

**Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students
with mild intellectual disabilities in regular classrooms
in primary schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding including pupils with mild intellectual disabilities in regular education classes in Saudi Arabia. One hundred teachers participated, both from general education and from special education in primary schools. To answer the research questions, the quantitative and qualitative approach was required. A questionnaire was designed consisting of closed-end questions and open-ended questions consisting of closed-end questions and open-ended questions and distributed to mainstream schools in Riyadh.

The views and attitudes of most of the participants were positive towards the inclusion of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities in regular classes in accordance with social justice and the principle of equality for all. In addition to suggesting some participants the need to adapt the curriculum and the school environment and prepare students to include individuals with mild intellectual disabilities in the regular classrooms. Most participants also agreed that teachers in Saudi Arabia need training programs to deal with people with intellectual disabilities and meet their needs for progress towards inclusive education. Most participants also suggested reducing teacher workloads by providing assistant teachers and reducing the number of students in the classroom.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة اتجاهات ومواقف المعلمين نحو دمج التلاميذ ذوي الإعاقة الذهنية البسيطة في الفصول الدراسية العادية بالمملكة العربية السعودية. شارك في البحث مائة معلّم ومعلّمة من معلمي التعليم العام والتعليم الخاص في المرحلة الابتدائية. وللإجابة عن أسئلة البحث، تم اعتماد منهج يجمع بين الأسلوبين الكمي والنوعي، حيث أُعدّ استبيان تضمن أسئلة مغلقة وأخرى مفتوحة، ووُزِعَ على المدارس العادية في مدينة الرياض.

أظهرت النتائج أن غالبية المشاركين عبّروا عن مواقف إيجابية تجاه دمج التلاميذ ذوي الإعاقة الذهنية البسيطة في الفصول العادية، استنادًا إلى مبادئ العدالة الاجتماعية والمساواة بين الجميع. كما أشار بعض المشاركين إلى أهمية تهيئة المناخ والبيئة المدرسية، وإعداد الطلاب لاستقبال زملائهم من ذوي الإعاقة الذهنية البسيطة. وأجمع معظمهم على حاجة المعلمين في السعودية إلى برامج تدريبية تمكّنهم من التعامل مع هذه الفئة وتلبية احتياجاتها، بما يساهم في التقدّم نحو التعليم الدامج. كذلك، اقترح العديد من المشاركين تخفيف أعباء المعلمين من خلال توفير معلمين مساعدين وتقليل عدد الطلاب في الصف الواحد.

Introduction:

Runswick-Cole and Hodge (2009) stated that nearly 20% of children need special services because of the difficulties they face in attending school. All children around the world, whether with special educational needs (SEN) or not, deserve to be educated under human rights legislation and to achieve the concept of social justice. Education is the way to improve a country's economy and eliminate the problems of unemployment and poverty (Amr, 2011). However, some countries around the world continue to deny students with SEN their right to education by isolating and marginalizing them (Miles & Singal, 2010).

Miles and Singal (2010) describe inclusive education as an approach that removes barriers from the school environment and promotes the education and improvement of SEN individuals in mainstream schools. There has been controversy over the past decades about the appropriate educational settings for students with SEN. Inclusive education has become one of the most prominent approaches for educating all pupils with SEN in mainstream schools alongside their peers.

According to Polat (2011), this movement emerged in Western countries in the early 1980s. Although there are some benefits to inclusive education in economic and social aspects, it may not be ideal or appropriate for everyone. Al-Mousa (2010) pointed out that educating students with SEN in segregated or special schools may be more beneficial in the academic and cognitive aspects, as it ensures focused attention and gives them their needed time to learn.

Inclusive education provides pupils with SEN greater opportunities, increases community confidence, and strengthens family and community cohesion (Gargiulo and Metcalf, 2017). However, inclusion sometimes lacks essential factors for its success, such as appropriate educational adjustments and curriculum adaptations, as well as teacher training programs. Teacher attitudes towards inclusion, in addition to years of experience and qualifications, are significant factors in the success of inclusive education. Armstrong (2006) suggested that each country needs to make adjustments and adaptations to its education policies to implement inclusive education in a way that aligns with different cultures.

Attitudes of teachers regarding pupils with SEN play a crucial role in the success of inclusion in mainstream schools. Attitude has been defined as "the mental position regarding a fact or state, a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state" (Webster's New Collection Dictionary, 2000, p. 74). Teachers' attitudes, whether positive or negative, affect their behaviour and interaction with students (Richardson, 1996). Studies also indicated the inability of teachers to separate thinking and work, confirming the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their actions. Richardson (1996) emphasized the complex relationship between beliefs and actions, as beliefs guide and influence practice.

The aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of special education and general education teachers in Saudi Arabia towards the inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs) in regular classrooms in mainstream schools.

Research problem:

The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia classifies pupils with SEN into two main categories: the first group, those with mild and moderate disabilities, are educated in special classes attached to regular schools, while the second group, those with severe or multiple disabilities, are placed in separate institutions or special schools (Alquraini, 2011a). Currently, students with specific learning disabilities are included in regular classrooms but receive additional services in a separate resource room (Felimban, 2013). Students with SEN in mainstream schools have the opportunity to integrate socially with their peers during extracurricular activities and breaks (Felimban, 2013). The Saudi government also offers services for individuals with severe and multiple disabilities to help them achieve independence (Al-Mousa, 2012).

Despite the efforts of the Saudi government to support inclusive education, there are still many shortcomings. Al-Ahmadi (2008) noted that pupils with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs) continue to be taught in special education classes in regular schools. Intellectual disability is defined as a disorder that inhibits an individual's mental development, affecting cognition, language, adaptive behaviour, and intelligence (Katz & Lazcano-Ponce, 2008).

These students are typically identified through IQ tests and adaptive behaviour measures (Harris, 2006). This study focuses on students with mild intellectual disabilities, defined as having an IQ of 50 to 70 — a category commonly used among education professionals in Saudi Arabia and in previous studies.

