"WILL THERE BE A SPARK IN THE DARK?
Provision of Services for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Private Schools in Dubai

هل ستكون هناك شرارة في الظلام ؟
تقديم الخدمات للأشخاص الذين يعانون من التوحد والإضطرابات في المدارس الخاصة في دبي

by

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

at

The British University in Dubai

October 2019

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate and evaluate critically the present status of Inclusion for students with Autistic Syndrome Disorder (ASD) within the mainstream in primary section of three private schools in Dubai, UAE, and determine how much support is rendered to such students and can we term it as "A Spark in the Dark". The goal of incorporating students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) into the regular streamline of education is to bring about awareness and understanding within students; teachers: and other stakeholders in order to bring justice to students of special needs. Every child has the right to education whether they be normal or special and no child should be deprived of education in today's world. A number of data collection methods have been employed in three different schools, with three different students and in three different setting or subjects. These were done through the use of Observation, Questionnaire and through Networking. Accommodating ASD students into regular school set-ups is not an easy task and process. Such students cannot acquire knowledge by themselves as those in normal situations as they need to be a part of schools and taught along with other students strategically and step by step in order to become a part of their own life style. The findings of this study should lay a foundation for a number of promising situations in Inclusion in Private Schools in Dubai.

نبذة مختصرة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة وتقييم الوضع الحالي للطلاب الذين يعانون من التوحد والإضطرابات داخل التيار في المرحلة الإبتدائية لثلاثة مدارس خاصة في دبي وتحديد كيفية تقديم الدعم لهؤلاء الطلاب وأطلقنا عليها (شرارة في الظلام)

الهدف من دمج الطلاب اللذين يعانون من التوحد والاضطراب هو تبسيط التعليم وتحقيق الوعي وفهم الطلاب والمعلمين وأصحاب المصلحة لتحقيق العدالة للطلا ب ذوي الهمم فكل طفل له الحق في التعليم سواء كان طبيعياً أم خاصاً فلا يبنبغى حرملن أي طفل من التعليم في عالمنا اليوم .

تم تطبيق عدد من طرق جمع البيانات في ثلاثة مدارس مختلفة مع ثلاثة طلاب مختلفين وفي ثلاثة أوضاع وقد تم ذلك . من خلال استخدام الملاحظة والإستبيان ومن خلال الشبكات لا يعد استيعاب طلاب التوحد في مجموعات مدرسية منتظمة مهمة وعملية سهلة . لا يمكن لهؤلاء الطلاب أن يكتسبوا المعرفة بأنفسهم في مواقف طبيعية لانهم يحتاجون إلى أن يكونوا جزءاً من المدارس وأن يتم تدريسهم مع طلاب آخرين بشكل إستراتيجي وخطوة بخطوة لكي يصبحوا جزءاً من أسلوب حياتهم الخاص . يجب أن تضع نتائج هذه الدراسة أساساً لعدد من المواقف المتوقعة او المرجوه ضمن المدارس الخاصة في دبي .

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I sincerely wish to thank all those people who have made possible for me to write this dissertation as without whom it would have not been possible to finish.it.

Firstly, I would like to thank the authorities of Private School Principals in Dubai for their permission, hospitality and kindness. Without their cooperation it would have not been possible for me to conduct this research.

Secondly, I would like to honour my current supervisor Professor (Dr.) Eman Gaad for her support, encouragement and her continuous guidance to accomplish this dissertation. Special thanks to her for continuously assisting and advising throughout the M.Ed process.

Further, I appreciate my family for being a part of my decision making at this stage of life and for continuously supporting me by believing in me and encouraging me accomplish this dissertation. I definitely do not have enough words to thank them. This dissertation is dedicated to my lovely children.

Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow colleagues and work authorities for excusing me and tolerating me leave and providing support by substituting for my absence. I honour them and appreciate their understanding towards me.

TABLE OF CONTENT

4. FINDINGS:

Title and Research Question

Title:

Provision for Services for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Private Schools in Dubai and other Emirates.

Research Questions:

1) Do private schools in Dubai   foster students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as one of the main objectives of their schools?

2) Do teachers, learning support assistants (LSAs), parents and other scaffolders possess the required skill and training to impart knowledge and render skills to ASD students for preparing them as educated civilians for future?

3) If so, what teaching methods and strategies are used by teachers and stake-holder for students with ASD? Do teachers use Curriculum Adaptation for students with ASD which enables them to succeed in achieving their goals.

4) What are the obstacles that the ASD students face to gain education in mainstream schooling? And, how can these hindrances be eliminated or resolved?

