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School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Is Inclusion the Key to Addressing the Issue of Marginalization of Children with Mental Disabilities in Egypt?

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Egyptology

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

In Sociology - Anthropology

By **Nour El-Zouhairy**

Under the supervision of **Dr. Helen Rizzo**

May/2016

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

To: Nour El-Zohairy

Cc: Safaa Sedky

From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB

Date: August 30, 2015

Re: Approval of study

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "**Is Inclusion the Key to Addressing the Issue of Marginalization of Children with Mental Disabilities in Egypt?**" and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

Dr. Atta Gebril
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
T: 02-26151919
Email: agebril@aucegypt.edu

Acknowledgment

Without you, I would not be the person I am …
Thank you for believing in me, and pushing me forward
Fathia Khalil, my mother
Alaa El-Zouhairy, my father

My number one supporter, and the person who always has big dreams for the both of us…
Ahmed Boghdady, my husband

My very precious professors who make dreams come true…
Helen Rizzo, Reem Saad, Nazek Nosseir, Heba Kotb, Munira Khayyat and Hala Abdel-Hak

Life would not have been the same without each and every one of you…
Layla, Malak, Mai, Nada, Sara, Safaa, Iman, Yomna, Yasmine, Amy, Dina and Norhan

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CHAPTER ONE

Is Inclusion the Key to Addressing the Issue of Marginalization of Children with

Mental Disabilities in Egypt?

INTRODUCTION

Children with mental disabilities have long been discriminated against and were often considered among the minority groups that experienced marginalization in many societies throughout history. Ableism is one form of discrimination, which is the discrimination against people with certain types of disabilities, including mental disabilities. Like in most societies, in Egypt the problem is compounded, as children not only experience ableism, but also adultism; which is the bias towards adults' attitudes, activities and ideas, accompanying prejudice and discrimination against children and youth (Fletcher 2013). This thesis will investigate those combined modes of discrimination against children with mental disabilities, with a special focus on the relationship between marginalization and educational choices.

The marginalization of children with disabilities from the Egyptian educational system is not a recent issue and thus policies were formed in order to tackle this problem. In my research I would like to understand whether children with disabilities have been marginalized from the educational system because of its rigidity, lack of resources, and inability to accommodate for including diverse learners? OR is their marginalization from the educational system a result of being segregated from the Egyptian society as a whole, due to other societal factors? And whether or not inclusion (including children with disabilities in the same classrooms with children without disabilities) would address the issue of their marginalization from the educational system and/or society?

Children with mental disabilities either join a mainstream school that implements inclusive education or a special education school according to the type of disability they have. European-American literature is in favor of the implementation of inclusive education. In Egypt, the number of mainstream schools dramatically increased in the past five years. However, the number of special education schools is increasing as well. Disability professionals in Egypt will be asked to explain the reasons for the increase of the two contradictory types of schools in Egypt.

In this thesis, I would like to assess the experiment of inclusive education from the point of view of the main actors involved through investigating the opinions of mothers of children with disabilities, mothers of children without disabilities, teachers in special education, language and mainstream schools, professionals and activists. I would only be targeting one social class in Egyptian society, which is the upper class. Special education schools, national mainstream schools and international mainstream schools in the sample are close in their tuition fees which limit the socioeconomic differences in obtaining the results. Also, I examine the societal factors that play a role in formulating those attitudes towards tolerating difference and disability. After obtaining the results about people's attitudes towards inclusion, I would like to further investigate whether inclusion would actually result in the integration of children with disabilities in the society, or is it not the key to their desegregation?

Social Stigma and Discrimination

Negative stereotypes have been tied to the very concept of mental disability and mental health in general, across the world (Sadik, Bradley, Al-Hasoon & Jenkins 2010).

People with mental disabilities and mental disorders have been discriminated against and stigmatized. Erving Goffman was the first to formulate the concept of stigma and he identified it as a feature that devalued persons who possessed certain traits that were considered socially or morally unacceptable, and were revealed through the presence of bodily signs (Goffman 1963). However, the concept of stigma was broadened from what Goffman had proposed to include a diverse set of processes and traits that are not necessarily observable based on outward appearance alone (Coker 2005). Stigma, according to Byrne, is a sign of dishonour and disgrace and it forms categories which separates people from others (2000). In the case of mental disabilities, stigma separates the person with a mental disability, from "normal", "non-disabled" individuals (Coker 2005).

There are several factors that contribute to the formation of stigma, such as lack of knowledge, unintended or involuntary exclusion of persons who are perceived as deviants or different from the majority, superstition, ignorance and self-referencing (Baffoe 2013). Furthermore, research revealed that the person who experiences a stigmatizing situation, usually experiences discrimination, social exclusion, labelling, isolation, shame and blame as well (Corrigan and Miller 2004).

Discrimination is the way people are treated either intentionally or unintentionally because of the presence of a social stigma, which might result in social exclusion, oppression and deprivation of the person's rights such as the right to education and maintaining regular employment (Baffoe 2013). Both stigma and discrimination are demoralizing experiences for people with disabilities in any society, which are usually based on cultural traditions, belief systems and stereotypes (Coker 2005).

Colin Barnes argued that precisely pinpointing the main root causes of people's attitudes towards persons with disabilities was impossible. However, Barnes accepted the argument that the origins of discrimination against persons with disabilities could be traced back to primitive humans who lived in a hostile harsh environment and depended on their physical strength and creativity to benefit from the environment for their own survival (1985). Moreover, the harsh environmental conditions and limited resources made it hard for the less fortunate members of primitive societies, the sick, the weak and persons with disabilities, to survive. Thus discrimination against whoever was unable to provide for and protect themselves emerged (Barnes 1985).

Although the concept of normality could not be measured quantitatively or statistically analyzed, it has always remained endemic to people's consciousness and interconnected to the perceptions of fitness and rightness. Consequently, the notion of disability which has always been used synonymously with abnormality, carries implications of badness and disorder resulting in the formation of stigma and discrimination (Barnes 1985).

Institutionalization of Persons with Disabilities

In the past, children and adults with mental disabilities were abandoned by their families and were institutionalized for life in asylums and mental institutes (Bender 1970). Children with mental disabilities were also excluded from public education all over the world until the latter half of the 20th century. The only two options that parents were given were either to keep their children at home and sometimes lock them up in order not to bring "shame" to their families or institutionalize them (Yell, Rogers and

Rogers 1998). In Egypt, most of the upper class families used to institutionalize their family members who had illnesses or mental disabilities for life in Abaseya or Khanka hospitals (Jenkis, Heshmat, Loza, Siekkonen and Sorour 2010).

History and Main Founders of Special Education

Special education started in Europe in the 15th century for children with (sensory) hearing and visual impairments, and they had special curricula developed specifically for them. "It was not until the late 1950's that categorization of people with disabilities into separate groups and institutionalization began to be questioned" (Kisanji 1999: 5).

Between 1801 and 1805, Jean Itard was one of the pioneers who argued that using systematic teaching techniques and designing special teaching methods could be efficient in teaching children with mental disabilities (Kozol 2005).

The French psychologist Eduard Séguin also developed influential teaching techniques and guidelines for children with mental disabilities, especially children with mental retardation, in 1848. He was one of the founders of special education system for special needs students. He was also one of the first psychologists who stressed the importance of developing self-reliance and independence in students with special needs by educating them using a combination of intellectual and physical tasks (Justin and Richardson 2011).

The first female physician in Italy, Maria Montessori was also one the pioneers and main figures of special education. In 1900 she became the co-director of a school that was designed to train teachers to educate children with mental disabilities and in 1907 she

founded her own school for children with disabilities, who society thought of as "uneducable" children (Cossentino 2005).

The fourth highly influential figure in the development of the field of special education is Ovide Decroly who founded a special education school for children with light mental retardation, learning disabilities, and behavioral disorders in 1901 (Tremblay 2007).

History of Special Education in Egypt

In Egypt, the first special education school established was for blind and deaf students in 1874. Later in 1896, a number of non-governmental organizations established five boarding schools for people with visual impairments (Abdelhameed 2010). In 1900 a British woman established a special education for blind students in 1900, followed by another school in Cairo in 1901 (Gaad 2011).

In 1926, the Egyptian Ministry of Education established a new department specialized section for preparing teachers to educate students with visual impairments in the teachers' college located in Bollaq. In 1933, the first special education school for students with hearing impairments in Alexandria was established (Gaad 2011). Not until 1964 were students with visual impairments studying the same curricula as their typically developing counterparts in all school grades: primary, preparatory and secondary (El Messiri and Mabrouk 2005).

The first special education school in Egypt for persons with mental disabilities was established in 1956 and it was mainly targeting children with mental retardation called "The Institution of Mentally Handicapped", founded by the Egyptian Ministry of

Education. It was the first school to accept children with below average IQ, varying between 50 and 70. The department was called "Department of Abnormal Children". After that attention was given to the issue of terminology for the first time in Egypt. The term "visual impairments" substituted for "blind", "hearing disabilities" and "hearing impairments" were used instead of "deaf and dumb", and the term "intellectually disabled" replaced "mentally retarded" and "slow learners" (Gaad 2011: 5). The Ministry of Education sent Egyptian teachers to receive intensive training in special education teaching in the United Kingdom. In 1969, the Ministry of Education started training programs in Egypt to prepare teachers to educate children with intellectual disabilities (Gaad 2011).

In 1964, special education was no longer a sub-department, and became independent. In 1978, a law was issued to organize the sections of the special education department as:

> Al Noor for the Blind was to become the Education Department for Students with Visual Impairments; Al Amal for Deaf was to become the Education Department for Students with Hearing Impairments; and the Mental Department was to become the Education Department for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (Al Tarbia Al Fekria) (Gaad 2011: 5).

Moving Towards Inclusive Education

In 1933 parents of children with mental disabilities in the United States started forming advocacy groups for special education and those groups made the voices of students with disabilities heard. Soon after there were laws put into place to grant

students with disabilities the right to education (Pardini 2002). Although the Supreme Court of the United States required the public schools to equally serve all students, this resulted in marginalizing children with disabilities (Yell, Rogers and Rogers 1998). General education schools did not serve all students equally. Children with mental disabilities were not included in general education classrooms with other students, instead they were placed in special needs classrooms in extremely restrictive environment where they were not allowed to have any contact with the rest of the students (Pardini 2002).