Through professional experience in special classes attached to regular schools, the researcher observed that teaching students with mild IDs in separate classrooms can limit their development. At the same time, the inclusion of students with moderate IDs in special classes within regular schools has shown to promote academic, social, and psychological development. Prior studies, such as Alquraini (2011b), have explored teachers' attitudes toward the integration of students with severe IDs, but limited research has addressed attitudes toward the inclusion of pupils with mild IDs specifically in regular classrooms.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are special education teachers' and general education teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with mild IDs?
2. What is the difference between their attitudes towards full inclusion?
3. What factors influence teachers' attitudes towards full inclusion?
4. What do teachers believe are the main barriers to inclusion?
5. What challenges may arise if full inclusion is implemented?

Research importance:

This study is significant as it aligns with the Ministry of Education's vision of comprehensive and inclusive education in Saudi Arabia. Understanding the attitudes of general and special education teachers towards the inclusion of pupils with mild intellectual disabilities can help identify the enablers and obstacles in implementing inclusive education effectively. It also contributes to current educational discourse by providing data that can support decision-making, teacher training programs, and policy development aimed at inclusive practices in mainstream schools in Riyadh.

Study Objectives

The current study aims to:

1. To examine special education teachers' and general education teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities (IDs).
2. To compare the attitudes of special education and general education teachers towards full inclusion.
3. To identify the factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards full inclusion of students with mild IDs.
4. To explore teachers' perceptions of the main barriers to inclusion.
5. To investigate the potential challenges teachers anticipate if full inclusion is implemented.

Literature Review:

In this chapter, some of the previous literature is discussed regarding the concept of inclusion in ordinary schools, alongside key international legislation that helped promote and implement inclusion. The background of inclusion in Saudi Arabia and related policies in the Saudi education system are then briefly reviewed. Finally, previous literature on teachers' attitudes towards including students with mild IDs in regular classes in mainstream schools is examined.

1. Inclusion in Mainstream Schools

Inclusion is defined by Evans (2016) as an approach that enhances belonging for all and develops the ability to interact with others. Norwich (2013) notes that there is still debate over a clear definition of inclusion. Connor (2007) emphasizes that implementing inclusion requires providing social services to enable students with SEN to coexist, in

addition to offering equal educational opportunities. In this study, inclusion is considered an approach that ensures equal opportunities for pupils with SEN in regular classrooms, with additional services based on needs and abilities. One obstacle to inclusive education is the absence of a unified definition, as interpretations vary across cultures (Slee, 2001).

According to Armstrong et al. (2010), one of the greatest challenges for mainstream school teachers and administrators is adapting the environment and curriculum. Critics argue that while inclusion is ideal in principle, it may be unsuitable in practice if the educational setting is unprepared (Devarakonda, 2013). Teachers may struggle to meet SEN students' needs in regular classrooms, or students may fail to adapt, undermining the purpose of inclusion.

The Saudi experience with full inclusion has been limited mainly to those with specific learning disabilities. Al-Qahtani (2017) found that students in resource rooms showed 21% greater academic progress compared to those in regular classrooms.

At the international level, the 1990s saw significant developments. The Education for All (EFA) Initiative emphasized the universal right to education, though without explicitly mentioning all groups (Peters, 2007). The 1994 UNESCO Salamanca Statement, involving 92 countries and 25 international organizations, played a pivotal role in advancing inclusive education, stressing respect for diversity and meeting individual needs (Peters, 2007; Wertheimer, 1997). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) further ensured that children are educated alongside their peers (Pearson et al., 2014). Nevertheless, implementation remains a lengthy process (Armstrong, 2006).

Peters (2007) highlights that mainstream schools offering inclusive education provide optimal environments for student growth, while also benefiting national economies by reducing the need for separate facilities.

2. Background and Inclusion Policy of Special Education in Saudi Arabia

Before 1958, individuals with SEN in Saudi Arabia received no formal special education (Aldabas, 2015). Education and care came from families, and some sought services in neighbouring countries (Aldabas, 2015). Awareness grew when visually impaired individuals learned Braille, leading the Ministry of Education in 1960 to establish institutions for them. The first was Al Noor Institute for the visually impaired (Al-Mousa, 2010). In 1964, the first institute for hearing impairment was founded (Aldabas, 2015). Initially, services were male-only, with female education introduced later (Alanazi, 2012).

In 1971, the Centre for the Education of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities was opened to foster independent living (Aldabas, 2015). By 1987, there were 27 institutions for people with hearing, vision, and intellectual disabilities, focusing mainly on service provision rather than inclusion. To reduce dependence on foreign specialists, the Ministry established the first Special Education Department at King Saud University in 1984 (Battal, 2016). By 1990, special classes for moderate and mild disabilities were introduced in mainstream schools (Aldabas, 2015), and by 2006, nearly 80% of SEN pupils were in mainstream schools (Alnahdi et al., 2019). However, exclusionary practices persist, especially for mild and moderate disabilities (Aldabas, 2015).

Saudi special education has evolved alongside international conventions. The 1987 Legislation of Disability ensured equality (Alquraini, 2011a). The 2001 Rules and Regulations of Special Education Programs (RRSEP) mandated access to appropriate education, early intervention, transitional services, and inclusion in the least restrictive environment.

Prior to 1958, government inaction represented explicit exclusion from education, contrary to international policies such as UNESCO's Salamanca Statement (1994), which called for education for all (Wertheimer, 1997). Saudi Arabia has since moved toward compliance with international policies guaranteeing inclusive education rights (Alquraini, 2011b).

Alanazi (2012) identified two types of inclusion in Saudi mainstream schools:

- Inclusion of pupils with specific learning disabilities in regular classes with resource room support.
- Placement of pupils with moderate and mild disabilities in special classes within mainstream schools.

Alanazi (2012) emphasized that successful inclusion depends on teacher readiness, attitudes, and beliefs. Even in special classes, students benefit socially through interaction during breaks and extracurricular activities. Alquraini (2011b) found improved academic performance in inclusive settings. Inclusion enhances self-confidence, social relationships, and experiential learning.

3. Importance of Teachers' Attitudes

This research examines the attitudes of general and special education teachers in Saudi Arabia towards including pupils with mild IDs in regular primary classrooms. Reviewing Western literature is relevant due to these countries' longer history with inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Over the past two decades, teacher attitudes have been a central focus, influenced by factors such as teacher training, years of experience, and the nature of disabilities.

