع تعيين اسماء (كإنسان , حيوان ,جماد ,مكان)
	6- لاتميز بين التاء المفتوحة و المربوطة

كيف يؤثر هذا الجانب من الإحتياج على مشاركة الطالبة/ تقدمها في منهاج التعليم العام أو في بعض الحالات الأنشطة المناسبة للفئة العمرية؟

How does this area of need impact this student's participation/progress in the general education curriculum or in some instances, age-appropriate activities?

الأهداف السنوية: ماذا ينبغي على هذه الطالبة أن تعرف أو أن تكون قادرة على عمله؟

Individualised Education Plan

مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم

خطة التعليم الفردية

مدرسة الاصالة للبنات\ح1

Annual Goal: What does this student need to know or be able to do?

ان تكون قادرة على القراءة على الاقل كلمات من ثلاث حروف وكتابة املاء كلمات من ثلاث الحروف

الأهداف قصيرة المدى: ما هي الخطوات القصيرة لتحقيق الهدف؟ **Short Term Objectives: What are the small steps there**	التقدم: متى سيتم تقييم التقدم نحو الهدف؟ **Progress: When will progress towards goals... goals be evaluated**			

الأهداف	Progress التقدم / Date التاريخ	Progress التقدم / Date التاريخ	Progress التقدم / Date التاريخ	Progress التقدم / Date التاريخ
1- يستخدم معرفته لصوت الحرف على تهجئة الكلمات 2- يقرا كلمات تتكون من حرفين 3- يهجي الكلمات معتمدا على أصوات الحروف				ويستكمل في النصل الثاني
1- تحليل الكلمات المكونة من مقطعين / مقطع وحرف...... 2- تركيب الكلمات المكونة من مقطعين / مقطع وحرف......				
1- تكتب المقاطع بشكل صحيح مستخدما معرفته للأصوات الطويلة والقصيرة 2- يستخدم معرفته للحركات (الطويلة و القصيرة) في قراءة و كتابة الكلمات				الى اخر الفصل

كيف سيتم قياس التقدم نحو هذا الهدف السنوي؟ (ضعي علامة على كل ما ينطبق)

How will progress towards this annual goal be measured? (Tick all that apply)

التقارير المكتوبة Written Reports	الملاحظة √ Observation	المشاركة الصفية √ Classroom Participation	
ملف الإنجازات Portfolios	مشاريع خاصة Special Projects	الأعمال الصفية √ Class work	
أخرى Other:	الإمتحانات والإختبارات القصيرة Tests and Quizzes	الواجبات المنزلية √ Homework	

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Appendix 16 Cont'd: School A, Student Sample IEP

اسم الطالبة: ____ اعتدال عادل المهري   رقم الطالبة: ▓▓▓   التاريخ: _____

_____ Student Name _____ ID# _____ Date

Curriculum / Classroom Accommodations and Modifications

المنهاج/ ملائمة الصف وتعديلاته

ماهي عملية الملائمة والأدوات المساعدة التكميلية المستخدمة في التعليم العام أو التغييرات في المنهاج العام والتي تحتاجها هذه الطالبة بسبب جوانب احتياجاتها الخاصة؟

What accommodations and supplementary aids and services, supports in general education, or modifications to the general curriculum does this student require because of his/her area(s) of need?

Alternate Written Response إجابة مكتوبة بديلة	Flexible Schedule جدول مرن
☐ Respond using a Word Processor الإستجابة باستخدام برنامج	☐ Extended Time زمن إضافي معالجة الكلمات
☐ Respond using a Brailler الإستجابة باستخدام جهاز بريل	☐ Frequent Breaks أوقات إستراحة متكررة
☐ Keyboard Modification (*if available) تغيير في لوحة	☐ other أخرى المفاتيح (*إن وجد)

Visual Aids مساعدات بصرية

☐ Use of Tape recorder for Pre-Writing activities? لا   استخدام مسجل الصوت لأنشطة ما قبل الكتابة

☐ Dictation to a Scribe الإملاء على الكاتب	☐ Place Keeper أداة التتبع
☐ Voice Activation Software برنامج تفعيل الصوت	☐ Magnifying Glass عدسة مكبرة
☐ Other أخرى	☐ Graphic Organizers منظم الرسم