In the final years of the 20th century, children with mental disabilities either went to special education schools where they received their academic education with other students who had the same type and a closely similar degree of disability with special education teachers, or they were placed in self-contained classrooms in general education schools (Lane, Batron-Arwood, Nelson, and Wehby 2008). Children with disabilities, mainly mental disabilities, were placed in self-contained classrooms to receive their academic education in a small restricted and controlled setting, assuming that this would provide the children maximum academic benefit. However, research revealed that the academic improvement of children with mental disabilities was unfortunately "very limited" both in self-contained classrooms and special education schools (Lane et al. 2008: 221).

The right to inclusive education was covered in a number of significant international declarations asking for providing children with disabilities the right of an equal and fair education as their typically developing peers, in a non-segregating/inclusive environment. Among those declarations are (Gaad 2011):

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

- UN Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons 1971

- UN Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons 1975

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

- World Declaration for Education For All 1990

- Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability 1993

- UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action 1994

- Dakar Framework for Action 2000

- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006

Medical Versus Social Models to Disability

Disability is defined differently all over the world. In the past, the common definition of disability was regarded from a medical perspective, which involved the need for some sort of rehabilitation or medical intervention. However in the 1970s, the medical approach to interpreting disability was rejected in many Western countries as it used to view disability as an individualistic issue or problem, that only concerns and affects the person with the disability. However, the social model to disability, which replaced the medical approach in a number of countries, views society as the main factor in disempowering the persons with disabilities, by fulfilling the needs of the majority while marginalizing the minority of individuals with disabilities (Sullivan 2011).

There was a differentiation between impairment and disability but it is still applied in Egypt today. The distinction between impairment and disability was explained as the former is any anatomical or psychological function or structure of the body, which

is temporarily or permanently defective, and this could be either congenital or acquired (Barnes 1985). On the other hand, disability or the inability to do things, is the outcome of an inhospitable physical and cultural environment that prevents people with impairments from participating in their communities on an equal level with non-disabled contemporaries" (Hagrass 2005:153). Moreover, the person with a disability is assumed to struggle in order to achieve "normality", which highlights the underlying assumption of "otherness" and "abnormality". It has been argued that the assumption of "abnormality" resulted in categorizing individuals and making persons with disabilities second class, marginalizing and excluding them from the society and creating a social stigma (Hagrass 2005). In this research, I would like to examine whether or not mainstreaming children with disabilities in Egyptian schools would address and help in resolving their social exclusion and marginality.

The Sociology of Disability

The field of the sociology of disability emerged as " a direct challenge to the weighty paradigm of special education, with its fixation on individual deficits and remedies, and it has successfully directed attention to the structural and material causes of disability and failure and has oriented analyses of inclusive education towards the identification of exclusionary pressures" (Allan 2010: 603). Moreover, Barton (2001) outlined the duty and function of the sociology of disability and described it as "a political analysis which is inspired by a desire for transformation change and that constitutes hope at the center of struggles…At both an individual and collective level a

crucial task is to develop a theory of political action which also involves the generation of tactics or strategies for its implementation" (3),

Disabilities in the Case of Egypt

Persons with disabilities in Egypt have long been marginalized. Hagrass argued that policies concerned with the rights of persons with disabilities in Egypt are formulated around charity rather than the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP) that Egypt had signed and ratified in 2008. The actual implementation of the CRDP would be considered a paradigm shift towards applying a rights-based approach to disability (Hagrass 2012). In this paper I will be adopting a human right's perspective, which entails "viewing people with disabilities as subjects and not as objects" (Quinn and Degener 2002:14).

Persons with different types of disabilities have been socially marginalized from Egyptian society through different means. First, they need to pass a medical exam before being enrolled in school if they have any type of physical disability, and if the impairment is high, then the child would not be accepted at school, as it has been easier not to accept the child than to accommodate for his/her impairment (Hagrass 2012). Moreover, for persons with physical disabilities, especially motor ones, there are no accommodations for them in the public transportation systems and even accessibility to buildings and streets has been hard, which has worsen their social isolation and marginalization (Hagrass 2012).

Additionally, psychologists have argued that when someone has identified himself/herself as a disabled person, rather than a person with a disability, this has

damaging consequences. In the former, there would be objectification and declaration of the person's membership of a category or a social group, which would consequently lead to his/her oppression (Lawson 2011). Furthermore, scholars have argued that the term "children with disabilities" regardless of the type of disability they had, whether sensory, motor, intellectual or learning disability, denoted that they were a homogenous group, homogenized because of their shared experience of social oppression that resulted from having any type of disability (Lawson 2011).

Disability and Education

Teaching children with disabilities has been a serious challenge throughout history (Buonocore 2014). The mental and intellectual disabilities are not the kinds of disorders that the person can be cured from, but coping with and improving some of the disorder's impairments has been widely successful (Pinel 2007). Behavior therapy has been used to teach children with autism and other related disorders with some success as well as enrolling them in mainstreaming or special education schools, according to the child's capabilities and cultural acceptance of diversity in his/her country (Bernard, Stevens, Siwatu and Lan 2008).

One-to-one tutoring for children with mental disabilities has been an immensely effective way to improve their cognitive development. In the past, the only way for upper class families to educate their children with physical and/or mental disabilities was to hire private tutors for them (Slavin 2009). Presently, children with different kinds of disabilities can join mainstream schools with the help of private tutors, using the strategy of partial inclusion; that children could attend half the school day in special education

classes where they would have private one-to-one tutoring and/or have children with disabilities with them who have the same level of cognitive development, and the other half of the day they would be included in mainstream classes with children without disabilities, however, this is mainly accepted in the so called "developed" countries (Croslans & Dunlap 2013).

The adoption of the term "inclusive education" or "inclusion" started in the early 1990s and it was defined as "an educational system which values the diversity of its students as a human and cultural resource, is one in which education takes place in common, comprehensive schools and colleges, in which there is a minimum of separation on the basis of competence and appearance" (Booth, Swann, Masterton and Potts 1992:3). Inclusive education is becoming the accepted trend and policies are increasing worldwide in order to universally implement inclusion in schools (Sward and Pettipher 2005).

Research has revealed that children with mental disabilities showed improvements in their communication skills, language development and cognitive stills when they were included with children without disabilities in the same classrooms (Rainforth 2000). However, scholars have also argued that there were drawbacks to inclusion that needed to be considered before applying it in schools universally. Some educational and developmental psychologists argue that although inclusion would be beneficial for all the reasons that were mentioned before, it might also lead to unhealthy results. A child with a mental or physical disability might experience discomfort and feelings of inferiority when being with other children because of their different levels of communication and cognitive skills for the former, and differences in the looks and

physical capabilities for the latter (Killen and Rutland 2011). Moreover, children at the mainstream school would see the children with disabilities as "abnormal", because they would talk, play and interact differently, which increases the probability of having higher depression rates in children with disabilities (Lee 2010).

Inclusion and Cultural Acceptance

Basically, implementing inclusive education widely depends on the culture and the perception of disability in that culture. Researchers have argued that if children were raised to respect diversity and difference, the challenges facing the implementation of inclusive education would not be severe (Waldman, Swedloff and Perlman 2001). Research has also found that at schools and universities that included students from different races, ethnicities, religions and nationalities, their acceptance for inclusion of children and youth with disabilities and their tolerance to diversity and difference was high (Barnard et al. 2008). However, they argued that the drawbacks of the inclusion would usually take place in countries where there is no cultural acceptance and awareness of disabilities (Kafafi, 2004).

Moreover, inflexibility and intolerance to inclusion also happen when teachers do not have the awareness of and lack the training in how to deal with both types of children with the same ease, and help in soothing the discomfort children might experience in the early stages of the inclusion process (Shade & Stewart, 2001). In a study conducted in Egypt to examine teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, the more the pre-service training that the teachers received, the higher their tolerance to disabilities and the more supportive they were to the concept of inclusion compared to the group of teachers who

did not receive intensive training to learn how to deal with diverse learners in the same classrooms (El-Ashry 2009).

Media and Attitude Formation

Social stigma and negative perceptions toward persons with mental disabilities have been a key to their marginalization and a barrier to their integration in the society (Hamdy, Auter, Humphrey, and Attia 2011). Media plays a crucial role in the formation of people's perceptions; one of them is the creation of the meaning of disability (Haller 2000). Media frames persons with disabilities as 'different', which results in creating stigma. Hamdy et al. (2011) argued, "despite advances precipitated by many equal rights movements, the portrayals of people with disabilities in the media have often remained stuck in a stereotypical twentieth century construct" (p. 84).

Disability and Religion

Studies done in the Arab world suggested that mental disability does not elicit stigma compared to Western societies, and usually referencing the religiosity of Arab Muslims specifically (Fabrega 1991). Moreover traditionally, persons with mental disabilities, or "idiots" as they were referred to, were presumed to be blessed by God, and were treated with compassion and sometimes they were worshiped (Lane 1966). However, other studies conducted in the Middle East suggested that stigma exists in Muslim societies with varying degrees and it has a gender dimension (Coker 2005). Mental disabilities are tolerated in the Middle East when they do not result in shameful behavior or go out of control. Moreover, girls with mental disabilities are perceived

negatively and are more likely to be locked up, compared to males (Bassiouni and Al-Issa 1966).

Furthermore, Hagrass argued that culturally, the majority of Egyptians use religion when dealing with disabilities, which involves charity and compassion, but people with disabilities are not granted rights and they are being discriminated against. However tolerance of people with physical disabilities is much higher than their tolerance of mental ones (2005).

Right to Education

There were intense debates in the early 1980s around the claim that special education schools had negative impacts on the self-image of children with disabilities, and they created a category where those children were seen as second-class individuals since they became segregated from their peers who were not "disabled" (Oliver 1983). Investment in special needs schools has been increasing regardless of the earlier debate. In the United Kingdom and the Unites States mainstream schools were widespread, but many families preferred special needs schools due to the disapproval of a large number of parents of children without disabilities for inclusion (Momberg, 2008). However, with the increase of awareness and teachers' training, a dramatic increase in parents' acceptance of inclusion took place and it became widely implemented in mainstream schools of both countries (Lewiecki-Wilson 2011).

In the United States, parents of children with disabilities as well as advocacy awareness were behind the drive for legislation in order to give children with disabilities the right for inclusive/mainstream education. The United Nations Convention on the

Rights of the Child (1989) included in Article 2 that protecting children against discrimination is mandatory and that all children should have the same rights in developing their potential regardless of their ability. Moreover, respecting children with special needs was also stressed upon in the CCR ensuring that children who required special care or more attention than others should be given rights for this in order to ensure the equality of opportunities and respect for diversity among all children.