Cook (2001) found that teachers were more receptive to students with mild (hidden) disabilities than severe (visible) disabilities. In Saudi Arabia, limited Arab studies on inclusion mean that Western research often informs the debate (Alquraini, 2011b). A common obstacle to inclusion is negative teacher attitudes, which vary with the severity of the disability (Alquraini, 2011b). Other influencing factors include class size and prior experience.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) reported that school administrators tend to hold more positive attitudes than teachers, with special education teachers more positive than general education teachers. Teachers in countries with strong legislative support, such as the USA and Germany, often show more positive attitudes.

Positive teacher attitudes are linked to successful inclusion (Alanazi, 2012; Alquraini, 2011b). However, Alanazi (2012) also found cases where teachers refused to participate in studies due to categorical rejection of inclusion. Salary disparities and limited cooperation between general and special education teachers may contribute to challenges (Alnahdi et al., 2019).

While most Saudi studies show positive attitudes, some reveal reluctance, often tied to increased workload expectations (Alnahdi et al., 2019). Comparative research shows that Finnish pre-service teachers, for example, hold more positive views than their Saudi counterparts. A lack of training programs is consistently identified as a barrier (Alanazi, 2012).

Although some studies downplay the role of teacher attitudes (Zagona et al., 2017), Avramidis and Norwich (2002) stress a strong link between teacher beliefs and their commitment to implementing inclusion. Cultural and systemic differences make it difficult to generalize international findings (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). In Saudi Arabia, factors such as experience, preparation, and training strongly shape teacher attitudes (Alrubaian, 2014).

In summary, both international and Saudi literature agree on the importance of teacher attitudes in determining the success of inclusion. Factors such as training, experience, and systemic support remain decisive.

Research methodology:

This section describes the primary research methods used to achieve the study's objectives. It presents the research approach, population, and sample, followed by the study tool, data collection procedures, and statistical analyses used to test the hypotheses. Creswell (2002) highlights that educational research provides vital information to policymakers and supports educational development.

1. Research method:

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative data from closed-ended questionnaire items and qualitative data from open-ended questions. Questionnaires were distributed electronically to randomly selected public-school teachers in Riyadh, both in special and general education, via WhatsApp.

This design allowed for statistical analysis of attitudes (quantitative) and exploration of beliefs and experiences (qualitative). Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) define mixed methods as a design that integrates philosophical assumptions with data collection to provide richer findings. A single-method approach was deemed insufficient, as teacher attitudes involve both measurable trends and nuanced personal perspectives.

2. Research Design

The study used an explanatory model to:

- Investigate the trends and beliefs of teachers regarding inclusion of students with mild IDs.
- Compare attitudes between public and private education teachers.
- Examine the relationship between teachers' attitudes (dependent variable) and independent variables such as educational status, qualifications, training, class size, years of experience, and gender.

Quantitative methods allowed measurement of demographic and attitudinal variables, while qualitative methods provided insight into beliefs and experiences not easily captured through structured items (Johnson, 2001).

3. Population and Sample

The study targeted special and general education teachers in Riyadh primary schools during the 2019 academic year. Questionnaires were sent to over 160 teachers, anticipating at least 100 valid responses due to potential non-response. Distribution coincided with the school vacation period, creating challenges in securing complete responses.

Riyadh was chosen as the setting due to its size, diversity of schools, and relevance to the researcher's location. The sample included:

- Special education teachers working with students with mild IDs in inclusive schools.
- General education teachers in regular classrooms.

Distribution was approved by the Ministry of Education. Questionnaires were shared via WhatsApp with assistance from colleagues, Ministry staff, and headteachers, who further disseminated the link to staff. Ethical considerations were strictly maintained: participation was voluntary, and all responses were confidential.

4. Research Tool

The primary tool was a questionnaire combining quantitative and qualitative items, adapted from Al-Ahmadi's (2008) study on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of students with learning disabilities in Saudi public schools. Al-Ahmadi's version was itself adapted from the Opinion Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities (ORI) scale by Antonak & Larrivee (1995), originally based on Larrivee & Cook's (1969) model. The ORI measures teacher opinions toward mainstreaming students with disabilities.

For this study, modifications included:

- Adding a research information section at the start.
- Introducing open-ended questions at the end to capture in-depth views.

- Adjusting wording to fit the context of mild IDs in Saudi Arabia.

5. Questionnaire Structure

A. Demographics & Independent Variables

Collected data on age, years of teaching experience, qualifications, major, teaching field, training in special education, personal connections to individuals with mild IDs, and prior classroom exposure to students with disabilities.

B. Closed-ended Attitudinal Items

Included 27 items measuring perceptions of inclusion of students with mild IDs, rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree).

C. Open-ended Questions

Explored:

- Advantages of mainstreaming students with mild IDs.
- Disadvantages of mainstreaming.
- Barriers to effective inclusion.
- Recommendations for improving inclusion.
- Additional comments or suggestions from teachers.

The open-ended section enabled collection of information not obtainable through closed-ended items, addressing the limitations of purely quantitative surveys.

6. Justification for the Mixed-Methods Approach

The mixed-methods design offered several advantages:

- Quantitative: Enabled statistical analysis of relationships between demographic factors and attitudes, identifying trends across the sample.
- Qualitative: Provided richer, context-based insights into teachers' beliefs, challenges, and recommendations.
- Complementarity: Addressed the shortcomings of using a single approach, ensuring both breadth and depth in understanding attitudes toward inclusion.
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Table1: Pearson's correlation coefficient to ascertain the internal reliability of the questionnaire.