Spelling Aids مساعدات التهجئة	Amplification Equipment معدات تضخيم الصوت
☐ Spell Checker مصحح الإملاء	☐ Assistive Listening Device (FM System) جهاز السمع المساعد (نظام أف أم سيستم)
☐ Spelling/Bilingual Dictionary	☐ Acoustic Accessibility مضخم الصوت قاموس ثنائي اللغة

أدوات مساعدة في الرياضيات	Math Aids أدوات مساعدة لورقة الإجابة Increased Size of Answer Sheet الحجم المكبر لورقة الإجابة
☐ Abacus المعداد	☐ Enlarged Answer Document ورقة الإجابة المكبرة
☐ Number Line خط الأرقام	☐ Enlarged Test Booklets كتيب الإمتحان المكبر

Reading in Arabic/English of Directions/Assignments قراءة التعليمات/ الواجبات باللغة العربية/الإنجليزية

☐ Reading in Arabic/English of Directions قراءة التعليمات باللغة العربية/ الإنجليزية

☐ Fraction Bar/Circle شريط الكسور/الدائرة

مجلس أبو ظبي للتعليم

Individualised Education Plan

مدرسة الاصالة للبنات(ح)1

خطة التعليم الفردية

□Reading in Arabic/English of Assignments قراءة الواجبات باللغة العربية/الإنجليزية□

√القراءة عند طلب الطالب□Read on Student Request

□Multiplication Chart جدول الضرب □

□Calculator or Arithmetic Tables آلة حاسبة أو جداول حسابية □

Alternate Means of Responding   الوصول للنص / وسائل بديلة للإجابة   أخرى other

□Opportunity to Respond Orally   √فرصة للإجابة شفهياً   □ Oral Administration الطريقة الشفهية

□Mark in Assignment Document وضع علامة على ورقة الواجب مختصرة   √ □ Shortened Assignments مهمات

□Student Records Answers on Tape الطالب يسجل إجابته على شريط

□Clearly Defined Limits/Expectations حدود/ توقعات محددة وواضحة

□Electronic Text نص إلكتروني   □Positive Reinforcement System نظام التعزيز الإيجابي √

□Large Print طباعة كبيرة   □Behavior Intervention Plan خطة الدعم السلوكي

□Braille لغة بريل   □Reduced Paper and Pencil Tasks التخفيف من الواجبات الكتابية√

□Access to Audio Materials الوصول الى المواد المسموعة   □Highlighted Text/Materials تظليل النص/ المواد

□Assistive Technology تقنيات مساعدة

□Peer Tutoring/Paired Working Assignments التعليم بين الأقران/ الواجبات الثنائية

□Other أخرى   practical support in science   □Assignment Notebook دفتر الواجبات √

□Other أخرى   planned activities in PE

□Other أخرى   all lessons timetables on ground floor   □Group Size حجم المجموعة

Other actions by Learning Support Team:

Appendix 17: ADEC Differentiation

Differentiation

'Differentiation' describes how schools and teachers meet the educational requirements of individual (or a group of) students with different learning needs. This is an essential element of the provision that schools make for learners with special educational needs, including those who are Gifted and Talented. This applies whether the students are in **Stage 1 or Stage 2** of the appraisal and intervention process

All of the following are differentiating practices within general education programs:

- Individual tasks or challenges that meet the needs of particular students
- Modified materials or resources that allow students at different levels access to appropriate learning
- Small group activities planned to be appropriate for distinct ability levels within a larger class
- Flexible tasks that allow students to take different routes through common material
- Common topics or questions that allow different levels of response or engagement

- The **third stage** has gone through the Intervention Plan process and been referred for further testing and Special Needs Assessment. The student may access the Resource Room services in some schools where individual or small group support is provided. And/or a placement in a special class of a smaller group of students all of whom have special education needs. Such classes may support general special needs or specialize in a particular disability. All students at this stage will have an IEP or ALP.
3. The **fourth stage** is where a student has severe or complex special educational needs and so requires placement in a more restrictive specialized setting. All students have an IEP.

These stages of provision do not have to be consecutive, and students can move in either direction. For instance, a student in a restrictive setting (stage 4) may transition to a special class (stage 3) or general class with support (stage 2).
Similarly, a student may need to move from a general class (stage 1) to a special class (stage 3) or restrictive setting (stage 4).