Education in Egypt

The Egyptian Ministry of Education revealed a five-year (2007-2012) strategic plan in order to enable children with special needs to receive quality and intensive educational services so their transition from special needs to general education schools would be smooth (Ministry of Education, 2007). Unfortunately, the proportion of the Egyptian population who has access to special needs education is very small due to the high cost of those schools. Therefore, the transition from special education to general education that the Ministry was planning would not be targeting the whole population (Momberg, 2008). Despite the plan's limitations, it would have been a step towards giving children with disabilities rights to education, since training the teachers would take place and providing schools with the necessary tools to accommodate inclusion would also begin (El-Ashry, 2009).

One study showed that in Egypt, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were negatively inclined (El-Ashry, 2009). In a study done by Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly (2003), they found that when teachers do not have enough education and awareness about disabilities, they usually have very low expectations for children with any kind of

disability, especially mental disabilities, and this lack of awareness increases the teachers' rigidity and rejection of inclusive education.

In Egypt, the number of students in public schools exceeds the teachers' capabilities of controlling the classrooms, therefore, providing children with quality education is not available (Momberg, 2008). Moreover, scholars found that the inflexibility of the Egyptian government's school curricula does not allow children with mental and developmental disabilities to be enrolled in schools (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001).

Class and Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

Research has found that in some Western societies, people's socioeconomic status and level of education influence their attitudes towards the acceptance of the process of inclusion of children with disabilities in general education schools (Swain and Cook 2001). In terms of socioeconomic status, the higher the socioeconomic status of the parents of children with disabilities, the higher probability that they would enroll their children in mainstream schools (Thomas & Zahorodny, 2011) and by implication, people of a higher social class in general would be more accepting of mainstreaming children with mental and physical disabilities. Moreover, socioeconomic status very much influences people's degree of education, therefore, the widely accepted argument is that people from a lower social class especially in the so called "developing world", are less likely to be aware of the new research studies and technologies due to their poor status, which would make them rigid to accepting change (El-Ashry 2009).

Additionally, people's inflexibility in accepting inclusion might be traced back to the fact that in the past and not long ago, people with disabilities were seen as shameful individuals in families and they were locked away (Swart and Pettipher 2004). Therefore, I would like to investigate teachers' and mothers' attitudes towards inclusive education and whether it would affect how children with mental disabilities are being marginalized from Egyptian society or not.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY/RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Obtaining a deep understanding of the situation of children with mental disabilities in Egypt. Investigating whether inclusion would be the key to addressing the issue of marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt.

2. Addressing the reasons behind the marginalization of children with disabilities in Egypt.

3. Investigating perception and attitudes of mothers of children without disabilities towards inclusion.

4. Understanding the role of professionals who work with children with mental disabilities in promoting for and implementing inclusive education. Investigating their attitudes and activists' attitudes towards inclusion, and towards special education.

5. Examining attitudes of mothers of children with mental disabilities towards inclusion, and reasons behind their preference of enrolling their children in special education or mainstream schools.

Operationalizing the Research Question

Chapter One: Introduction

The first chapter will be giving a holistic idea of mental disabilities, types of schools that children with mental disabilities enroll in. It will also include a section talking about the history of special education in the world and in Egypt specifically.

Chapter Two: How Do Parents of Children without Mental Disabilities Perceive Mental Disabilities? What are their Attitudes Towards Inclusion?

The second chapter will focus on mothers of children without disabilities. I will rely on in-depth interviews with my participants, and I will choose them according to the type of school they enroll their children in, whether national language schools or international schools. I would like to know their attitudes towards children with mental disabilities, and whether they accept that their children would have diverse learners with them in the same classroom or not. In order words, I would like to investigate whether they support the concept of inclusion, and the reasons behind their preferences.

Chapter Three: Teachers' Attitudes Towards Having Diverse Learners in the Same Classrooms

The third chapter will be investigating teachers' attitudes towards having children with mental disabilities in the same classrooms with children without disabilities. It will focus on teachers' concerns and perceptions of disabilities, inclusion and cultural/societal factors that influence the implementation of inclusion in general education schools in Egypt. I will conduct in-depth interviews with teachers from three types of schools:

special education schools, international schools that do not have inclusion and mainstream schools.

Chapter Four: Shadow Teachers Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education in Egypt.

The fourth chapter will be focusing only on one group of teachers who work directly with children with mental disabilities. Shadow teachers are special education teachers who either in special education schools, or accompany children with mental disabilities in mainstream classrooms. In this chapter I would like to investigate their attitudes towards inclusion, and their experiences in national and international mainstream schools. Also, I would like to know the main obstacles that shadow teachers face, and the main challenges in the process of implementation of inclusive education in Egypt.

Chapter Five: Reasons Behind Parents' Preferences: Whether Mainstream or Special Education Schools. Mothers of children with mental disabilities, and disability professionals in Egypt

In this chapter I will be investigating the attitudes of mothers' of children with disabilities who enroll their children in both special education schools and mainstream schools and understand the reasons behind the preference of each of them. I would also like to know the attitudes of disability professionals towards inclusive education in Egypt.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this chapter I will highlight the main findings of my study and its contribution to the larger literature on special needs education. It will show the attitudes of each group of the participants towards inclusion of children with mental disabilities in general education schools in Egypt and their implications as well as make recommendations for future research.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research study is relying on both primary and secondary research. For the primary research I am using a qualitative research approach, specifically semi-structured in-depth interviews with all the participants. I am also using memory notes from my past personal research experience and interaction in the field of special needs education. Additionally, I am using secondary research to examine relevant studies conducted in different parts of the world to guide me and to compare my findings with them.

Study area

All the fieldwork was carried out in Cairo, Egypt. I went to national language schools, international schools, special education schools, and NGOs to interview my participants.

Participants

I am using purposive (judgmental) sampling, which is one of the forms of non-probability sampling. Since I had predefined groups of people in which I wanted to examine their attitudes towards inclusion, this was the most appropriate sampling

technique to use with mothers of children with/without disabilities and with teachers. Additionally, I used expert sampling which is another type of non-probability sampling used to approach experts and individuals who have demonstrable expertise in a specific field. I used this sampling technique with activists advocating for the rights of children with disabilities, professionals and special education school principals and founders.

Data Collection Procedures

Data for this study were collected from the respondents through in-depth interviews using a set of semi-structured, open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed the respondents to express their opinions freely. In-depth interviews allowed me to discuss the issues that emerged during the interview in more detail, which enabled me to dig deeper into the questions and collect rich data. I had a set of questions that I needed to cover for each group, but semi-structured interviews were flexible enough that follow up questions were dependent on each participant's answer. I asked for a written consent form from all the participants, but only a very few participants agreed to have the interview voice-recorded. In my pilot study, participants refused the use of a voice recorder, but professionals accepted it. I ensured the confidentiality of participants' identities and information provided. Names are provided only in the section discussing professionals' opinions about inclusion, after having their written consent.

Interviewing Mothers and Teachers

In this research study, I specifically chose to interview mothers, not parents, and wanted to know their attitudes towards inclusive education for a number of reasons. First,

because in Egypt mothers are the ones responsible for following up the child's academics and deal with teachers much more than the fathers (Khorshed 2014). Moreover, a number of studies revealed that in Egypt and the Middle East, fathers of children with mental disabilities are rarely active in taking care of them, rather it is the mother's responsibility. Furthermore, "many times the fathers try to prove the 'defective' gene came from the maternal share of the DNA" (Hamdy, Auter, Humphrey, and Attia 2011: 85, Azar and Kurdahi Badr 2009).

I chose four schools from which to collect data, two international schools and two private national schools. I chose the schools based on their tuition fees, and their implementation of inclusive education; the four schools are mainstream schools. The schools are located either in Cairo-Al Ismailia Desert Road, Maadi, or New Cairo. The tuition fees range between 16,000 and 23,000 EGP for the national schools, and 25,000 – 35,000 for the international ones, for children without disabilities. However, the four schools' fees ranged between: 30,000 to 42,000 for children with mental disabilities. The four schools are large; they have gardens, swimming pools, playgrounds, sports areas, art rooms and fully equipped music rooms, science laboratories, resource rooms for students with disabilities, and libraries.

Classrooms in the national schools are medium sized and not over-crowded with students. They are equipped with fans and whiteboards. I chose the classes that included a child with a mental disability and his/her shadow teacher, grades between 2nd primary and 4th primary. In the international schools I also chose the classes that included a student with a mental disability and his/her shadow teacher. The classes are equipped with smart boards, white boards, and they are all air-conditioned. The classrooms were also medium

sized, but they included a slightly fewer number of students compared to the national schools' classrooms. In both types of schools, partial inclusion of children with mental disabilities is implemented, and inclusion is not allowed without the presence of a well-trained shadow teacher accompanying each student with a mental disability. All of the schools in my sample allow the presence of only one child with a mental disability and his/her shadow teacher, in each classroom.

I met the schools' principals and took their approval to conduct my research in their schools after showing them the IRB's approval. I was then referred to the primary school principal for the national schools, and elementary school principal for the international schools, to help me recruit parents and teachers to conduct in-depth interviews with them. The principals chose the class teachers who had children with mental disabilities in their classes, grades 2 to 4, and I made appointments with the teachers, and asked the principals' assistants to provide us with a room where we could have the interviews, so the teachers and mothers would talk comfortably, rather than staying in the principals' office as some of them suggested. All the class teachers signed a consent form, but only a very few of them agreed to have the interview voice-recorded. For the shadow teachers, the elementary/primary school principals advised me to take the shadow teachers' consent as well as that of the mothers' of children with mental disabilities they are responsible for, as the mothers might not accept that the teachers would reveal any private information about their children. The principals' assistants contacted the mothers and explained the research to them, and the consent forms attached to a short paper explaining the purpose of the research were sent to them with their children, and the mothers resent them after being signed, the same way. The shadow

teachers were interviewed at the schools, but two of them felt more comfortable to have the interviews outside the school, in a café on a weekend. The principals' assistants also contacted mothers of children with disabilities and without disabilities for the interviews. Some preferred to have the interviews at the schools, but others preferred to meet in sports clubs while their children were playing, some preferred to meet over coffee in the morning while the children were at school. None of the interviews involved the presence of the children themselves, and all the mothers signed a consent form, but as the teachers, only a very few mothers agreed to have the interviews voice-recorded.

My Sample

I went to four mainstream schools: two national schools and two international schools. I conducted a total of 18 interviews with mothers of children with mental disabilities (3 national, 3 international, 3 special education), 12 mothers of children without disabilities, and 12 general education teachers from all schools in the sample, divided equally, 3 per school. Moreover, I interviewed 12 shadow teachers; each one of them had experience in working as a shadow teacher in national language schools, international schools, and also in a special needs/special education school. I also interviewed 2 primary national mainstream school principals, 2 elementary international mainstream school principals, 4 special education school founders, and 5 disability professionals in different NGO's. A total of 67 in depth interviews.