General concern:

To what extent the three Private Schools in Dubai are supporting the needs of learners with learning disabilities as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Chapter 1

1.1   Introduction:

Autism and Learning Disability are two different areas of special needs are co-associated. Autism, on one hand, is common among individuals with learning disabilities especially with lower levels of intelligence especially among more severely affected individuals. Learning disability is characterized by global delay but autism is synonymous with both delay and deviance (Ghaziuddin, 2000). Many people believe that students with Autistic Syndrome Disorder (ASD) should not be a part of regular schools and should have separate schools or home-schooling (Barnard, J Prior, A Potter, D 2000). They do not see Autism as a school framework which has to have a start and an end. Also, because educating students with ASD require special skill and is not an easy task and cannot be taught for sake of education. Educators and researchers need to consider teaching students with ASD as important as others and as an engine of teaching and learning. Thus, it is necessary to include students in regular mainstream schooling and not as special entities in special schools (Alghazo, E Gaad, E 2004).

2.2   Purpose of Study:

The purpose of teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the mainstream teaching is to prepare students to succeed in the world and be responsible for their own continuous and learning process (Glashan, L MacKay, G Grieve, A 2004). Schools are the first place where students are exposed to learning in a systematic way. They might learn certain things informally while they were at home before they started schools, but soon they would either not learn or lose all learnt if not kept in touch and practiced regularly. Once, ASD students

are on track with the right learning strategies, they can carry on with all learned and progress further in life and future (Glashan, L MacKay, G Grieve, A 2004).

This study emphasizes on the Private Schooling Sector in Dubai with English as medium of Instruction. In this paper, the main finding will be through Observation, Interviews and Collection of other Data.

The study will portray whether problems and issues surface from including pupils with Autistic ASD into regular schooling and will further speculate whether Inclusion can be considered and looked into and be described as a "Spark in the Dark"?

In School 1: One of the teachers with a student in grade 1with a student affected by ASD along with concentration problems ADHD, though willing to help the child is finding it extremely difficult to assist academically and improve his behaviour due to frequent absentees as whatever taught gets wiped off with the gap of learning and behaving.

In School 2: the class-teacher of the student with ASD is unable to cope up or give assistance to the child due to her own work load which she finds it difficult to complete and thus the attention span which she would like to give the SoD (student of determination) child in her class get unwillingly neglected.

In School 3: The teacher in the third school in grade level 2, being new as an employee and to the concept of special education, is enthusiastic, empathetic and is trying her best to improve the ASD student academically by giving the requires attention within mainstream teaching. The teacher comes prepared with teaching aids as by doing so the child not only acquires knowledge but his conduct also gets under control.

Thus, the main concern of all the three teacher seems to fall in place with the findings of this research paper, whether there is dearth of skilled teachers just because of their willingness of the work or due to their inability to cope with the situation. This research, will therefore will be able to establish whether the findings are more of generalized ones or obstacles to Inclusion of ASD pupils in mainstream education classrooms. And, should this paper expose examples to prove "the spark in the dark" as contributing factors for the success of inclusion in regular schooling (Sherratt, D 2005).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction:

The literature review commences by backdropping current meaning of Autistic Syndrome Disorder (ASD). Then, the study will throw light on commencement of Education policy of UNICEF (2004), followed by the Dubai Inclusive Framework Policy which emphasizes on the need for a framework to foster Autism in private schools in UAE. Next, the issues of including autistic pupil in mainstream education such as teacher's role and teaching strategies, curriculum modification, least restrictive environment in order to gauge the current status of support rendered to ASD students in mainstream schooling will be discussed and thrown highlight upon. Lastly, the study will narrow down its perspective to the misconception of Autistic Syndrome Disorder (ASD) which general prevails in society relating to autistic students but with educators and other stakeholders

2,2 Establishing of Policy for Inclusion in the UAE

The UAE Education Policy reflects international best practices and align with the UAE's ratification of the UNCRPD, particularly Art. 24, on the rights to Inclusive Education and the UAE Education Policy UNICEF (2004). The principles of **inclusion** and **equity** lie at the heart of the legislative framework. It requires that education providers ensure that students who experience SEND have equitable access to quality inclusive education with their peers.

2.3   Dubai Inclusive Framework Policy:

Dubai Inclusive Framework Policy is due to the inspiration for the development of Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework is clear in the words His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum who stated that 'Determination, strategy and vision for the future are our real resources in the quest for excellence and success.'

Dubai Inclusive Education Policy Framework' has also been developed to support the UAE's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as well as federal and local legislation that calls for the inclusion of all learners, regardless of ability, in the education sector. Federal Law 2006 and 2009 and Dubai Law no 2 (2014) clearly demonstrate Dubai's commitment to ensuring the educational and social inclusion of all children, experiencing special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

2.4   Rights of Students of Determination (ASD) in the Emirates

The philosophy of Inclusion has been practiced by many countries and UAE has been no less to do the same. Policy of Inclusion has been UAE Federal law No. 29, Article 12 (2006), which is a new law, guarantees that people with special needs have equal access to all educational institutions, unless there is sufficient reason for prohibition.