ممارسات مراعاة الفروق الفردية
Differentiation practices

1- مهام فردية أو تحديات تلبي احتياجات فئة معينة من الطلبة **Individual tasks or challenges that meet the needs of particularl students**	2- مواد معدلة أو مصادر تسمح للطلبة على اختلاف مستوياتهم بالحصول على تعلم مناسب **Modified materials or resources that allow students at different levels access to appropriate learning**	3- أنشطة جماعية صغيرة تم تخطيطها لتناسب المستويات ذات القدرة المتميزة ضمن فئة أكبر **Small group activities planned to be appropriate for distinct ability levels within a larger class**
4- مهام إضافية تسمح للطلبة بتناول مضوعات قياسية على مستويات أعلى من التحدي Extension tasks that allow students to take standard topics to more challenging levels.	5- أنشطة إثرائية من شأنها رفع وتوسيع مستوى التفكير حول موضوع ما Enrichment tasks that raise or broaden the level of thinking around a topic	6- مهام تتسم بالمرونة تسمح للطلبة باتباع طرق مختلفة خلال مواد مشتركة Flexible tasks that allow students to take different routes through common material

7. ARABIC
Common topics or question that allow different levels of response or engagement (open-ended)

Lower Ability (LA)

LA

To, Too or Two

Fill in each sentence with the correct word.

to: a function word   **too**: also   **two**: a number

1. I am going _____ read a book.

2. Donald ran _____ miles.

3. Is Ann coming _____?

4. She got _____ wrong on the test.

5. My brother likes _____ play baseball.

6. I was at the park _____ times today.

7. Those clothes are _____ expensive.

8. Cindy got _____ strikes in bowling.

9. I need _____ write _____ pages for school.

10. I need you _____ help me it's _____ heavy!

To Too Two(2)

Put the correct word in the sentence:

1. Miss Nitika is going _____ the mall.

2. Mohamed is _____ noisy in the class.

3. Abdulla has _____ brothers and one sister.

4. I am feeling sick because I had _____ much cake.

5. Khamis is going _____ the shop to buy _____ t-shirts.

6. My mum gave me _____ lollipops.

7. My bag is _____ heavy.

Appendix 19: Project School SEN Teaching Practices

Table 9. SEN teaching practices

Appendix 20: SEN small group sample

In any form of SEN teaching, the grouping is flexible and can be changed from one lesson to another according to the student's skills, according to the topic etc. Flexibility enables fast reaction to new learning challenges a student might face and continuous assessment guarantees that the students are supported according to their needs.

SEN teacher's small group lesson

Appendix 21: Student Progress Report

School B – Student 3

Student progress report

Name: ████████ ████ / FEBRUARY 2016

	Excellent ممتاز	Good جيد	Needs support يحتاج إلى دعم
Behaviour السلوك	✓		
Homework الواجب الدراسي			✓
Handwriting خط اليد			✓
Arabic العربية			
English الإنجليزية			✓
Math الرياضيات			✓
Science العلوم			✓

Appendix 22: Sample Class reports

Student Work
TERM 2

Subject/Class   Fractions | Angles 3D | Jumonns B | SPA1 SPA2 SPA3 Juan B | Multip

N.	Student Name	5MF02 5MF01							
1.	▓▓▓▓	M M	nE	nE	24 ⓓ E,4,N	D	36 ⓓ	A
2.	▓▓▓▓	₄N ₄E	E	N	A E,N,N	E	1 Ⓝ	N
3.	▓▓▓▓	M M	M	M	57 ⓜ M,M,M	E	A	M
4.	▓▓▓▓	A A	D	D	32 ⓓ M,N,N	E	A	A E
5.	▓▓▓▓	ₙM ₙN	32/64 ⓓ E,N,N	D	A	E
6.	▓▓▓▓	M M	D	M	10 ⓜ M,M,M	M	54 ⓜ	M
7.	▓▓▓▓	E D	D	E	2 Ⓐ E,N,N	D	0 Ⓝ	N
8.	▓▓▓▓	A A	D	D	28 ⓓ M,E,N	E	39 Ⓐ	E
9.	▓▓▓▓	ₐN ₐE	E	D	4 Ⓔ D,E,N	?E	15 Ⓔ	N
10.	▓▓▓▓	N M	D	D	14 Ⓔ M,E,N	D	A	D
11.	▓▓▓▓	1 M M/	D	M	57 Ⓑ O,N,O	D	53 ⓜ	M
12.	▓▓▓▓	2 ₐE ₙM	D	M	13 Ⓔ M,E,N A		17 Ⓔ	A D
13.	▓▓▓▓	M A	D	D	60 ⓜ M,D,M	D	60 ⓜ	D
14.	▓▓▓▓	M M	ₙE	ₙE	60 ⓜ E,N,N	D	58 ⓜ	E
15.	▓▓▓▓	M M	M	M	60 ⓜ M,D,M	D	53 ⓜ	E
16.	▓▓▓▓				M,N,N A		25 ⓓ	E
17.								
18.								