Research Significance

The topic of marginalization of children with disabilities in Egyptian society in general, and from the educational system specifically is under researched, therefore this research would have academic significance in this field and would increase awareness about the situation of children with mental disabilities in Egypt. Moreover, it might be a step forward towards advocating for the rights of children with disabilities in Egypt, mainly the right to quality education.

CHAPTER TWO

The Attitudes of Mothers of Children without Disabilities Towards Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Children with mental disabilities have been marginalized from and within the Egyptian educational system for years. Recently, attention has been given to the issue of their marginality, and a number of private Egyptian national and international schools are accepting the enrollment of children with mental disabilities. Those schools adopt and implement the American, British, French, and German inclusive educational systems that are increasingly taking place worldwide. According to a number of mainstream school principals and disability professionals in Egypt, there is no clear starting point for the shift towards curbing the marginalization of children with mental disabilities from the Egyptian educational system. However, they claimed that it might have started in some international schools that adopted the trend of Western inclusive education systems, since mainstream education of children with mental disabilities in Western countries is increasing. They also asserted that in Egypt, there is no unified inclusive education curriculum or guidelines that all mainstream schools follow.

Children with mental disabilities in Egypt, who come from an upper class background, either get private tutors at home, or go to one of two types of schools: special education or mainstream schools. Special education schools are for children with different types of disabilities. Some of those schools are mainly for children with hearing and speech problems, visual problems or mental disabilities. Also, some of the special education schools are mainly specialized in one type of mental disability such as the Egyptian Autistic Society, which only targets children with autism. In this chapter I am

focusing only on the second type of schools in the private education section. A mainstream school is one that implements inclusive education and the term "inclusion" refers to "the process of educating children with disabilities in the regular education classrooms – the schools they would attend if they did not have a disability – and providing them with the necessary services and support" (Rafferty, Boettcher, and Griffin 2001:266).

There are two main aspects to inclusive education, the academic and the social. Both special education teachers and mothers of children with mental disabilities stressed the fact that children with mental disabilities are marginalized in the Egyptian society as a whole, as they are not socially integrated, and they are also marginalized from the educational system in particular, although inclusive education started to take place. While the emerging trend of inclusive education could be a positive first step in dealing with this problem, opinions and attitudes varied regarding the extent to which such type of education successfully addresses the issue of marginalization and exclusion of children with mental disabilities. Most of the mothers of children with mental disabilities in international schools in my sample reported enrolling their children in mainstream schools in order to gain the social dimension of inclusion more than the academic one. On the other hand, most of the mothers who enrolled their children in national mainstream schools were looking for the academic aspect of inclusion. Thus, the definition of inclusive education varied between both types of mothers in Egypt.

In this chapter, I am going to address the attitudes of mothers of children without disabilities who enrolled their children in national and international mainstream schools towards inclusive education. A research study conducted in a number of national and

international schools in Cairo in 2014, revealed that mothers are the ones primarily responsible for making educational decisions for their children. They decide what type of school their children would attend, and they are the ones responsible for studying with their children, attending parents' meetings, following up with class teachers and keeping in touch with school principals (Khorshed 2014). Mothers' direct commitment in the process of educating their children is one of the main reasons why I chose to investigate their attitudes towards inclusive education, since their attitudes directly influence their children's acceptance or intolerance of inclusion (Emam and Mohamed 2011).

While conducting the interviews with mothers and teachers in different schools, some patterns emerged and clear divisions and differences in attitudes were obvious between mothers and teachers in private national mainstream schools and those in international mainstream schools. I will address the differences among mothers of children without disabilities in this chapter.

Attitude Formation

Social psychologist, Russell Fazio, argued that the formation of an attitude towards something results from the person's experience and memory of that thing, and it has an evaluative component, that ranges between extremes, the positive and the negative (Faizo 1986). Research studies based on studying mothers' and teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education originated Fazio's theoretical framework of "attitudes" (Emam and Mohamed 2011). Adopting Fazio's theory of attitude-behavior relationship, in this research study, I will investigate to what extent mothers' experiences with mental disabilities and inclusive education, guide their attitudes of acceptance or disapproval of

the implementation of inclusion, and what social value does inclusion provide children with and without disabilities in their opinions.

National and International Mainstream Schools

The establishment of new private schools in Egypt has become a business trend over the past decade. It has become a successful and secure way for gaining fast and easy profit (Khorshed 2014). Schools in Cairo have become extremely competitive and a large number of new private schools open every year. They include both national language schools and international schools. Moreover, some of the established national schools, started to open new international sections in order to be able to compete with the new international schools that are rapidly emerging all over Cairo (Khorshed 2014).

Overall, the mothers and teachers I interviewed in the international mainstream schools were more supportive of inclusion, and they reported noticing more positive effects of inclusion on all the students, the ones with and without disabilities. They had more positive attitudes towards inclusion and less concerns from its drawbacks compared to mothers of children without disabilities and general education teachers in national mainstream schools. I chose four private mainstream schools, two national and two international. They were all close in location, and close in their tuition fees.

MOTHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

There is a strong direct relationship between the parents' educational history, specifically the mothers' educational background, and the decisions they make regarding their children's type of schooling (Zaich 2013). Parents who were educated abroad or

graduated from a private university are more likely to enroll their children in international rather than private national language schools in Egypt (Khorshed 2014). After interviewing my participants, I found out that all the mothers who enrolled their children in national schools graduated from national universities and national schools. On the other hand, some mothers who enrolled their children in international schools graduated from private universities, and some of them studied in the United States. Although educational background and class background are strongly correlated, in my sample the main difference between people who enrolled their children in national and international mainstream schools was not an economic one, since the schools in the sample were similar in their fees. Some disability professionals in the sample mentioned that, mothers' educational background played the most significant role in influencing their school preferences, and their attitudes towards inclusive education, not their economic status.

Mothers of Children without Mental Disabilities in National Schools

I interviewed six mothers of children without disabilities from each type of school. Only two of six who enrolled their children in national schools were working mothers, and all of them graduated from Egyptian universities and went to national schools. Only two of them chose to have the interview in English. They lived in different areas in Cairo, but none of them lived in a compound. The two private national-mainstream schools I chose were not new, but they started the implementation of inclusive education four to five years ago. Five mothers mentioned that they were unaware of "inclusive education" before enrolling their children in a mainstream school. They all mentioned that in the early admission's interview, they were told that the school

was accepting children with different abilities and there would be diverse learners in the classrooms. Most of the mothers reported that they did not think that "diverse learners" and "different abilities" meant having children with mental disabilities. Some thought there would be children with physical disabilities: motor, visual or auditory disabilities, others thought there would be children with different nationalities in the classroom. This reflected the degree of ignorance about mental disabilities and inclusive education in Egyptian society even among the upper class. Additionally, the majority of the mothers mentioned having only basic knowledge about mental disabilities, except the ones who had direct contact with a child with a mental disability in their families.

Selectivity in Attitudes According to the Type of Disability

When the mothers knew that their children were having a new colleague with a mental disability in their classrooms, they had different attitudes. There was selectivity in their attitudes towards inclusion, according to the student's type of disability. Past research demonstrated that people usually show more positive attitudes towards persons with physical disabilities, compared to people with mental disabilities (Dale and Salt 2008). One of the mothers revealed:

> The school should have taken the parents' permission first before enrolling
> a child with cerebral palsy (CP) in our children's classroom. I do not have
> a problem that a child with a (physical) disability would be with my son in
> the classroom, but not a mental disability. A child who cannot see
> properly, cannot hear properly or is on a wheelchair would never harm my
> daughter or be a negative influence on her, but definitely a child with a

mental disability would. I do not mean to discriminate against them, but young children do not know how to differentiate between wrong and right behavior, it is confusing to have children with mental disabilities with them in the classroom since most of the time behave differently. It is better not to confuse children at that age.

The Impact of Media on People's Perceptions of Disability

Some of the mothers were selective according to the type of mental disability itself. They showed more positive attitudes towards children with Down's syndrome than other mental disabilities, since children with Down's syndrome are known for being friendly, sociable and cheerful (Burke and Sutherland 2004). This could be related to the fact that Egyptian popular culture regards children with Down's syndrome as closer to God. It is culturally accepted that people with specific mental disabilities "are often considered superior rather than inferior due to the fact that they possess Baraka (blessing), and are able to pass it on and bless others" (Saad 2009: 4).

This could be explained using cultivation theory. This theory examines the long-term impact of television on people proposing that, as people's TV consumption increases, the more likely people would believe the "social reality" portrayed on the television, which leads to having a "shared societal perspective about the world" (Hamdy et al. 2011: 86). Media plays a role in filling the gaps in the viewers' understanding of the world specifically about the places and issues that they have no direct experience with, thus profoundly influencing the viewers' cultural perceptions. Hamdy et. al (2011) argued: "…media messages reinforce society's presumed stereotypical images of people

with disabilities…portraying either the heroic or bitter, angry people worthy only of pity and charity" (p. 86). Mabrouk and Bulbul, and El-Saher are two Egyptian movies that were released in 1998, and 2001 including people with Down's syndrome. In those movies, there was a positive cultural evaluation of people with Down's syndrome, which could partly explain mothers' positive attitudes towards them. One of the founders of a special education school in Egypt noted:

> It is common to see people with Down's syndrome on television. Their faces are familiar, and usually they are associated with laughter and kindness in people's minds. In my opinion raising awareness about other mental disabilities should be through media, or specifically television because it reaches everyone. In Egypt, people from all social classes have televisions at home and it introduces them to things they do not experience in their daily lives. If we focused on educating people about mental disabilities, we should start with representing a true and positive image to children with mental disabilities on television. It will positively impact people's attitudes towards disability in general, for sure.