NO.	Corr. Coefficient	P-value	NO.	Corr. Coefficient	P-value	NO.	Corr. Coefficient	P-value
1	.273**	.006	10	.276**	.006	19	.254*	.012
2	.229*	.023	11	.209*	.037	20	.261**	.009
3	.326**	.001	12	.222*	.026	21	.337**	.001
4	.260**	.009	13	.298**	.003	22	.209*	.037
5	.354**	.000	14	.204*	.043	23	.458**	.000
6	.238*	.018	15	.497**	.000	24	.230*	.023
7	.337**	.001	16	.204*	.044	25	.404**	.000
8	.356**	.000	17	.374**	.000	26	.227*	.024
9	.321**	.001	18	.287**	.004	27	.272**	.006

*Significant at the 0.05 level

7. Research procedure

Prior to the data collection process, the Graduate School of Education at the University of Exeter provided the researcher with ethical approval for the research. It was important to anonymise all data, including schools' and individuals' names to safeguard their personal information and adhere to ethical research standards. The Ministry of Education in Riyadh also granted the researcher permission to carry out the study. Initially, the researcher had to go through the process of validating the research by sending an email to explain the research objectives to the Ministry of Education. This enabled her to gain ethical approval and help in distributing the questionnaire to the sampled population. As soon as it was approved, the questionnaire was sent to several special and general teachers at mainstream schools in the capital. Aiming at minimising response bias, the researcher disseminated more than the lowest number of questionnaires for the needed sample size. Each respondent would need 20 minutes approximately to complete the full questionnaire, with all responses remaining anonymous. The following step involved translating the scale into Arabic for clarity and to be in line with the language of the sample. Furthermore, there were some changes to some sections of the questionnaire, while questions were added as necessary depending on the particular setting and research questions to be taken into account in this study. Ensuring that the survey questions were in keeping with the research questions was the purpose behind these changes.

8. Statistical methods

The statistical analysis program (SPSS v.20) was been used in the study in data entry and analysis, with the use of necessary statistical methods to achieve the objectives of the study. The following statistical methods were used:

- Frequencies & Percentages: which is used for describing personal data for the study sample.
- Mean: to identify to what extent the responses for sentences and the main dimensions of the study.
- Standard Deviation: shows how much variation or dispersion exists from the average (mean), or expected value, the more values came close to zero the more responses are centered and dispersion decreased.
- Pearson Correlation Coefficient: To measure the sincerity of internal consistency and the correlation coefficient, which is used to study the relationship between variables.
- T-test for independent samples: to test the differences between the attitudes of general education teachers and special education teachers towards the full inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities.

Data Analysis and results:

This chapter addresses the results of the descriptive statistical analysis represented in the description of the study sample, the results of inferential statistical analysis, as well as displaying the most important statistical results that have been reached about the problem of the study. In addition this Chapter includes discussion of how the research questions have been answered

1. Results of the section I

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants according to their demographic information, the results showed that 10% of the participants are male, while 90% are female. In this study half of the participants were between the ages of 31-40, while nearly one third of the sample were between the ages of 41 and 50. Participants over 51 years of age and under 30 years of age are the minority in this study. The distribution of participants has been seen at the highest level of education, two thirds of whom have a bachelor's degree, while the last third have a postgraduate degree and others. Distribution according to the field of education, one third of the participants of special education, while the other two thirds are from general education.

Participants' dominant field, of teaching, were one third of them are Arabic language teachers and the other two thirds are from other subjects. One third of respondents have learning experience under 5 years of age, the second third have learning experiences between 6-10 years, and the last third have more than 10 years. 39% attended a training program in special education, 43% have relatives with disabilities, and more than half of the participants had a student in class with a disability.

Table 1 shows the distribution of participants according to their demographic information.

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	10	10.0
	Female	90	90.0
Age	20-30	12	12.0
	31-40	54	54.0
	41-50	32	32.0
	51+	2	2.0
Highest Educational level	Bachelor's degree	79	79.0
	Graduate degree	12	12.0
	Other	9	9.0
Education Area	Special education	24	24.0
	General education	76	76.0
Dominant teaching Field	Language	22	22.0
	Sciences	11	11.0
	Math	9	9.0
	Other	58	58.0
Teaching experiences	less than 1 year	5	5.0

	1-5 years	22	22.0
	6-10 years	32	32.0
	more than 10 years	41	41.0
Have you attended any training program in special education	Yes	39	39.0
	No	61	61.0
Do you have any family member or close relative with disabilities?	Yes	43	43.0
	No	57	57.0
Have you had a student in class with a disability?	Yes	58	58.0
	No	42	42.0
Total		100	100.0

The following diagram shows the most prevalent disabilities found in the schools in which the respondents work, where the most prevalent disabilities in Saudi schools are; Learning disabilities 33%, Intellectual disabilities 19%, and Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder 16%.

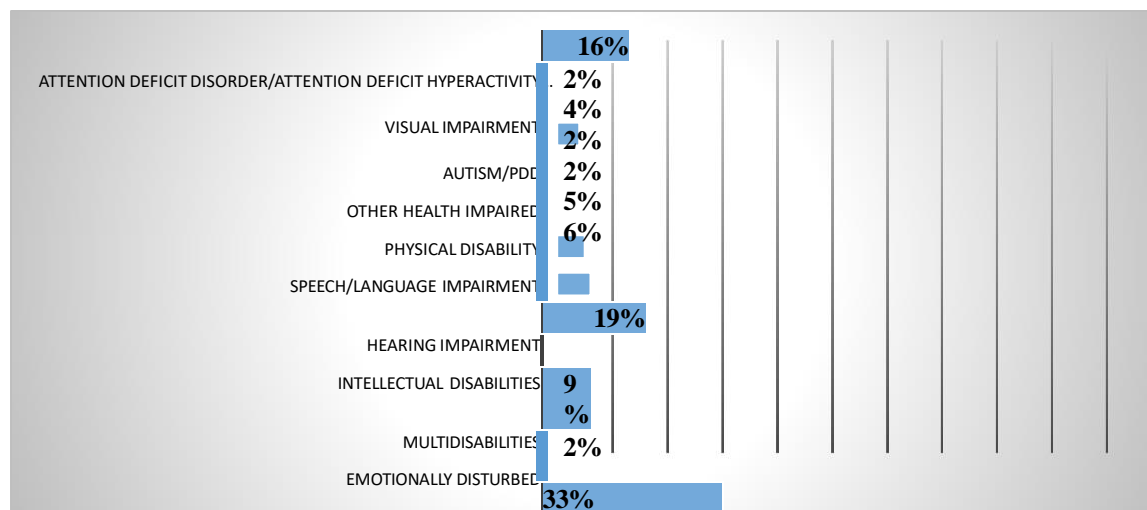


Diagram1: The most prevalent disabilities in Saudi schools.