19. School A - Student 4
20. Adec Grade Codes — Indicators for Esis
21.
22. 1. E = Emerging
23. 2. D = Developing
24. 3. M = Mastery
25. 4. N = No achievement
26.
27.
28.

Appendix 23: School Report

ADDITIONAL SCHOOL REPORT TERM 2/2016

▮▮ AL AMEEN SCHOOL

Grade 5B   Name▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

You as a student.

	Excellent	Good	Improving	Weak, needs to work harder	Teacher's note
You come to school on time 7.15				✓	You have a lot of absensies
You do your homework.			✓		
You listen to teacher and concentrate on the lessons.		✓			
You can wait your turn.		✓			
You help your classmates if needed.				✓	
You are a good classmate (no fighting, saying bad words, bullying others).		✓			
You try your best.			✓		
You are active and participating on the lessons.			✓		

Teacher's note You are a good boy! Keep trying your best.

School A - S5
N/B= Student with visual impairment

Appendix 24 – High Frequency Words

MM d A S

ADEC Skills Task_English_grade 3

School B
Student 2

1. An	2. M d A	3. n U	4. d M
5. A d	6. n d	7. d V	8. S d A
9. d N	10. S t V	11. n U d	12. A d
13. d M U	14. A M	15. d n	16. UM A

_0_ /16p.

4) High Frequency Words:

food	next	important	idea	blue
between (1)	life	children	enough	above
light	paper	took	eat	girl
story	run	once	face	soon
city	saw	second	watch	family

_0_ /10p.

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Appendix 25: Student work samples

English spelling test   29.10.2015

Your name: m m d g m z   Points /10 C

1. DP nt   **car**
2. I P U   **book**
3. tVnd   **door**
4. Comm   **ruler**
5. SMMo   **this**
6. nUmnad   **got**
7. VMPR   **wing**
8. Or   **are**
9. nPnMA   **wheel**
10. biN mnn   **pencil**