How Myths and Misconceptions about Mental Disabilities Influence Attitudes

Mothers of children without disabilities showed highly negative attitudes towards children with autism, since they had misconceptions about the disability. Mothers commonly reported being concerned about the safety of their children being threatened around children with mental disabilities, especially children with autism. It is not infrequent that children with autism might engage in violent behavior or harm

themselves, but the severity of autism is on a spectrum, from being fairly mild to extremely severe. Dr. Dahlia Soliman, an educational psychologist and the president of Egyptian Autistic Society said that children with autism who are usually accepted in mainstream schools and are ready for inclusive education are not severe cases, and are completely safe around other children. One of the mothers whose child had a colleague with autism in class said:

> I wanted to switch my son's class when the boy with autism was enrolled in his classroom, because those children are violent and aggressive. They would hurt themselves and endanger others. I did not want my child's safety to be threatened, but he did not want to leave his friends and go to another class, so I asked a group of mothers of my son's friends in class to go to the primary school principal's office together and tell her our concerns about the safety of our children, and ask if she would consider switching the autistic child's class, because our children had the right of staying with their friends. I did not mind when my son had a colleague with Down's syndrome last year because the girl was lovely and kind, and definitely Down's was different from autism. The principal refused to change the boy's class but she assured us that our children would be safe, as he was not a severe case, and his shadow teacher was with him all the time. We agreed but we told our children to keep their distance and not to play with him in order not to be harmed.

In this case, the child with autism was accepted in a mainstream school, and included with children without mental disabilities, but he was marginalized within the inclusive

classroom because of the attitudes and perceptions of his colleagues' mothers towards his mental disability.

Tying Disability to "Wrong" Behavior

Mothers of children without disabilities also reported having different trepidations about inclusive education besides their children's safety. Imitation was one of the common concerns mothers had. They asserted that frequently children with mental disabilities behave and talk differently, compared to children without disabilities. The mothers' concern was that their children would imitate the child with disability's behavior, assuming that behaving differently would necessarily mean engaging in a wrong behavior. For most of the mothers in my sample, "different" was synonymous to "wrong" or "unpleasant". One of the mothers observed:

> When I saw the boy with cerebral palsy (CP) in my daughter's class
> talking, I was afraid she would start to imitate him, because he talked
> improperly and in a funny way. I did not want her pronunciation in
> English to get affected, and I talked to her class teacher about this.

Another mother also said, "My son had a colleague with ADHD, he moved in the classroom and could not sit still. He also used to speak loudly. I was afraid my son would imitate him, so I switched his class." The primary school principal accepted the change of classes because she did not want the mother to blame the boy with ADHD for negatively influencing her son. The principal argued:

> I know that if another student rather than the one with a mental disability
> moved in class or talked loudly or even did anything wrong, no one would

have requested to change their children's classes because of the fear of imitation and bad influence and all the concerns mothers reported, but it is not easy to make people accept children with mental disabilities. We are trying to raise awareness at school, but this will take time until everyone accepts to see that those children have the right to education as all the children.

In this respect, the attitude/perceptions of Egyptian mothers of children without disability is in line with the findings of Nichols (2010), that these mothers usually perceive their children's behavior as the "normally accepted behavior" and they are likely to take an ableist stance in judging children with mental disabilities' behavior.

Teachers' Divided Attention

Another common concern was teachers' attention. Mothers of children without disabilities in national mainstream schools mentioned that having a child with a mental disability in the classroom would be hard and confusing for the teacher. The teacher's divided attention would negatively influence their children, and they would not be gaining the maximum educational benefit they deserve (Fink, McNaughton and Drager 2009). Teachers should receive special training in order to be able to deal with diverse learners in the same classroom, and when the teachers are not qualified enough, they would not be able to give enough attention neither to the child with mental disability nor to the rest of the students (Avramidis and Kalyva 2007). One of the mothers noted:

I believe that those children benefit more in their special needs schools because they have their teachers' full attention, and they receive the

special treatment they need to gain the best academic benefit. We need the same for our children as well, and I do not expect my daughter's teacher to give her undivided attention while having a child with a mental disability in the classroom. When I talked to the class teacher, she said that the main purpose of inclusion is the social more than academic benefit for those children. I think that school means academics and the social part could be achieved outside the school, in the club or somewhere else, but we send our children to school to learn, not to socialize.

Research revealed that the way mothers perceived what a school is influences their attitudes towards inclusion. Mothers who perceived schools as a place where children focus mainly on academics are more likely to have negative attitudes towards inclusion compared to mothers who had a more holistic view of the role of the school, perceiving it as a place for socializing children and preparing them to deal with diverse forms of life situations.

Mothers' Concerns About Children with Mental Disabilities

Not all the mothers' concerns were about their own children; they also had concerns about the children with mental disabilities. Some mothers asserted being worried about children with mental disabilities being bullied and neglected in the mainstream school. Others recounted that teachers did not get enough training to be able to deal with children with different abilities in the same classroom, so it would be unfair to implement inclusive education, because s/he would need special treatment that general education teachers would not be able to provide him/her. This points to an important

distinction between attitudes towards inclusion in principle as opposed to attitudes towards the way inclusion is being implemented in particular schools. This issue will be taken up later in more detail in connection with the comparison between national and international mainstream schools.

Although most of the mothers in my sample did not allow their children to play or interact with children with mental disabilities, they did not feel that those children were in the right place as they could have attended a special education school and then would not experience feelings of loneliness and difference. One mother said:

> When I saw the autistic boy sitting in the playground with his shadow teacher alone, I felt so sorry for him because I would hate it if my child was left alone like this, but I did not encourage my son to play with him, because I was afraid this boy would be aggressive.

Mothers of children without mental disabilities who enrolled their children in private national mainstream schools in my sample showed negative attitudes towards inclusion. They had concerns about their children and also about children with disabilities, and most of them did not believe that inclusive education would academically and socially benefit students with special needs. The mothers' concern about children safety and their lack of awareness about disabilities decreased the social benefit of inclusion. On the other hand, mothers of children without disabilities in international schools had different attitudes towards inclusive education.

Mothers of Children without Mental Disabilities in International Schools in Egypt

I interviewed six mothers of children without disabilities in two international schools, five working mothers, and one housewife. Two mothers received their Bachelor's degree from the United States, and four graduated from private universities in Egypt. They all preferred to have the interviews in English. All the mothers lived in Maadi or compounds in New Cairo. Mothers of children without disabilities in international schools responded with different attitudes compared to those in national schools. This group of mothers had different concerns about inclusion compared to mothers of children without disabilities in national mainstream schools. They showed more knowledge about mental disabilities and also more tolerance to people with mental disabilities; this was reflected in the language they used. Mothers did not use discriminatory language, as they did not refer to children with mental disabilities as "those children" or "disabled children", they talked about them the same way they referred to children without disabilities.

Schools Preparing Parents for Inclusion

Mothers knew before enrolling their children at the schools that they accepted children with mental disabilities. At the beginning of each academic year, both schools in the sample informed the parents if there would be a child with a mental disability with their children in class that year, what kind of disability and its features, and the best way to deal with it in order for the parents to help in facilitating the inclusion process.

Most of the mothers of children without disabilities in the national and international schools shared the same concern about bullying. Mothers in the latter

reported that at the beginning stage of the inclusion process they were apprehensive about discrimination against children with mental disabilities with their children in class. They mentioned being concerned about them being bullied because of their differences. On the other hand, most of the mothers mentioned that their concern dwindled rapidly after seeing the teachers' efforts to integrate all the students together, and the cooperation of general education and shadow teachers in curbing bullying. One of the mothers noted:

> My son attended preschool and first grade in a school in the Washington, DC area and then we moved back to Egypt. His school in the States implemented inclusive education, and I wanted the same for him in Egypt because I believe that this would make him a better person, he would appreciate people more, and he would not take everything for granted. My main concern was that in Egypt bullying would be more, since stigma is still accompanying children with mental disabilities. I cannot deny that sometimes some parents encourage their children not to play with special needs children, but the school tries all the time to handle the parents' concerns properly. Sometimes I feel it is too early to implement inclusive education in Egypt, but when I am in a situation and I see my son dealing with a child with special needs in a very kind and understanding way, I appreciate the existence of inclusion, even if there is still stigma in the society and discrimination against people with disabilities in general.

Children's Gradual Acceptance to Inclusion

Mothers of children in third and fourth grades mentioned that it was not easy in the beginning for their children to have children with mental disabilities in their classrooms when they were in grades one and two, but it was getting easier by the time they reached fourth grade inclusion became a norm for them. When the children were younger, they experienced some jealousy from the child with the mental disability in their classroom, as the child would have a shadow teacher with her/him in class every day. Commonly the children thought that the shadow teacher was the child's mother accompanying him/her to class, and they wanted their mothers as well. Mothers mentioned that after their children were convinced that this was a teacher, not the child's mother, the jealousy subsided and they started to get to know the child. Mothers also mentioned that their children did not feel that the special needs student wanted to play or interact with them. It usually takes longer for children with mental disabilities to become friends with others, so this might have been the reason behind the children's feelings (Elkins, Kraayenoord and Jobling 2003), but the class teachers, with the help of the shadow teachers, facilitated the interaction between the children.

Positive Impact of Inclusion on Children without Disabilities

Mothers of children without disabilities in national schools were concerned about their children's safety being around children with mental disabilities, and also feared that they would negatively influence their children. On the other hand, mothers of children without disabilities in the international schools reported seeing positive effects of inclusion on their children, rather than negative. Some of them said that their children

showed more tolerance and acceptance to children with different disabilities outside the school -not necessarily mental disability- after having a child with a mental disability in their classroom. One mother said (pseudo names are used):

My son argued with his friends in the club a month ago because they were making fun of a child with mental retardation who had a stuttering problem, and he got really angry and made his friends stop. I did not know what was going on, I just saw them arguing and went to see what happened, and those were his words: "This boy does not speak properly and we should not make fun of him. They were telling him that he talks like a baby and I told them to stop because they embarrassed him. Mrs. Maria (their class teacher) said that when we see someone who stuttering we should give him the time to say what he wants to say on his own, and not to complete the sentence for him because this would make him feel so embarrassed, we only need to be patient and wait. And he is not a baby, he stutters. Salma in class stutters and she is not a baby, she is in the 3rd grade with us" I felt very proud of him, he was defending that boy from his heart, and it was the first time for them to meet, they played together afterwards and when his mother saw this situation she was tearing up.

Another mother also stated:

I found my nine year old daughter and her best friend from school playing with a girl with Down's syndrome in the club's garden for over an hour, and when I asked my daughter about her new friend, she said that they wanted to play with her because she is like Dina, their friend at school

who had Down's syndrome, and she said "Miss Sara and Miss Mariam
always tell us that there are a lot of children who do not play with kids like
Dina because they do not know how friendly they are they also do not
know why do they look different, so they leave them alone. We did not
want her to play alone, and we found her really friendly like Dina, she
even laughs a lot like her."

Most of the mothers of children without disabilities in international schools
mentioned situations where their children showed positive attitudes towards children with
mental disabilities outside the classroom. Also, their children usually referred to their
general education teachers' encouraging words to make the children play and interact
with children with mental disabilities, mentioning how the others in the society treats
them. For example, mothers repeatedly said their children recalled their teachers' words:
"others do not play with children who look different", "we should take care not to hurt
their feelings", "give them time, and be patient with them", "do not allow others to make
fun of them", "explain to people what do you know about autism because they do not
know", "encourage your friends in the club to play with children with disabilities, they
will be happy".