2. Results of the section II

Table 2 shows the attitudes of male and female teachers towards pupils with mild intellectual disabilities and their education, for the item that states " Isolation in a special classroom has a beneficial effect on the social and emotional development of the students with mild intellectual disabilities" in ranked first in terms of the approval of the respondents, according to the relative weight of 86%. It is followed by the paragraph " Integration offers mixed group interaction that will foster understanding and acceptance of differences among students " which received the second highest degree of support in terms of the approval of the respondents, according to the relative weight of 81%, then the paragraph that states " Students with mild intellectual disabilities should be given every opportunity to function in regular classrooms when possible " ranked third in terms of the approval of the respondents, according to the relative weight of 80%. While the paragraph that states " Teaching students with mild intellectual disabilities is better done by special than by regular classroom teachers" on the last ranked in terms of the approval of the respondents, according to the relative weight of 48% and then the paragraph that states " Regular classroom teachers have the abilities necessary to work with students with mild intellectual disabilities" obtained the penultimate arrangement in terms of the approval of the respondents, according to the relative weight of 49%.

Table 2 shows the attitudes of male and female teachers towards pupils with mild intellectual disabilities and their

			Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Relative weight	Ranking
1.	Most students with mild intellectual disabilities will make an adequate attempt to complete their assignments.	#	13	28	15	34	9	2.98	1.24	60%	19
		%	13.1	28.3	15.2	34.3	9.1				
2.	Integration of students with mild intellectual disabilities will necessitate extensive retraining of regular classroom teachers.	#	4	8	19	59	9	3.62	0.91	72%	7
		%	4.0	8.1	19.2	59.6	9.1				
3.	Integration offers mixed group interaction that will foster understanding and acceptance of differences among students.	#	5	6	6	43	40	4.07	1.08	81%	2
		%	5.0	6.0	6.0	43.0	40.0				
4.	It is likely that students with mild intellectual disabilities will exhibit behavior problems in regular classroom.	#	6	12	11	55	15	3.62	1.08	72%	7
		%	6.1	12.1	11.1	55.6	15.2				
5.	Students with mild intellectual disabilities can best be served in regular classrooms.	#	1	6	14	64	15	3.86	0.78	77%	4
		%	1.0	6.0	14.0	64.0	15.0				
6.	The extra attention students with mild intellectual disabilities require will be to the detriment of the other students in regular classroom.	#	4	32	9	37	17	3.31	1.21	66%	13
		%	4.0	32.3	9.1	37.4	17.2				
7.	The challenge of being in a regular classroom will promote the academic growth of students with mild intellectual disabilities.	#	6	12	20	52	8	3.45	1.02	69%	10
		%	6.1	12.2	20.4	53.1	8.2				
8.	Integration of students with mild intellectual disabilities will require significant change in regular classroom procedures.	#	2	13	12	50	21	3.77	1.00	75%	5
		%	2.0	13.3	12.2	51.0	21.4				

education.

	Integration of students with mild intellectual disabilities will require significant change in regular classroom procedures.	%	2.0	13.3	12.2	51.0	21.4				
9.	Increased freedom in the regular classroom would creates too much confusion for students with mild intellectual disabilities.	#	2	21	20	44	11	3.42	1.01	68%	11
		%	2.0	21.4	20.4	44.9	11.2				
10.	Regular classroom teachers have the abilities necessary to work with students with mild intellectual disabilities.	#	20	41	14	22	2	2.44	1.11	49%	26
		%	20.2	41.4	14.1	22.2	2.0				
11.	The presence of students with mild intellectual disabilities will not promote acceptance of differences on the part of students without disabilities.	#	7	37	24	31	1	2.82	0.99	56%	21
		%	7.0	37.0	24.0	31.0	1.0				
12.	The behavior of students with mild intellectual disabilities will set a bad example for students without disabilities.	#	10	44	20	25	1	2.63	1.00	53%	24
		%	10.0	44.0	20.0	25.0	1.0				
13.	The students with mild intellectual disabilities will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a regular classroom than in special classrooms.	#	6	20	20	44	9	3.30	1.08	66%	14
		%	6.1	20.2	20.2	44.4	9.1				
14.	Integration of students with mild intellectual disabilities will not promote his or her social independence.	#	13	46	17	23	-	2.51	0.99	50%	25
		%	13.1	46.5	17.2	23.2	-				
15.	It is not more difficult to maintain order in a regular classroom that contains students with a mild intellectual disability in one that does not	#	7	32	23	29	6	2.95	1.08	59%	20
		%	7.2	33.0	23.7	29.9	6.2				
16.	Students with mild intellectual disabilities will not monopolize the regular-classroom teacher's time.	#	16	34	17	27	4	2.68	1.16	54%	22
		%	16.3	34.7	17.3	27.6	4.1				
17.	The integration of students with mild intellectual disabilities can be beneficial for students without disabilities.	#	11	18	18	44	7	3.18	1.16	64%	15
		%	11.2	18.4	18.4	44.9	7.1				
18.		#	6	20	19	40	12	3.33	1.12	67%	12