- The law states: *The State guarantees to the person with special needs access to equal opportunities of education within all educational institutions ... whether in normal or private classes... The special needs do not constitute a reason for prohibiting the person from applying for, or joining or entering any education institution whether public or private. (Article 12)*

However, (Arif and Gaad 2008), are of the opinion that though the new law gives all children right to education, it is still in the infancy stage.

2.5   Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

According to Frith (2003) ASD is referred to as: *a withdrawal from the fabric of social life into the self. Hence the words "autistic" and "autism", from the Greek autos meaning "self".* Children with autism rarely initiate spontaneous interpersonal inter- actions (Hobson, 1993; Wing and Gould, 1979). They are deficient in prosocial behaviors such as offering affection, giving, sharing and greeting (Dunn, 1991). They are relatively unengaged with and unaffected by other people's expressions of feeling (Sigman et al., 1992). Facial expressiveness is more limited and they display less positive and more negative affect than mental age matched typical children (Snow et al., 1987; Yirmiya et al., 1989). Ghaziuddin et al. (1991) noted that the incidence of violence or other offences by people with autism or Asperger syndrome is actually very small.

It is to be noted that ASDs are generally thought to affect more boys than girls at a ratio of 4:1 (Sicile-Kira 2003), although there is a possibility that ASDs are harder to detect in girls as they tend to display greater social empathy and diagnostic tools may need to be modified to account for this (Jones 2002).

2.6   Inclusive Education for ASD students in mainstream schooling in Dubai

Sicile-Kira (2003) believes Autism Spectrum Disorders are "becoming the fastest- growing disability of this decade". Though, there is death of unpublished literature regarding inclusion

of children with ASD in mainstream education in Dubai (or the UAE), Gaad (2004a), states that an increasing number of children with special educational needs are being educated in mainstream education in the UAE. The private mainstream education system provides special education classes to autistic pupils whose needs are not deemed too severe for mainstream school.

2.7   Curriculum Modification and Adaptation

Curriculum adaptation is an ongoing dynamic process that modifies and adapts the prescribed program of studies to meet the learning requirements of a student with special needs (Coffey, K Obringer, SJ 2004). It enables the teaching team to welcome learners of all abilities and ensures that every student is challenged to learn (Eaves, L and Ho, H 1997).   Curricular Modification occurs as no two students learn in the same way. Sometimes, students require curricular accommodations or modifications in order to achieve reasonable learning goals.   Curricular accommodations are changes made to methods or materials that do not reduce the learning expectations of the student. (Coffey, K Obringer, SJ 2004)

2.8   Creating a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to teach students with Autism

LRE clause states that students with disabilities should be educated with students without disabilities to the maximum appropriate extent. If a student should require supplementary aids and services necessary (such as an interpreter, resource room teacher, learning support assistant) to achieve educational goals while being placed in a classroom with students without disabilities, they should be provided as needed. (Dahle, K B 2003)

2.9   Current Issues regarding the Inclusion of Pupils with Autism

The law states that no school in the UAE can refuse admission to a child with SEN. However, the law also provides for the education of children with special needs in a range of settings - general classrooms, special classrooms or in special centres. Some authors have argued that whilst the law provides a framework for inclusion it is not clear whether it 'requires' a school to accommodate children with SEN (Weber, 2012).

Although, inclusion is taking heed in most of the countries of the globe, every country has different laws and acts concerning education but the challenge they face is the same: "how to educate an increasing number of children in the best possible manner". Research literature suggests that there is a general move towards including pupils with ASDs in mainstream education, with many pupils attending school full-time (Jones 2002).

Bradshaw et al (2004) have reported that most private schools did not knowingly provide admission to children with special needs because of a lack of funding and/or expertise to provide appropriate support. The fact that merely placing a child with ASD in mainstream education is in itself not enough to ensure successful inclusion seems uncontested by research (e.g. Glashan et al. 2004, Ochs 2001). Key to success is the adoption of various strategies or interventions (MacLeod 2007). With effective strategy, pupils with ASDs can to be taught at the heart of the school and class, not the periphery (Sherratt 2005). Relevant to Eapen et al.'s recommendations are the comments of Sara Baqer (cited by Mustafa 2008), from the Dubai Autism Centre, who states that, "the four autism centers in the UAE are swamped with applications and have long waiting lists of children seeking admission". There is a period of up to six months, she explains, for an autism assessment test.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Data Collection

3.1: Introduction: In order to approximately conclude the extent to which students with Autistic Syndrome Disorder (ASD) are being accommodated in the mainstream schooling in few private schools in Dubai, which could also be described as bringing light to ASD students' lives "Spark in the Dark", this study has made use of qualitative type of data collection method, customizing three stages of data collection.