Children's Sense of Responsibility and Pride

Three mothers mentioned that their children talked at home about their
colleagues' with mental disability and mention their achievements with pride. One of the
mothers said that her daughter told her about her friend who has autism, that he was
unable to form a sentence in the grammar lesson, so the teacher played some activities

with the whole class to introduce the new piece of information in various ways to help him grasp it. Then her daughter kept informing her mother with the boy's progress, until a week later she told her mother happily that in class that morning, her friend was finally able to make the sentence correctly on his own, and they praised him and the teacher gave candy to the whole class because they all shared in the activities and shared in making the lesson easier for him. This is consistent with some research studies that examined the impact of inclusive education on children without disabilities, which revealed great improvement in the children's sharing skills, sense of responsibility, and appreciation of the small achievements of others (Nichols 2010). One of the mothers recalled:

> My son talks about his colleague's achievement with the same pride as his own achievements. I think his teacher reinforces this behavior in all the students in the classroom, which is something I am very happy my child feels. It is rare to find nine year olds praising one another for performing well on a game. This is one of the major benefits of mainstream education that I witness in my son.

Inclusive Language

The group of mothers also stressed the fact that the class teachers reinforced the use of inclusive rather than discriminatory language, to help the children understand and accept the idea of inclusion, and to facilitate the implementation process. For example, making distinctions between "normal" children and children with disabilities was not accepted, and treating the student with special needs as the "other" was also raised inside

the classrooms as unpleasant. One of the mothers said that teachers banned students from referring to a student with autism as "the autistic boy", and talked to mothers during the parents' meeting to tell them not to use such discriminatory language at home. The importance of introducing "inclusive language" to children was mentioned in a number of studies to facilitate the early stages of inclusion and aid its success (Burke and Sutherland 2004).

CONCLUSION

Mothers of children without mental disabilities in national and international schools in Egypt had different attitudes towards inclusive education. Mothers' educational background and type of education could be factors influencing the creating of difference in their attitudes. Although educational background is strongly correlated with class background, and in fact a subset of it, in this research study, the education aspect of class is highlighted as an influential factor, regardless of the material/economic aspect of class. This is due to the closeness in school fees between national and international schools chosen in the sample, and also the opinions of disability professionals dealing with both types of mothers who stressed the existence of mothers' different attitudes towards inclusion due to differences in educational rather than economic background.

Mothers of children without mental disabilities in national schools lacked the awareness about the different mental disabilities, and about inclusive education as well, which resulted in building their opinions about inclusion upon myths and misconceptions. Moreover, they had different concerns about their children that were not reassured by the general education teachers. On the other hand, mothers who enrolled their children in the

international schools highlighted the schools' and teachers' efforts in curbing the segregation and marginalization of any of the students and continuously reinforcing inclusion.

Teachers' role in the implementation of inclusive education, and in influencing mothers' attitudes towards inclusion was highlighted during the interviews with mothers. Some teachers reinforced students' good behavior with children with mental disabilities, while others reinforced the marginalization of children with special needs within the inclusive classroom. Therefore, the next chapter will examine the attitudes of general education teachers in national and international mainstream schools in Egypt, towards inclusive education.

CHAPTER THREE

General Education Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

INRODUCTION

This chapter is addressing general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. It focuses on teachers in national and international schools in Egypt as they are the main actors implementing the new education trend of inclusion. This chapter is examining teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, factors influencing the formation of their attitudes and whether inclusion would address the issue of the marginalization of children with mental disabilities or not. In other words, are children with mental disabilities in mainstream schools in Egypt still experiencing marginality or has inclusive education tackled their segregation and marginalization from the educational system?

Decades ago, when the term "diverse learners" was used, people would commonly think that it meant children of different religion, nationality, race, or gender in the same classroom. They rarely thought that children with disabilities were also considered as part of diverse learners (Hurt 2012). It is now widely accepted that the term "diverse learners" describes children with different capabilities included in the same classroom. For the teachers to be able to deal with diverse learners in their classes, they should receive special training in how to explain the material in ways that would suit students' with different mental capacities, in the case of having children with mental disabilities (Avramidis and Kalyva 2007).

Family, Experience and the formation of Attitudes

Research has found that there are various factors influencing teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Among these factors is the teacher's personal knowledge about disabilities. Teachers who had direct contact with persons with mental disabilities in their personal lives, regardless of the professional training they received, were more supportive of inclusive education (Bradshaw and Mundia 2006). Basically, general education and shadow teachers in this research study who mentioned having persons with mental disabilities in their families were more supportive of inclusion compared to the ones who had no direct contact with persons with mental disabilities.

Moreover, teachers who had persons with mental disabilities in their close families, showed more confidence in dealing with students with mental disabilities in their classrooms (Slavin 2009). One of the general education teachers I interviewed explained:

> I did not know much about mental disabilities before having a nephew with an intellectual disability [mental retardation]. He was rejected from many schools and I felt so bad that I was a primary school teacher and unable to explain to him simple things. I decided to learn how to teach children with special needs, but private courses weren't enough. I had to read on my own, and asked professional special needs teachers for guidance, then I became a mainstream teacher. I did it because of my nephew and I found out that having a special needs child of your own, or in the family is the main influence for many teachers to have a career shift and become special education teachers and mainstream teachers.

Another general education teacher said:

> My lifetime best friend's sister has Down's syndrome. We grew up
>
> together and I never forget her mother's disappointment for not being able
>
> to grant her daughter her basic right for having a proper education. This
>
> girl has a huge influence on the person I turned out to be today. I don't
>
> think I would have chosen to be a mainstream teacher if she was not in my
>
> life.

The Rigidity of Experience

Another factor is teachers' years of experience and its influence on their attitudes towards inclusion. A research study conducted in the United States comparing years of experience of special education teachers and general education teachers, and their attitudes toward inclusive education revealed that, the two groups of teachers showed negative attitudes towards inclusion, as their years of experience increased. Additionally, teachers with less years of experience showed more willingness to try new teaching methods and implement inclusive education in their classrooms, compared to teachers with more experience (Avramidis and Kalyva 2007). One of the general education teachers mentioned that in the beginning of implementing inclusive education at school, the head of the English department and the most experienced teacher in the department, was the one who struggled most in accepting mainstreaming students with mental disabilities in regular classrooms. Moreover, the department's head was more inflexible in accommodating the school's curricula for special needs students. On the other hand, another teacher mentioned that "fresh-graduates", the youngest teachers with the least

teaching experience were more willing to learn and apply various new teaching strategies.

Self-Efficacy and Sense of Competence

Additionally, research revealed that there is a direct relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusion. Self-efficacy is defined as a future-oriented belief regarding the individual's displayed level of competence in a specific situation which could have an impact on his/her emotions and thoughts. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3).

Rosenzweig (2009) argued "low self-efficacy of teachers may be related to negative attitudes of inclusion" (p. 19). One of the general education teachers in a national mainstream school argued:

> Students with mental disabilities should be placed in special education classrooms with teachers qualified to facilitate the learning process for them. General education teachers lack the experience and knowledge about the different disabilities and the different educational techniques that should be used with those students. Although I work in a mainstream school, I believe that it is better for special needs students to attend special education classrooms, or partial inclusion as I have in my class, but full-time inclusion is hard for the teachers and students.

Moreover, according to Lee-Traver (2006), "In general, teachers have been found to be unwilling to accept a child with a disability into the regular classroom…and teachers

attributed a significant increase in stress when asked to cope with a child with a disability with their regular education students" (p. 264).

On the other hand, one of the teachers working in an international mainstream school mentioned that every academic year, as mainstream teachers get more training and get exposed to different types of mental disabilities, their experiences increase and their competence and confidence levels increase. As a result, their feelings of anxiety and discomfort from having children with mental disabilities that they used to complain about earlier decrease. Teachers with high self-efficacy show more confidence and are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes towards inclusive education (Bradshaw and Mundia 2006). Another teacher said:

> I have been working in a mainstream school for four years. I am more comfortable in dealing with children with mental disabilities every year, or even every semester. At the beginning I used to avoid the child, and only dealt with his/her shadow teacher, but now I know more about mental disabilities, and I think I am more confident that I can teach special needs children than I was three years ago.

Training and its Effect on Attitude Formation

Several studies in the United States and Western Europe revealed that there is a direct relationship between teachers' training and their attitudes towards inclusive education. Teachers who received special education training showed positive attitudes towards mainstreaming children with mental disabilities in general education classrooms (Koutrouba, Vamvakari and Throdoropoulos 2008). Similarly, a study conducted in a

number of Egyptian schools in 2011 revealed that general education teachers who received intensive training in special education were more supportive of inclusive education, and showed more willingness to implement it in their classrooms, compared to teachers who received only a few training sessions, or received no training at all (Emam and Mohamed 2011). Those findings are in line with what general education teachers in my sample reported. General education teachers who received proper education about teaching children with special needs, and took intensive courses and various training sessions about mental disabilities and teaching diverse learners in the classroom, were more supportive of inclusive education compared to teachers who received only basic training. Garriott, Miller and Snyder (2003) argued that teachers' training about special education and mainstreaming special needs students, alleviates misconceptions about inclusion and training also "enables them to feel competent to accommodate the learning needs of a diverse student population" (p. 51).

Additionally, teachers specialized in special needs education, even those who worked in special education schools, not necessarily in mainstream schools, were more supportive of inclusion compared to general education teachers (De Boer, Piji and Minnaert 2011). Similarly 91% of the shadow teachers and special education teachers in this research study saw more benefits to inclusive education compared to general education teachers.

Offering teachers the opportunities to attend international conferences examining and addressing the inclusion experiences in different parts of the world, and sharing stories about successful inclusion stories supports teachers' "sense of empowerment" and motivates them to accept inclusive education (McLeskey and Waldron 2002: 67). General

education teachers in the international schools reported being encouraged by their schools' principals and departments' chairs to attend national and international conferences discussing issues of marginality and exclusion of persons with disabilities in Egypt, educating children with mental disabilities and successful ways of implementing inclusive education. On the other hand, teachers in the national schools did not mention attending any of those conferences or receiving such encouragement from their schools.