	Students with mild intellectual disabilities are likely to create confusion in regular classroom.	%	6.2	20.6	19.6	41.2	12.4				
19.	Integration will likely have a negative effect on the emotional development of the students with mild intellectual disabilities.	#	7	29	23	34	5	3.01	1.07	60%	17
		%	7.1	29.6	23.5	34.7	5.1				
20.	Students with mild intellectual disabilities should be given every opportunity to function in regular classrooms when possible.	#	-	4	13	59	22	4.01	0.73	80%	3
		%	-	4.1	13.3	60.2	22.4				
21.	The classroom behaviour of students with mild intellectual disabilities generally does not require more patience from the teachers.	#	5	15	19	41	18	3.53	1.11	71%	9
		%	5.1	15.3	19.4	41.8	18.4				
22.	Teaching students with mild intellectual disabilities is better done by special than by regular classroom teachers.	#	1	70	19	10	-	2.38	0.68	48%	27
		%	1.0	70.0	19.0	10.0	-				
23.	Isolation in a special classroom has a beneficial effect on the social and emotional development of the students with mild intellectual disabilities.	#	-	2	12	41	45	4.29	0.76	86%	1
		%	-	2.0	12.0	41.0	45.0				
24.	The students with mild intellectual disabilities will not be socially isolated in the regular classroom	#	13	26	17	27	15	3.05	1.30	61%	16
		%	13.3	26.5	17.3	27.6	15.3				
25.	Assignments should not be modified for students with mild intellectual disabilities.	#	10	29	18	31	9	3.00	1.19	60%	18
		%	10.3	29.9	18.6	32.0	9.3				
26.	Modification of coursework for students with mild intellectual disabilities would be difficult to justify to other students.	#	-	12	19	52	15	3.71	0.87	74%	6
		%	-	12.2	19.4	53.1	15.3				
27.	I would welcome working with students with mild intellectual disabilities in the regular classroom.	#	5	48	23	23	1	2.67	0.92	53%	23
		%	5.0	48.0	23.0	23.0	1.0				

Table 3 shows the differences between the attitudes of general education teachers and special education teachers towards the full inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities, by using independent samples T-test. The results show that the mean responses of general education teachers towards the full inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities is (3.18), While the mean responses of special education teachers towards the full inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities (3.27), and to test the differences between the attitudes of general education teachers and special education teachers towards the full inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities, the T-test was (1.216) which is less than the T- Tabulated, and P-value was (0.227), which is greater than 0.05 level, and therefore we conclude that there are no statistically significant differences between the attitudes of general education teachers and special education teachers towards the full inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities.

Table 3 shows the differences between the attitudes of general education teachers and special education teachers towards the full inclusion of students with mild intellectual disabilities.

Education Area	N	Mean	Std. D	T-test	P-value
Special education	24	3.18	.196	1.216	.227
General education	76	3.27	.332		

3. Results of the section III

The third section contains five open questions addressed to participants and related to opinions and perspectives. In this section, the answers to each question will be discussed and analysed separately.

Table 4 describes the participants' answers to the first question concerning the benefits of integrating pupils with mild IDs into regular classes in mainstream schools.

Benefits of inclusive education	Frequency	Percent
The improvement of social and psychological skills for students with mild IDs.	35	47.9
Inclusion helps people with mild IDs to be accepted by society and welcomed as an effective member.	10	13.6
The improvement of academic achievement for people with mild IDs.	14	19.1
No positive aspects in their inclusion	9	12.3
Unrelated answers to the question	5	7.1

Nearly half of the participants agreed that inclusive education is useful in the personal development of pupils with mild IDs. one fifth of respondents believed that academic improvement of pupils would be one of the benefits of inclusive education. However, the minority has not seen any positive or beneficial aspect of the implementation of inclusive education for pupils with mild IDs

Table 5 describe participants answers relates to disadvantages of having students with mild intellectual disabilities included in regular classrooms in mainstream schools

disadvantage of inclusive education	Frequency	Percent
Marginalization of students with mild IDs and exposure to bullying and abuse.	25	30.4
Teachers don't accept them and consider them an extra burden.	19	23.1
Teacher's inability to adjust the class and fair distribution of attention among students.	13	15.8
poor academic achievement for pupils with mild IDs.	20	24.3
No disadvantage in inclusion.	5	6.09

Almost, one third of the participants answered this question that marginalizing and abusing pupils with disabilities is a disadvantage of inclusive education. However, a quarter of respondents considered low academic performance to be one of the disadvantages of comprehensive education. As for increasing the burdens of teachers and not accepting students with mild IDs, a quarter of the participants considered this to be disadvantage in inclusive education.

Table 6 describe participant's answers relates to suggestions to make the inclusion of pupils with mild IDs in the regular classroom successful

suggestions to make the inclusion successful	Frequency	Percent
Preparing the school environment.	15	18.9
Providing teacher training programmes.	21	26.5
Reducing the number of students in the classroom.	12	15.1
Raising awareness of students in schools and preparing them before inclusive education is implemented.	14	17.7
Adapting and changing curricula to suit the abilities of students with mild IDs.	17	21.5

Table 6 show the number of responses to this question is 79, however, A quarter of the participating teachers suggested the need to provide teacher training programs. On the other hand, one fifth of the participants considered the adaptation and change of the curriculum an important factor for the successful integration of pupils with mild IDs in the regular classes in the mainstream schools. In addition, one fifth of participants who proposed preparing the school environment to receive people with mild IDs.

Table 7 describe participants answers relates to the barriers to including students with mild IDs in the regular classroom.

The barriers to including students with mild IDs in the regular classroom	Frequency	Percent
Large number of students in the classroom.	11	14.8
Lack of experience of general education teachers to deal with people with mild IDs.	16	21.6
The lack of acceptance of teachers of public education and the negative perception of students with mild IDs.	19	25.6
Difficulty adapting the curriculum and the large number of homework.	15	20.2
Lack of adaptation and preparation of school environment.	13	17.5

Table 7 shows the number of responses to this question is 74, a quarter of participants who believe that the acceptance of teachers and their attitudes towards those with mild IDs play a crucial role in hindering the application of inclusive education. While one fifth study participants believe that the lack of experience of public education teachers and the lack of training programs are barriers to the implementation of inclusive education. one fifth participants noted the difficulty of the curriculum and the large number of homework that could be a major challenge for students and teachers. However, one fifth of participants answered the difficulty of adapting the school environment, as well as (14.8%) of participants answered the large number of students in the classroom may not be able to apply inclusive education.