3.2: Research Strategy Stages:

- **Stage 1**: General Overview, involves taking a survey of a questionnaire with teachers' knowledge of Inclusion in schools and of their perspective on Dubai Inclusive Policy Framework, and how far children with ASD have been included in their schools. Whole School Approach (add reference)

- **Stage 2**: Involved piloting interviews with Inclusion Champion, SEN Professional in-charge of the phase and the Teacher of the respective student, and the Learning Support Assistant (LSA) of the ASD child.

- **Stage 3**: Included a series of qualitative classroom observation of the ASD student, and analysis of documental evidences related to students' academic performances, extracurricular activities and behaviour.

3.3: Data Storage

Observation and interview field notes were written up as soon as possible following the event (Hopkins 2002, Wragg 1999) and copies are provided (Appendix 1 & 2).

Observation, interview, documental and questionnaire data were systematically archived as they were obtained (Bassey 1999: 69) as in (Appendix 3 & 4).

3.4: Data Analysis

Firstly, data was organised and recapitulated in a tabular form for overview. Every question of the interview was concussed and evaluated for the presentation of genuine comments.

Next, the interview data was considerable in volume and in order to assemble and give it form, the arrays were compacted for its demonstration into matrices (Robson 2002: 482). Efforts were made to preserve raw data too (Appendix 5).

All data observed was then shortened to give it a brief overall view of school life of ASD student. The interview data of teachers was also reserved carefully not to disclose the authenticity and confidentiality of it. Parents' views on Inclusion of students in mainstream education whether positive or negative and the therapies given to students along with teaching strategies at home was also collated.

3.5: Ethics

Before activating any of research, a verbal permission was sought from each participant school. Full confidentiality was assured to schools that the identities of students would be masked by varying all real names to aliases. Further, it was assured that all transcripts would be returned

to participants once they were reviewed and comments given so that the participants and the stakeholders can make use of them for review if needed. Parents' permissions were sought prior to observations and were done without students being aware of them, not to disturb or draw their attention from routine learning or behaviour.

3.6: Limitations and Challenges

This research has its own limitations:

Firstly, this research is limited due to its miniscule nature. Observations were possible in restricted time-frame, as approach to students given were of lesser time and thus the range of sample obtained was controlled. The teachers did allow to observe the student but did not allow to see all documents, i.e. their psycho-educational reports to maintain the confidentiality of the student. Secondly, obtaining time slots for observation from teachers was also a tedious task due to their own busy schedule and time constraint. Interviews either had to be conducted in their free periods or by engulfing their break time. Further, the Supervisors were allowing lesser number of observations in every students' case which in resultant has limited the sample size of this research (Gaad 2004b).

School 1 allowed access with continual request, but were helpful enough to grant entry to classes and to teacher (Barnard, J Broach, S Potter, D and Prior, A 2002).

School 2 was difficult to crack access. Approaching the Principal itself was a task. The school follows the policy of not granting permission to alien personnel for any observation due to their privacy policy. However, with continuous persistence to a SEN professional of that school, access became possible though had to wait for long to gain access to that student (Farooq, K 2007).

School 3 allowed access only to observe the student only once in the class-room situation, in play areas and activity time, so as to preserve the class lesson functioning and not disturb the students from an unknown person within them. Resultant, Observation data for this school is limited. However, student's LSA's interview was arranged and much information of student's performance in class could be acquired.

Chapter 4

Findings:

4.1 Introduction:

For the purpose of this research paper, three students were observed in three different situations from three different schools.

4.2.1. Observation of Student 1 - (Titus)

Titus, who is grade 1, was observed in Math and EVS periods, and then in Break-time. During Math session, Titus enjoyed learning as he likes numbers and probably the period was earlier in the day (add ref). He was able to count numbers from 1-20 with hands-on-activity (add ref), and is able to write only till 1-10 with motor coordination prompt by the LSA. The teacher, teaching addition to the class gave an abacus to Titus to keep him engaged in counting of numbers and add one or two digits with the learning aid (Dahle, K B 2003).

For Environmental Studies, Titus was learning the topic of "Water" and its sources. The subject-teacher showed a video of the same to the whole class while attempting Inclusion but Titus could not focus on the screen for a long span and could not eye-contact (add ref). However, he did not disturb the class by a typical short speech which he makes often. The LSA here tried to turn his head gently to watch the video but he shrugged away showing that he does not like touching and should be allowed his own will (add ref) and showed signs of boredom and resentment.

Later, Break-time was when Titus enjoyed eating and was well-behaved too. The LSA helped the student put a table-mat under his lunch box, assisted opening the lunch box and took care

that Titus ate food in small morsels (add ref), as some ASD students do not possess the cognition of food quantity to be picked while eating.