Attitudes Influenced by the Type of Disability

Furthermore, the student's type of disability could be a determinant of teachers' and mothers' attitudes towards inclusion. Studies conducted in a number of North American schools have shown that teachers were more supportive of inclusion of the students who had hearing, visual, or motor impairments, compared to other behavioral, mental and cognitive disabilities (Avramidis and Kalyva 2007). A few general education teachers in Egyptian national schools mentioned that inclusion of children with motor disabilities is easier on both the class teacher and the students without disabilities compared to including children with mental disabilities. One of the teachers said:

Regular students always look at children with disabilities as different. But when the child is sitting on a wheelchair or wearing a hearing aid it is different than when he behaves and talks in a distinctive way or has a shadow teacher accompanying him, writing for him or assisting him in everything he is doing. Regular students feel that children with disabilities are deviant, and the degree of deviance they experience is dependent on

the type of disability the special needs child has, and of course it is more towards children with mental disabilities.

Similarly, according to Aramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000):

Regular teachers' attitudes reflected lack of confidence in their own instructional skills and quality of support personnel available to them. They were positive about integrating only those whose disabling characteristics which were not likely to require extra instructional or management skills from the teacher (p. 279).

Some teachers also have different attitudes towards children with mental disabilities according to the type of mental disability they have. Some teachers preferred having students with Down's syndrome to having ones with autism, as the former are "more friendly and easy-going". Others mentioned preferring students with mild intellectual disabilities to children with attention deficit hyper activity disorder, although almost 15% of children with mental retardation also have ADHD (Hässler and Thome 2012). A few teachers reported that children with ADHD are usually out of control, and sitting down in a classroom is always a problem for them, thus they "disrupt their colleagues and exhaust the teacher."

Labeling and the Use of Language

A number of comparative studies between teachers with positive and negative attitudes towards inclusion have shown that the former usually report that students with disabilities belong to the general population and are part of the society, thus it is normal to have them in general education classrooms. Similarly, a number of teachers in

international mainstream schools in Egypt talked about inclusive education from a rights-based approach. They showed positive attitudes towards inclusion of children with mental disabilities in regular education classrooms and asserted that education is a basic right for each child, and diversity should be respected in the educational system, curricula should be appropriate and accommodations should be codified (legalized).

Those teachers rarely use discriminative or marginalizing language of framing children with disabilities as "the other" (Burke and Sutherland 2004). One of the teachers working in an international mainstream school said:

> Here at school, while preparing us as general education teachers to have children with special needs in the classroom, they brought us a professional guest speaker just to talk to us about the use of language. What should children with special needs be called and referred to in order not to offend them, their parents and not to teach their colleagues to discriminate against them. This psychologist told us that it is not incorrect to view children with mental disabilities as "different", because in fact they are different, but it is important to believe and teach the students that "difference" is not a negative connotation, it is being unique in their own way.

Ainscow (2007) argued that teachers who "implicitly or explicitly subscribe to a belief system that regards some students, at best, as disadvantaged and in need of fixing or, at worse, as deficient and therefore beyond fixing" fail in implementing inclusive education (p. 248). Moreover, viewing children with mental disabilities as "things that

should be fixed" is reflected in teachers' attitudes that are easily adopted by the rest of the students, forming an atmosphere of discrimination and marginality (Ainscow 2007).

General education teachers with negative attitudes towards inclusive education view inclusion as a burden on the teacher and students without disabilities. They repeatedly mention that "those children" need to be in special education schools in order not to negatively impact "normal" or "regular" children. They use discriminatory language and their arguments usually include forming "binaries" between children with and without disabilities (De Boer, Piji and Minnaert 2011). One of the general education teachers' instructor said:

> I am the one responsible for training the teachers to handle diverse learners in the same classroom, but at the early stages it is always challenging. Most of the time teachers think in binaries when they imagine implementing inclusive education. They make automatic comparisons between "normal" children and disabled ones. The existence of those stigmatizing binaries limit the teachers' potential to think outside them, as if they are trapped inside them. Once the teacher reaches a point of handling the students holistically as a diverse yet unified entity; as a single group of diverse students, the teacher excels and successfully implements inclusion. The main issue is in the attitudes teachers hold towards children with mental disabilities, when the labeling stops, stigma diminishes.

<u>**GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN EGYPT**</u>

National and international mainstream schools in Egypt implement inclusive education differently. According to Dr. Dahlia Soliman, the founder of the Egyptian Autistic Society's special education school, there are no standard rules that mainstream schools follow, thus the inclusion experience varies from one mainstream school to another (2016). General education teachers working in national and international mainstream schools reported having different attitudes towards inclusion, and their attitudes varied according to multiple factors that will be addressed in the following sections. Silverman (2007) explained that: "Teachers' attitudes and beliefs directly affect their behavior with students, thus having tremendous potential to influence classroom climate and student outcomes" (p. 43). Thus, teachers' attitudes not only affects other students' attitudes towards inclusion, it affects the success of the implementation of inclusion in the first place.

Teachers in the Sample

I interviewed a total of 12 general education class teachers, 6 teachers in each type of school. Three teachers who worked in the national schools graduated from Faculty of Arts, two graduated from the Faculty of Education, and one from Faculty of Commerce, all from national Egyptian universities. The six teachers did not learn about special education or disabilities as part of their college education. Their years of teaching experience ranged between nine and twelve years. Some of them mentioned never hearing about some mental disabilities before receiving special education training at the schools where they worked and for only a few weeks/months before the implementation

of inclusive education. One of the teachers mentioned that she was against having children with mental disabilities in her classroom, but she had to accept inclusion, as she did not want to change her workplace.

The other group of teachers who worked in international schools received a different type of university education, compared to teachers working in national mainstream schools. Only one of the teachers I interviewed in the international schools graduated from Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University, but the rest of the teachers graduated from different faculties in private universities. Three teachers graduated from the American University in Cairo; two of them studied psychology and the third studied English and comparative literature. Also, the fifth teacher had a diploma in inclusive education from the University of Malta, and the sixth teacher had a Master's Degree in inclusive education from Washington State University. Their years of teaching experience ranged between four to seven years. Most of the teachers I interviewed in the international schools learned about mental disabilities as part of their university education, and all of them received extra courses and intensive training in special education after graduation. Moreover, teachers in international schools chose to work in a mainstream school where inclusive education was already implemented before they started working at the schools; it was not enforced on them compared to teachers in national mainstream schools.

Teachers in National and International Mainstream Schools

Overall, teachers working in the national mainstream schools were more inclined towards having negative attitudes towards inclusion compared to teachers in international

schools. Years of teaching experience were higher among teachers in national schools, and also they had different educational backgrounds, and special needs training compared to teachers in international schools, which might have influenced the formation of the wide gap in their attitudes towards inclusive education.

One of the most frequently stated complaints that general education teachers mention in the literature about inclusive education is their fear of lacking the necessary knowledge to adequately teach children with different abilities in the same classroom. Moreover, general education teachers' sense of incompetence is the most widely documented fear about inclusion in the literature (D'Alonzo, Giordano and Vanleeuwen 1997, McLeskey and Waldron 2002, Shade and Steward 2001, Fink, McNaughton and Drager 2009, Emam and Farrell 2009, Forlin 2010, and Emam and Mohamed 2011). General education teachers in the national schools mentioned feeling incompetent and fearful about having diverse learners in their classrooms. However, teachers in international schools reported having feelings of incompetence only in the early stages of the implementation of inclusion, and asserted that their confidence increased as they gained more knowledge about ways of handling diverse learners.

Teachers' Frustration and Stress

Brownell, Adams, Sindlar and Waldron (2006) argued that "general education teachers play a primary role in the education of students with disabilities… [but] often they report feeling unprepared to undertake this role" (p. 171). Most of the teachers in the national mainstream schools shared the same concern about being unable to control the classroom in the presence of a student with special educational needs, especially if s/he

engaged in disruptive behavior and "badly influenced the rest of the students". "Teacher's frustration" is something that teachers experience when they feel that they are losing control over their classrooms because of being unable to handle the presence of a special needs student, and lacking the sufficient knowledge about mental disabilities (Emam and Farrell 2009). Moreover, Cassady (2011) found, "teachers have reported feelings of frustration and guilt due to the time that is taken away from the majority of the students in order to accommodate the needs of one student with special needs" (p. 6). One of the teachers in Egyptian national mainstream school said:

> Once, I had a boy with ADHD in my class, and he was very angry most of the time because I used to ask him over ten times each class to sit down [sitting down is very difficult for a child with ADHD]. Sometimes he used to keep screaming and walking in the classroom, so I would ask him and his shadow teacher to get out of the class, because he was wasting the lesson's time and that was unfair to the rest of the students. I asked them to leave the class so he would calm down; I was not punishing him. A week later, one of the normal students started to imitate him, and kept shouting in the class as a joke, and all the students started laughing and the class went out of control. I asked the shadow teacher to control the boy's behavior several times, but it did not work, so I asked the primary school principal to move the boy from my classroom because he was negatively influencing the students' behavior. I had no other choice.

Experiences of "teacher's frustration" were also mentioned among general education teachers in the international schools, but only under certain conditions.

Specifically that happened when the shadow teacher was not professional enough and not fully understanding and fulfilling the students' needs. In such cases, the shadow teacher would not cooperate with the general education teacher and would not facilitate the necessary communication between her/him and the student. Thus, handling the entire class becomes the responsibility of the class teacher, so s/he would experience feelings of frustration and incompetence. Moreover, the teacher would likely disregard the benefits of inclusive education, and perceive it as a "burden". One of the teachers in the international schools said:

> My first experience with inclusion was great, since the special needs child had a very cooperative shadow teacher assisting her and actually assisting me. She helped me prepare the activities, lessons and also helped me in putting the exams in order to suite the girl. The year after, I had a child with intellectual disability and his shadow teacher was not helpful at all. The burden was all on me, and I was unable to fulfill the needs of the entire class. I believe that if I did not have a great first experience with inclusion, I would have had a completely different attitude towards it. If this second experience was my point of reference, I would have told you that inclusion is a burden on the whole class, waste of time and energy for the teacher, and also unfair to the special needs students. But honestly, the shadow teacher is as efficient as the general education teacher, and our cooperation implements successful inclusion, none of us can do this alone"

Experiences of "teacher's frustration" were more among teachers in national mainstream schools, and most of them devalued the role of the shadow teacher to minimize such frustration and did not perceive them as "helpers" or "facilitators" who play a role in aiding the general education teachers to handle diverse learners (Emam and Farrell 2009: 412). Unlike general education teachers in national mainstream schools, teachers in international schools were more inclined towards the implementation of inclusive education, and feelings of "frustration" were not the most dominant.