⁰/₁₀

School C
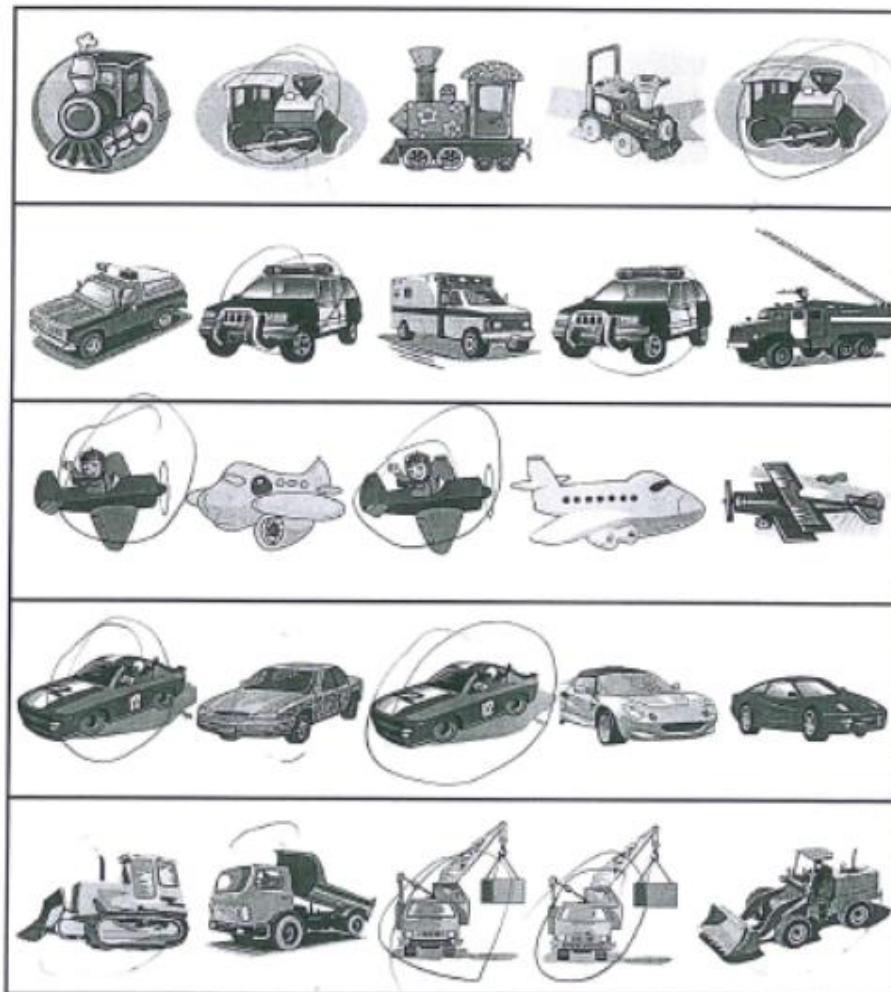Student 2

Appendix 25 Cont'd: Student work samples

Find the Matches

School A
Student 1

• very difficult, he did it with help
• was not interested

Circle the two pictures in each row that match.

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Appendix 26: Inclusive practice working with SEN students

Inclusive Practice: *Working with SEN students*

Important Points to Remember

1. Differentiate Instruction

2. Capitalize on Learning Styles

3. Group Students Effectively

Instructional Directions

- Repeat and clarify directions/instructions as needed
- Deliver information in more than one way
- Simplify daily language
- Be specific when giving instructions
- Provide written directions (with visual reminders if possible)
- Show a sample of the finished product you are assigning
- Pre-teach or Teach vocabulary
- Organize information/structured approach

Teaching Vocabulary

- Provide reading and vocabulary instruction accompanied by images
- Encourage children to use kinaesthetic learning methods
- Provide visual cues and tools to reinforce language instruction
- Teach specific skills for finding the main idea, finding facts, and drawing conclusions
- Teach reading comprehension strategies

Attention/Focus

- Break instruction into small parts
- Establish a routine and clarify expectations
- Use a homework diary
- Break longer assignments into shorter parts
- Recommend for students to do easier tasks first
- Be thoughtful about where you seat a student
- Make direct eye contact with a student
- Write instructions on the board
- Allow students opportunities to be actively engaged.

Behaviour

- Be precise in your communications
- Teach and model social skills
- Allow students to move in ways that does not distract others
- Address behaviour with minimal amount of attention
- Use positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviour

Appendix 27: Educational Psychologist Report

The Psychologist Report

Initial data:

Student name: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓

Gender: Male

Grade: Three

Place &date of Birth: ▓▓▓▓▓▓

Interview date: 02/11/2016

Nationality: ▓▓▓▓▓

Transferred by: Learning support team

Reasons of the transfer:

1. Low achieving level.

Social history: the student lives with his parents, he is the fifth kid, and the youngest one.

Assessment results: The student earned (97) in the IQ test and percentile of 49%

Report summary: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ student in grade 3, and he is 8 years old, his IQ result 97, and per

Diagnosis: Average (learning difficulties)

Recommendations:

- To raise motivation for learning by constantly encouraging the student and praise him, and give him simple tasks in order to raise his self-confidence.
- Communicate with his parents to discuss his situation.
- Guide the student how to study and memorize, and give him exercises to strengthen his memory.
- Engage the student in sport activities which he is interested in to encourage him to come to school.
- To encourage him to form friendships with other students who are better academically and morally to improve his level.
- Continuous encouragement for the student and rewarding him for any simple achievement.
- Direct the parents to help their child at home and encourage him.
- Focus on his strengths (strengths of the linguistic aspect and verbal knowledge).
- Develop and improve his weaknesses (performance)