While, eating he was socially good as refrained from eating from his peers' and concentrated on eating his own but closed his ears when students were talking to each other in lunch time.

4.2.2. Observation of Student 2 - (Mannan)

Mannan student 2 from another private school, which is the sister concern of the first one, was observed in the resource room for learning Arabic (pic in Appendix), for an English session and during leisure music time. It was noted in all three situations, Mannan learned the best when taught by singing (Eaves, L and Ho, H 1997)

In the first observation of Arabic learning, Mannan preferred writing the Arabic alphabets of the white board with a coloured white-board marker pen proving that most ASD students learn better with colour coding (add ref) and do not prefer black-and-white scripts (Eaves, L and Ho, H (1997).

Next, in English language period while doing nouns in class Mannan showed least interest in learning of abstract concepts and his behaviour in class tend to be disruptive. He snatched another student's pencils and ran towards the other end of the class. The LSA found it difficult controlling as when caught physically Mannan became aggressive and showed signs of violence.

Finally, in the music period, though it was later half of school time, Mannan was most energetic and enjoyed singing nursery rhymes (add ref). The teacher was of the opinion that music was Mannan's favourite and was used in class to control his disruptive behaviour too. As this student

had the tendency to get aggressive of-and-on, the teacher asked other students to start singing for it worked to subdue Mannan's violent behaviour (add ref).

4.2.3. Observation of Student 3 – (Nathan)

Nathan, the third student, from another private school was an ASD student who joined schooling late and not in regular starting school age as he shifted to Dubai recently. While, in his home country, Nathan did not reach milestones of development in time and was given home-schooling. Nathan joined mainstream school earlier this year and was admitted in the grade. The school following a CBSE curriculum promoted him to the grade 2, as schools require students with ASD to be with their chronological age group and not their mental age levels (add ref).

In all three observations of English, SST (UAE) and Physical Training sessions, Nathan showed least interest in learning and lacked the ability to concentrate. He has developed a tendency of leaning on the table while being unable to sit upright. Further, Nathan has his own mother as an LSA due to lack of parent's funding ability (add ref)

In the two sessions of learning, Nathan showed disinterest. However, he focused for a longer span of time on sports activities as his friends played while not participating but showing peculiar smiles and making shrieking noises (add ref)

Being the only child, Nathan was much dependant on his mother for every little support which she gladly did for the child, not realising the need to prompt and make Nathan an independent child.

Observation Check list (Appendix I)

4.3 Interviews:

4.3.1. **Discussing the Questionnaire with teachers:**

A separate set of 20 questions was designed and given to mainstream teachers and a slightly different one to specialised teachers. Each questionnaire given to teachers consisted of 10 questions: (Appendix II)

Qs. 1- 4 Obtained data on personal profile of teachers attending to ASD students.

Q.5 Inquired of teacher's teaching experience of special students, where it was noticed that majority of the teachers handling students with autistic spectrum disability received no formal training of the field and were struggling to keep abreast with the teaching strategies for the ASD students.

Q6. Required number of years of experience of teaching students with special needs and it was noticed that many agreed that Inclusion was a new phenomenon and was recently introduced by the Dubai Inclusive Framework Policy of 2007 Alghazo, E Gaad, E (2004).

Q7. Gained data of extra support given to teachers having ASD students in their classes and positive approach of schools towards Inclusion did provide Assistant Teachers in class with added Learning Support Assistant of individual SoD child autism.

Q8 & 9. Asked of the professional efficacy and knowledge of teachers of autism and was found that 90% of the mainstream teachers had either no or scanty knowledge of this special field. Symptoms of Autism (Appendix III)

Q10. Obtained knowledge of the success of ASD students' integration in the mainstream and it was found that though Inclusion was a requisite for all schools in UAE, the degree of it varied. Facilities for full inclusion is still in its infancy stages, however there is a *Spark in the Dark.* Awareness Autism checklist for teachers (Appendix IV)

Q11. & 12. Listed the preference of Autism as a triad of impairment of Socialisation, Communication and Imagination, and it was noticed through interviews that the preferences were not the same in each interview carried on and did not match the response of other interviewees.

Q13. & 14. Queried the skills of the teacher to train children with ASD, and was found the willingness of teachers depended on the severity of autism in the particular student.

Q15. Intrigued of the behaviour of students with ASD, and was learned that the severity of behaviour depended on several factors: such as parenting, siblings, peer group attitude, therapies taken and many other,

Q16. Investigated of the problems that ASD students faced in mainstream schooling and it was brought to notice that there differed from student to student academically, socially and severity of cases.

Q17. Investigated of the benefits that ASD students reap of Inclusion in mainstream set-up of education and it was realized that is was not really a gain to them academically due to lack of provisions in regular schools for students affected with Autism. However, there is definitely a sincere pursuance on the part of Private International School in Dubai, and would show improvement in the following years to come.