Table 8 describe participants answers relates to the further comments on the inclusion of students with mild IDs in the regular classroom.

further comments on the inclusion of students with mild IDs in the regular classroom.	Frequency	Percent
It's best to keep them in their special classes and focus on social inclusion.	17	27.4
It is preferable to develop diagnostic centers, early intervention programs and teacher training programs before implementing inclusive education.	10	16.1
The idea of educating people with mild IDs in regular classes is a success.	12	19.3
The need to have an assistant teacher besides the regular class teacher and reduce the number of students in the regular class.	9	14.5
The need to prepare a school environment and raise awareness in the community and individuals.	15	24.1

Table 8 shows the number of responses to this question is 62 more than a quarter who think it is better for pupils with mild IDs to study in special classes attached to the mainstream schools than to include them in regular classes. However, a fifth of participants, they agreed that the inclusion of pupils with mild IDs is a successful idea and includes many benefits for students, whether with disabilities or others. A quarter of respondents point to the need to prepare a school environment and raise awareness of the community and individuals. While nearly a fifth wonder how integration pupils with mild IDs is applied in regular classrooms, there are deficiencies in diagnosis, early intervention and teacher training programs.

Discussion:

This study aimed to investigate teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards integrating students with mild IDs into regular classes in general schools. A mixed, qualitative and quantitative approach was needed to obtain answers to research questions.

In this study the first result shows that teachers in general education and special education in Riyadh city typically have a slight positive view towards inclusive education for students with mild IDs. Likewise, Alanazi (2012) and Alahmadi (2008) found positive results representing positive attitudes from teachers to the concept of including pupils with SEN in mainstream schools. However, Alquraini (2011b) found the opposite in his study, which was aimed at exploring teachers' attitudes towards integrating pupils with severe intellectual disabilities.

Alquraini (2011b) in his study found the responses from teachers were negative due to the severity and type of disabilities. In addition to the lack of experience of teachers and the lack of training programs provided to them, that's why these negative attitudes were formed.

In the current study there is a conflict between the participants in open-ended questions, nearly a quarter of whom believe that inclusive education causes a decrease in the academic achievement of students with disabilities, but nearly 20% believe that inclusive education increases the academic performance of students with disabilities. However, in close-ended questions nearly half of the participants in this study considered maintaining the development of academic achievement to be the biggest challenge for teachers in the regular classroom during the implementation of inclusive education. This conflict is due to several factors, including the number of students in the classroom, the pressure of work on teachers, the lack of years of experience for teachers and the weakness of the training programmes offered to teachers.

In this study and Alahmadi (2008) study some of the teachers participating suggested reducing the number of students in the classroom so that attention is distributed equally to students. In addition, this measure will reduce the expected confusion when including students with mild IDs in regular classroom. Attention to students with mild IDs will be at the expense of other students as agreed by nearly forty percent of the participants in this study and agreed with Alahmadi (2008) study. In my experience the number of students in the regular classroom in general education in Saudi Arabia is 40 to 50 students. Compared to the size of classrooms in regular schools, the number of students is very large, with students with mild IDs increasing the burden on teachers and it is difficult to distribute equal attention to students. According to Scruggs and Mastropiere, (1996) the number of students in the classroom in general education should be reduced to 20 to ease the burden on the teacher and increase student attention.

It is necessary to consider, among other things, that these studies were conducted on the attitudes of teachers from different cities of Saudi Arabia, but the current study was limited to teachers in Riyadh. In addition, these studies dealt with the concept of inclusion for different categories of special education was not limited to those with mild intellectual disabilities, for example the study of Alahmadi (2016) was about those with learning disabilities. Moreover, the number of teachers in general education in this study exceeds the number of teachers of special education, which is normal because of the small presence of special education teachers in schools.

Al-Ahmadi (2008) indicated that teachers at the beginning of the inclusion had a fear and hesitation to work with pupils with SEN that were the reason behind their negative attitudes. In this study, participants considered the difficulty of distributing attention among students and the fear of not being fair to them from the disadvantages of inclusive

education. However, Al- Ahmadi (2008) found that these feelings and trends faded after the application of inclusion and turned into positive trends and attitudes. The attitudes of general teachers were shaped by their lack of confidence in students' educational skills and their lack of confidence in the quality of support staff available to them (Avramidis et al ,2000).

On the other hand, Al-Ahmadi (2008) noted there is a weakness in training special education teachers to deal with students with SEN and to help students in regular classrooms.

One of the most notable results of this study is the lack of many teachers in training programs in dealing with pupils with SEN and teaching methods. In my experience, special education teachers were not well trained before graduating from the Special Education Department to work in the regular classes.

Moreover, inclusion requires teachers to spend more time and effort in preparing lessons and working on curriculum adaptations and considering individual needs. Most of the participating teachers agreed that inclusion required more time and effort and increased workloads. Al-Anzi (2012) noted that cooperation between teachers of general education and teachers of special education plays a significant role in relieving psychological pressure on them and exchanging experiences, which benefits everyone, including students.

In addition, one of the main reasons why teachers of general education do not accept the inclusion of intellectual disabilities is the high salaries of special education teachers compared to their salaries (Alnahdi et al ,2019). I also noted the refusal of teachers from general education to cooperate with me during my work in mainstream schools when students with mild intellectual disabilities were integrated into regular classes during extracurricular activities such as painting, cooking.

According to Ross-Hill (2009) the importance of training programs in a significant and continuing way to relieve tension and fear for both teachers and students. These programmes must focus about individual differences between learners, collaborative learning strategies and peer education. This current study agreed with the Al-Ahmadi's (2008) that there is a relationship between providing appropriate training for teachers and their positive attitudes towards including people with SEN into regular classes in mainstream schools. From the results of the current study, more than half of the participants agreed on the need to provide training programs and reconsider the topics of these programs. Moreover, the current study and Al-Ahmadi's (2008) study proved the relationship between the number of years of experience and the positive attitudes of teachers towards the concept of comprehensive education.

Although the attitudes of teachers in this study towards the inclusion of people with mild IDs in the regular classes in mainstream schools, there is much agreement to keep them in the special classes attached to the mainstream schools. This is due to the difficulty of adapting the school environment, curriculum and psychological well-being of students and teachers.

Despite the advantages mentioned in this study for the inclusion of pupils with mild IDs in the regular classroom in mainstream schools, the current school situation requires many adjustments to effectively implement inclusive education. Preparing the school environment was considered by participants as one of the proposals for the successful implementation of comprehensive education. On the other hand, some participants considered the lack of preparation of the school environment as a barrier to the implementation of inclusive education. Alruwaili (2016) noted the school environment should be well prepared for inclusive education, including the provision of support services such as speech and language specialist, social specialist and psychologist.