Q18. Showed concern over two or more autistic students in the same class, and it has been concluded that it is not advisable of having more than one ASD student in a class limiting their acceptance and due to the difficulties that the teacher would face and the problem that the regular student would encounter due to Inclusion of two students in the same class.

Q19. Discussed the befits that the regular students would gain in the company of ASD students, and it was evaluated that the mainstream students will again awareness of the existence of ASD

pupils in society and furthermore will develop a value system of their own through buddy support.

Academic behaviour checklist (Appendix V)

Q20. Assessed the role of educational psychologist in terms of practical assistance for teachers for Inclusion and gauged that they played a vital role is supporting mainstream teacher with their expertise of knowledge and guidance through training, counselling and guiding. Continuous Professional Training was provided to teachers in all three schools of this research. Resource rooms and educational clinics were initiated in school. Books were made available for referencing and teacher were encouraged to attend several workshops for the same.

In conclusion and in line with the findings of Barnard et al. (2002) this study found that the majority of mainstream primary teachers had not undertaken any ASD-specific training, or where training had taken place it was usually either a short course of a few hour duration

4.3.2. Discussing students in Interview with Parents:

In discussion with parents of their preference of mainstream inclusion and it was mediated that a higher number of parents agreed to Inclusion as did not wish their child to be isolated from the society and hoped that their child will not gain academic knowledge, if not fully will surely receive vocational training in later years of life. (Appendix)

Secondly, they showed concern over the availability of facilities for their children from schools in the form of learning resources, teaching aids, differentiated curriculum and worksheets.

Thirdly, they showed concern on the acceptability of regular students towards their own children. some pupils are still inappropriately placed without support, even though there is now

a general awareness that merely placing a pupil in mainstream is not enough to ensure inclusion (Glashan et al. 2004)

4.3.3. Discussing the information collected from assistant teachers.

In informal talks with one assistant teacher in each school, it was learned that they had acquired more knowledge of inclusion and ASD students' achievement due to the longevity of the hours spent with them in classes and their empathetic nature and willingness to assist. It was surprising of their extensive knowledge of their field despite of their meagre qualification.

4.3.4. Presenting data collected from Learning Support Assistants (LSAs)

Data obtained from LSAs was also through informal interviews and it was gauged that nearly all the learning support assistants were qualified but in different areas of knowledge and did not possess the required knowledge and training to handle an ASD pupil. They had accepted the challenging job out of need and not expertise. However, they were ready to take support from the school educational psychologist for the student at hand.

4.3.5 Recommendation for learning for ASD students

In my process of research and observation, I have come down to the following suggestion and recommendation in order to bring successful inclusion in private schools in Dubai, which can also be adopted by other institutions in the Emirates.

1. I am thinking in terms of **Curriculum Modification.** It was noticed that Curriculum Modification was essential for the teaching/learning of students with autistic spectrum disorder as restrictions on modifying and adapting curriculum will hinder academic success

achievement for pupils. Curriculum restriction is a barrier to inclusion identified in current research (Jordan and Jones 1999 Appendix 3). Barnard et al. (2000), for instance, believe the National Curriculum of the UK to be too narrow to reflect the needs of children with autism and recognize that revision is necessary if schools are to become truly inclusive. inclusion identified in current research (Jordan and Jones 1999).

2. I am thinking in terms of **Add-on system**. Using of prompts by the teacher, LSAs or others involved in the teaching process for students is necessary. According to Dahle, 2003 "predictable routine" and "work broken down into smaller chunks" and in doing so emphasis the necessity of school adaptation as opposed to pupil. 'add-on' system.

3. I am thinking in terms of **Networking**. While observing, it was noticed that there was a lack of support networks with Dubai. Increasing the number of support staff is generally welcomed by research (e.g. Barnard et al. 2002, Margerison 1997), however, there are a myriad of potential issues that also require careful consideration before simply increasing numbers, namely: the importance of clear job descriptions (Jerwood 1999); necessity to ensure LSAs form part of a team (Mistry et al. 2004); that support staff are adequately trained (Lacey 2001).

4. I am also thinking in terms of **Reducing the quantity of content** according to individual's needs of students and **Providing of Aids** (Concrete TLM, Enlarge text materials Etc.)

5. I also suggest in the **Flexibility in taking student's responses** like oral, identifying the materials with finger pointing and written material and Extra time to complete the task

6. **Peer buddy** support to keep student on task.

7. **Special training for teachers, supporting teachers and LSAs** Barnard et al. (2000) recommend that training occurs at all levels: ITT, SENCO and that of the practicing teacher, for instance. Sherratt (2005) concurs with this stating that a whole-school approach is vital

for successful inclusion of children with ASDs, alongside the implementation of a whole school policy so all staff are cognizant with the approach.

4.4   Future Research

According to Howard Sharron Special schools are more valued whereas mainstream schools make very little use of expertise. Though inclusion is the best achievement in UAE private schools in the field of education by the Ministry of Education (MOE), there is still a need for adapting curriculum, strategies and practices for the child to survive in society and not just into main stream schooling. Future research is required to adapt policies for schools to adapt curriculum for schools for individual students according to their needs in order to make them learn skills that enables them earn their living and turn into independent citizens

Chapter 5

Conclusion:

In order to approximately conclude the extent to which students with Autistic Syndrome Disorder (ASD) are being accommodated in the mainstream schooling in few private schools in Dubai, which could also be described as bringing light to ASD students' lives "Spark in the Dark", this study has made use of qualitative type of data collection method, customizing three stages of data collection. With the growing government emphasis on inclusion, the role of special schools has become marginalised in education policy. Yet for many children, inclusion in the mainstream is a route to failure. However, private school in Dubai are trying their best to achieve successful inclusion in their institutions.

The law states that no school in the UAE can refuse admission to a child with SEN. However, the law also provides for the education of children with special needs in a range of settings - general classrooms, special classrooms or in special centres. Some authors have argued that whilst the law provides a framework for inclusion it is not clear whether it 'requires' a school to accommodate children with SEN (Weber, 2012).

Further, the ASD have certain options for education in the UAE. Pupils with severe and more obvious needs may not enter mainstream due to the lack of facilities with the institution and should preferably do home schooling get support with the Dubai Autism school.The national aim for educating people with disabilities in the National Plan for Development (1999) was and is to: "raise the child to become independent, and a good citizen who knows his duties, understands his rights, and works towards the continuous development of the nation" (cited by Gaad 2001).

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Appendix

Appendix1:

APPENDIX 1

Clearly evident	Somewhat evident	Not observed	**Teacher** In this classroom, the teacher:
☐	☑	☐	Provides a supportive classroom environment
☐	☐	☑	Maintains high expectations for student achievement
☐	☐	☐	Effectively manages the classroom by
☐	☐	☑	Establishing and teaching procedures and routines
☐	☑	☐	Effectively using prompting and cuing techniques to maximize student success
☐	☐	☑	Promoting student independence
☐	☐	☑	Ensuring a safe learning environment
☐	☑	☐	Presents information in a systematic and clear format
☐	☑	☐	Models/demonstrates concepts and procedures
☐	☐	☑	Uses techniques to promote student success
☐	☑	☐	Observes, records, and assesses student progress related to IEP goals
☐	☐	☑	Provides appropriate follow-up activities
☐	☑	☐	Provides a variety of ways for students to demonstrate knowledge
☐	☑	☑	Maintains momentum through
☐	☑	☐	Preparation
☐	☑	☐	Organization
☐	☐	☑	Delivery
☐	☐	☑	Collaborates with service providers and team members
☐	☑	☐	Implements an effective work plan for instructional team members
☐	☐	☑	Provides opportunities for peer interaction

LCPS, 2009 (Adapted from FCPS 1998/2006)

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APPENDIX 1.

Learning Environment

In this classroom, there is evidence of:

Clearly evident	Somewhat evident	Not observed	
☐	☐	☑	Curriculum, adapted or modified as needed
☐	☐	☑	Differentiated instruction to meet individual student's strengths and needs
☐	☐	☑	Adaptations to meet individual student's strengths and needs
☐	☐	☑	Use of visual strategies to augment instruction
☐	☑	☐	Pictures/picture symbols
☐	☑	☑	Checklists
☐	☐	☑	Pictorial/written directions
☐	☐	☑	Task sequences
☐	☑	☐	Highlighting
☐	☑	☐	Flip chart
☐	☑	☐	Assignments poster
☐	☐	☑	Variety of presentation materials
☐	☐	☑	Text
☐	☐	☑	Manipulatives
☐	☑	☐	Overhead projector
☐	☐	☑	Tape recorder
☐	☑	☐	Computer and software
☐	☑	☐	Card reader, as appropriate
☐	☑	☐	Writing boards
☐	☑	☐	Age appropriate materials and activities
☐	☑	☐	Meaningful, relevant, functional activities

LCPS, 2009 (Adapted from FCPS 1998/2006)

2

Clearly evident	Somewhat evident	Not observed	**Learning Environment (continued)** **In this classroom, there is evidence of:**
☐	☑	☐	Opportunities for all students to participate and communicate
☐	☑	☐	Communication systems in use for individual students across settings
☐	☐	☑	Group & individual learning opportunities
☐	☑	☐	Transitional routines
☐	☐	☑	Positive behavior programming
☐	☑	☐	Group and individual reinforcement plans
☐	☑	☐	Opportunities for making choices
☐	☑	☐	Modeling of desired behaviors
☐	☑	☐	Instructional language matched to student levels
☐	☑	☐	Minimal distractions/interruptions
☐	☑	☐	Assignment books/organizers/communication logs