Most of the participants in this study agreed that inclusion develops social skills for individuals with SEN and encourages the community and individuals to accept and understand them.

Armstrong et al, (2010) indicated that inclusive education is a concept derived from Western countries aimed at developing social and educational skills for people with SEN by including them into mainstream schools. In current study more than half of participants stressed that promoting social and psychological growth is the most important

benefit of inclusive education for pupils with mild IDs. Furthermore, the participants agree that inclusive education helps to develop the personality of students with mild IDs and raise awareness in the community and accept them as effective people in society.

However, one of the participants in this study noted that the inclusion of pupils with learning disabilities in the regular classes was not a good step for the educational system in Saudi Arabia, which caused the students to distract and waste the time of class. This is due to the student's frequent leaving from the classroom to the source room and his distraction. In addition to the lack of cooperation between teachers of general education and teachers of special education.

Recommendation and conclusion

1. Conclusion:

This is the first study in Saudi Arabia to discuss the attitudes of teachers in general and special education in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, towards the inclusion of pupils with mild IDs in the regular classes in primary schools. It used a quantitative and qualitative mixed research approach to get answers to research questions.

The Ministry of Education appears to be instrumental in changing teachers' attitudes towards integrating pupils with mild intellectual disabilities, both in public education and in special education. There are some updates that can be made, such as reducing classroom capacity, increasing the number of teachers and providing training programs.

Although there are some negative opinions about the inclusion of pupils with mild IDs in regular classrooms, the majority of participants agreed on the benefits of inclusive education and its role in the balanced growth of different aspects of student personality. In addition, inclusion helps pupils with mild IDs to be accepted by society and welcomed as an active member. However, if the school and social environment is not adequately prepared, many problems will arise, such as discrimination, marginalization and poor academic achievement.

As mentioned earlier, teachers' attitudes play a role in their acceptance of students with mild intellectual disabilities and their welcome in regular classes. Positive attitudes of teachers help students with special needs to increase a sense of belonging to their school, increase their effectiveness in society and develop their social and behavioral skills.

This study discussed many of the barriers that hinder students with mild IDs from integrating into regular classes. Some of them relate to the school environment and the preparation of facilities and classrooms, including those related to teachers and their psychological and scientific readiness and attitudes towards inclusive education for students with IDs.

In conclusion, there are many challenges facing the Ministry of Education to succeed in implementing inclusive education for pupils with SEN. One of these challenges is to reduce the number of students in the classroom, which most participants argued was the difficulty of implementing inclusive education because of its overcrowding. Second, provide teachers with the freedom to act in adapting curricula and homework to the needs and capacities of students.

Third, provide training programs for teachers and reconsider the current programming in addition to the need to benefit from the successful experiences of other countries and adapt them to suit the Saudi context. Finally, the ministry must develop diagnostic and early intervention services in addition to providing support services in schools as needed.

2. Limitations:

According to the results of the current study, and what is mentioned in the chapter of literature review, there are some aspects to consider for future research. First, this was a study conducted in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the research sample is limited to 100 teachers, so other research may highlight teachers' views on inclusive education for students with mild intellectual disabilities in several cities and with a larger sample count. Secondly, this study focused only on special and general education teachers; But future research may shed light on the positions of school principals and

ministry officials, parents regarding the inclusive education of students with mild intellectual disabilities. Third, a questionnaire was used to obtain qualitative and quantitative data in this study, and future studies may shed light on other aspects by using different tools such as interviews or observations. In the current study, there is a contradiction between open-ended questions and closed questions. Besides, open-ended questions have not been fully answered, and some of the answers were irrelevant to the question. Although the electronic questionnaire is easy to distribute, other research tools measure different and deeper aspects of the questionnaire that restricts the freedom of study participants.

Furthermore, future research may also use deeper and more extensive mixed methods than this study. It may also focus on other aspects that influence teachers' views on inclusive education such as age, gender and years of experience. The study was also limited to the attitudes and beliefs of teachers towards the inclusive education of pupils with mild IDs at the primary level. However, future studies may highlight on teachers' attitudes towards students with mild IDs at other levels. Finally, other research may be repeated this cross-cultural study to see if there are differences in teacher attitudes and different cultural contexts.

In this study, most of the responses were female because of the separation of female education from males, as well as cultural and religious reasons. In addition, the Department of Female Education is separate from the Male Education Department, and the cooperation of the staff in the Department of Female Education was easier even in approving the distribution of the questionnaire and cooperating in publishing it.

3. Recommendation:

The Saudi context needs studies on preparing teachers in general education and their professional development to work with students with SEN. As mentioned earlier, the Saudi education system needs a lot of development and intensive training courses to prepare teachers in general education to prepare and provide appropriate education for pupils with SEN. These programs also raise teachers' awareness and increase their abilities and confidence when teaching pupils with SEN. The provision of training programs for teachers is what more than a quarter of participants said will help change attitudes towards inclusive education for students with mild IDs. Although it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to provide suitable training programs for teachers, it is the responsibility of the school administration to encourage them to attend these courses. In future studies, it is important to highlight teacher training and ways to raise their competencies rather than focusing on teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards inclusive education for pupils with general secondary education (Zagona et al, 2017).

Through my work in mainstream schools I noticed centralization control of the education system in Saudi Arabia hinders many modifications, restricting teachers to many restrictions and hindering creativity. Alahmadi (2008) pointed to these bureaucratic restrictions that restrict teachers and require them to have a lot of complicated procedures and official papers. It is difficult to adjust the curriculum or homework without returning to the school administration or to the ministry's supervisors. Despite the difficulty of the books submitted by the ministry, the teacher is required to obligation with them even if they do not fit their abilities. In this study, participants considered the teacher's lack of freedom to adjust the curriculum or homework as an obstacle to the application of inclusion in regular classes. The Ministry of Education should give teachers the freedom to act in the classroom and with students in accordance with the interests of the student and his individual needs.

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