3

Learning Environment (continued)

In this classroom, there is evidence of:

Clearly evident	Somewhat evident	Not observed	
☐	☑	☐	Opportunities for all students to participate and communicate
☐	☑	☐	Communication systems in use for individual students across settings
☐	☐	☑	Group & individual learning opportunities
☐	☑	☐	Transitional routines
☐	☐	☑	Positive behavior programming
☐	☑	☐	Group and individual reinforcement plans
☐	☑	☐	Opportunities for making choices
☐	☑	☐	Modeling of desired behaviors
☐	☑	☐	Instructional language matched to student levels
☐	☑	☐	Minimal distractions/interruptions
☐	☑	☐	Assignment books/organizers/communication logs

3

Classroom Observation Guide

Physical Environment

In this classroom, you observe:

Clearly evident	Somewhat evident	Not observed	
☐	☐	☑	Appropriate amount of visual and auditory stimulation
☐	☑	☐	Individualized seating accommodations, as needed
☐	☐	☑	Visually separated areas
☐	☐	☑	Work: teacher directed; independent; centers
☐	☑	☐	Group instruction
☐	☐	☑	Leisure/break
☐	☐	☑	Transition/schedule
☐	☑	☐	Identifiable space for personal belongings
☐	☐	☑	An organized and orderly environment: Examples
☐	☐	☑	Placement of furniture and materials
☐	☑	☐	Containers, carts, shelving, cabinets
☐	☐	☑	Schedules
☐	☑	☐	Color-coding
☐	☐	☑	Labeling
☐	☑	☐	Adaptive equipment, as appropriate
☐	☐	☑	Student work displayed
☐	☑	☐	Evidence of the use of technology to meet student needs

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Questionnaire to test Teachers Knowledge on Special Education

- What are the services required and necessary to support the student?
- What is the least restrictive environment? How will the environment be least restrictive?
- Is it possible for the student to receive special education services in a school close to his home?
- Are there any resources or that can be provided by the school for the benefit of the student?
- Does the school have a clear idea of inclusion and acceptance of the student?
- Are parents involved in the development of an educational plan with the team?
- Does the student require a behavior intervention plan?
- Is there a need for an assistant teacher to facilitate the process of inclusion?
- What are the subjects in which the student performs best?
- Does the student require support services?
- Is there a special education teacher in the school?
- Is the number of teachers sufficient to cover the type of proposed program?
- Is there a resource room teacher?
- What is the number of students receiving special education in the school? (What are their programs)?
- Has the school informed students, parents and teachers about the special education programs?
- Is the class ready to receive the student?
- Is the school or educational environment ready to receive the student?

APPENDIX · III

NEW INDIAN MODEL SCHOOL – DUBAI

Symptoms of Autism

1. Apparent insensitivity to pain

2. No fear of real dangers

3. Resists normal teaching methods

4. Inappropriate laughing and giggling

5. Acts as deaf

6. Sustained odd play

7. Stand – offish manner

8. Echolalic (repetitive vocalization made by others)

9. Responds differently to touch

10. Crying tantrums – Extreme distress for no discernible reason

11. Difficulty in mixing with other children

12. Resist change in routine

13. Inappropriate attachment to objects

14. Indicates needs by gestures

15. Marked physical overactivity or extreme passivity

Awareness Autism Checklist for Teachers

If you have a child, or children with autism in your classroom, there are small adjustments you can make that will make a big difference to their lives. So, this checklist included here, isn't a checklist to determine whether a child may have autism, and there are plenty of those included here already. This checklist is for things you can do as a teacher to check that you're doing all you can to help students with autism.

By using the following techniques, you may help autistic students feel more supported, and go on to achieve more in life. It can reduce children being excluded from school too, due to their behavior.

- Does the child display obsessive behavior, with interests or people?
- Does the child show restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior?
- Does the child have difficulty processing sound, sight, smell, taste and touch?
- Does the child have difficulty controlling their emotions, especially anger?
- Does the child use sever avoidance strategies, such as distraction or excuses?
- Does the child have meltdowns?
- Was/Is the child's speech delayed compared to their peers?
- Does the child take things literally, such as sarcasm, jokes, teasing, and language?
- Does the child take time to process what they hear?
- Is the child comfortable with role play?
- Do you use a routine that has been mutually agreed with the student?
- Have you ensured that you have prepared your autistic students for any changes to their routine?
- Do you use visual supports for students with autism?
- Do you simplify your communication and allow them time to process what you say and request?