Furthermore, the implementation of inclusive education is challenging and puts stress on the general education teachers, "the significant stress that is continuously present affects the teacher's acceptance of the student with mental disabilities and the desire to include them" (Cassady 2011, p. 8). The only teachers who accept those challenges are the ones who have positive attitudes towards inclusion and believe in its constructive impact on all children (Ryan 2009). One of the teachers in the international schools said:

> I think no one could handle a challenging job as being a mainstream teacher to elementary school children, without being passionate about what we are doing and seeing the 'bigger picture'. Yes inclusion is very challenging, and yes we sometimes feel like losing our minds, but we believe that it is the right for every child with disability to be educated among his peers, and not to be marginalized in a special needs school only. Dealing with children with disabilities while he has the opportunity and the capability of being among a whole bunch of different students. But when the teacher does not believe in this 'bigger picture', definitely she

would not accept the challenge. Her effort would be worthless since there

is no goal.

Misinterpretation and Miscommunication

One of the most frequent complaints that teachers in national mainstream schools reported was having difficulty in interpreting the needs of students with mental disabilities. One of the teachers said that she had a student with autism in her classroom, and he had repeated outbursts of crying that she was unable to understand the reasons behind them. The teacher said:

When he cries like this I keep trying to understand what went wrong. Was it something I said? Was it something one in the class did? Is he in pain? Is there something physically wrong with him? I cannot interpret his needs at all when he has those outbursts and I feel helpless. I feel emotionally exhausted from the extent of helplessness I feel towards him. Sometimes I lose my temper from trying for a few minutes to calm him down, and understand what he wants, which adds a horrible sense of guilt to the extreme helplessness I was already feeling.

Another problem with interpretation that a number of teachers mentioned was that a large number of children with mental disabilities have is experiencing difficulties in emotional and social understanding, and inability to interpret teacher's body language (Emam and Farrell 2009). One of the teachers mentioned that sometimes the students with special needs engage in an unpleasant behavior and she looks at them waiting for them to stop, and they do not. At the beginning she thought they were disobeying her

rules, but their parents and their shadow teachers assured her that they were unable to interpret her body language. Another teacher also mentioned that interpreting the tone of voice was a major problem she faced with one of the students with intellectual disabilities. The student was unable to unable to interpret the teacher's tone, whether she was serious or joking which caused recurrent misunderstandings between the teacher and the student.

Restricted Use of Language

Emam and Farrell (2009) argued that some children with mental disabilities, especially those with autism spectrum disorders have "literal understanding" to what is being said (p. 414). Literal understanding makes children with mental disabilities unable to comprehend figurative or idiomatic expressions, which restricts the general education teacher's use of language in class. One of the teachers said:

> I was talking to one of the students and telling him that he needed to concentrate more on the next exam because he did not do well on the previous one. So the student told me that he has been studying very well for the coming exam and was well prepared. I replied "actions speak louder than words" and the boy understood what I was saying. Then the special needs child interrupted and said, but actions do not speak, actions are not persons. I thought he was making a joke at the beginning, then I realized that he was not. It is hard to speak freely in class during his presence, I should be cautious all the time not to use any idioms and not to say things that I do not "literally" mean in order not to confuse him.

Another teacher also mentioned that she had difficulty in choosing in-class activities for students since the games they used to play in class were guessing games, expression games, re-arranging the words, and other different games that require the use of imagination. Also, literal understanding of words would make it hard for the students with mental disabilities to understand them, thus they would not participate, and they would be marginalized within the mainstream classroom.

Different Attitudes Towards Shadow Teachers

I interviewed general education teachers in national schools first, and almost all of them mentioned the problem of having difficulties interpreting the needs of children with mental disabilities, and miscommunicating with them as a result. Then when I interviewed general education teachers in international schools I was expecting to have the same complaints, but I did not, and I was intrigued to ask whether they experienced the same difficulties. The teachers said that it was not uncommon to misunderstand the children's needs or misinterpret their intentions; however, the main difference between teachers in both types of schools was the role the shadow teacher accompanying the child with mental disability played. Teachers in the national schools repeatedly mentioned being anxious in the presence of the shadow teachers in the classroom. Feelings of "being watched" or "constantly evaluated" gave them serious feelings of discomfort. One of the teachers said:

> It is hard for any teacher and for me of course to have another teacher in
>
> my classroom interfering in way I teach, and interact with my students. It
>
> should not be acceptable to have someone in the classroom, as it is

distracting to the rest of the students. I used to argue a lot with a shadow teacher who was accompanying a student with cerebral palsy two years ago, as she always judged and had an opinion about what should I do and not to do with the student. I am not against inclusion, but I believe that students with mental disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools should be the ones with mild disabilities and do not need the presence of a shadow teacher, and there are some who can really function without assistance. Otherwise, they better go to special education schools.

On the other hand, most of the general education teachers in the international mainstream schools mentioned having a cooperative relationship with the shadow teachers who played a crucial role in facilitating the interaction between the class teacher and the special needs student. Therefore, issues of communication, misinterpretation and misunderstanding between teachers and students were less in international mainstream schools. One of the teachers said:

Last year I had a child with autism in class, and we had real issues in communicating together. The shadow teacher was the "point of intersection" between us. She explained to me what I failed to understand from the student, and the other way round. Also, she minimized the time of delivering the information to him. She knew his weaknesses more than I did at the beginning, so she helped me know the student faster and we cooperated together to design different activities suitable for him.

Supporting the teachers, and its effect on their attitudes towards inclusion

Several studies such as Heflin and Bullock (2010), Voltz, Brazil and Ford (2001), Shade and Stewart (2001), and McLeskey and Waldron (2002), indicated that the most significant factor that greatly affects general education teachers' attitudes positively towards inclusion and increases their acceptance and tolerance of inclusive education is having a "support system in place" (Olson 2003: 4). This means that when there is support of inclusion throughout the school, on different levels, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion incline towards the positive direction. Some examples of support are school's organization of on-going training sessions about inclusive education, reinforcement of consultation and collaboration between the shadow teachers and general education teachers. Moreover, schools' support for general education teachers by granting them ample preparation and lesson-planning time, when having children with mental disabilities in the classroom has shown to be an influential factor (Olson 2003). One of the general education teachers in an international mainstream school mentioned:

> I did not have children with mental disabilities in my classrooms for three
> years after I started working in this school, but some of my colleagues
> had. We had rules in our department to submit weekly teaching plans
> every Sunday. The fourth year, I had a child with Down's syndrome in
> class, and I was following the same rules as the previous years, but by the
> third week after the beginning of the academic year, I was unable to do it
> and I felt like a failure. I needed more time to prepare for year class as I
> needed to use different teaching strategies to deliver the information to the
> special needs student. The department's chair allowed me to have a

flexible schedule to have enough time to plan my lessons, and advised me to discuss them with the child's shadow teacher, and work cooperatively with her. Honestly, I was about to resign after having a mainstream class, and if my boss did not encourage me nor adjusted the rules for me so I would regain my confidence and try again, I would not have tolerated inclusive education. Also, if the shadow teacher did not co-teach and co-prepare with me, I would not have been able to handle all the students on my own without being unfair either to the majority or the special child.

Mothers of Children without Disabilities

General education teachers in the national and international mainstream schools reported that mothers of children without mental disabilities play a significant role in the success or failure of the implementation of inclusive education. Most of the teachers in the national schools mentioned that most of the mothers encouraged their children not to play with children with disabilities. Moreover, they said that, mothers' common concern was that the class teacher would have "divided attention" which would negatively influence the quality of education their children received. However, teachers in the international schools mentioned that a number of mothers of children without disabilities reported seeing positive impact of inclusion on their children's behavior outside the school. One of the teachers said:

Two weeks ago, we had a parents meeting and one of the mothers told me that they were visiting their friends who had a child with Down's syndrome, and her daughter saw him for the first time, and was able to

interact with him and they played together for hours. She said she was really delighted to see that her daughter actually took the first step and went to play with the boy, and that having a child with a mental disability with her in class was definitely the main motivator for her to do this.

CONCLUSION

There are a number of factors that influence the formation of teachers' positive and negative attitudes towards inclusive education. Teachers' training and educational background are among the most influential factors. Also, the schools' support and the attitudes towards inclusion at the whole school, from principals to parents, to bus matrons and drivers (Ryan 2009), impact the formation of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Cassady (2011) argued that general education teachers might "see the child as a burden on the classroom; a student who decreases the effectiveness they have when instructing the rest of the typically developing students" (p. 6). On the other hand, other teachers might see that inclusion benefits children with mental disabilities and their typically developing peers, socially, academically and behaviorally (Emam and Mohamed 2011). The type of disability also affects teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Children with physical and some mental disabilities might behave similar to their non-disables peers. However, students with autism, ADHD, and emotional behavioral disorders (EBD) exhibit behaviors and actions that are different from their peers.

Furthermore, inclusion is challenging for the general education teachers, but when they believe in the effectiveness of inclusive education, they are more likely to exert the needed effort to offer all the needed accommodations to assure the success of inclusion.

However, "when general education teachers have negative attitudes toward inclusion and are unwilling to have students with disabilities in their classroom, they may not provide the necessary supports that would create a beneficial learning environment for the students" (According to Cassady 2011, p. 3).

In this research study, patterns emerged after interviewing general education teachers in national and international mainstream schools. Students with mental disabilities in national mainstream schools are not included properly and suffer a degree of marginalization within the inclusive classroom. Since the attitudes of mothers of children without disabilities are mostly negative ones, and general education teachers do not receive enough training or knowledge about mental disabilities and strategies for having diverse learners in the classroom. Moreover, they rarely cooperate with shadow teachers. General education teachers in national schools in my sample were not ready to implement inclusive education. However, in the international schools, general education teachers had strong educational backgrounds that included special education courses, received support from their schools to successfully implement inclusion, and had cooperative relationships with shadow teachers to facilitate the implementation of inclusion. Therefore, teachers in international schools were more supportive of inclusive education.

Shadow teachers are the direct communicators/facilitators between children with mental disabilities and general education teachers, thus it is important to examine their attitudes towards inclusive education. Moreover, shadow teachers' relationships with general education teachers play a significant role in affecting the success or failure of the implementation of inclusive education. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will

thoroughly examine the attitudes of shadow teachers working in a number of national and international mainstream schools in Egypt towards inclusion and the factors influencing the formation of their attitudes.

CHAPTER FOUR

Shadow Teachers' Experiences in National and International Schools in Egypt

INTRODUCTION

Children with mild to moderate mental disabilities who capable of being enrolled in mainstream schools usually need a specialist to give them individual assistance in the classroom to facilitate the inclusion process. A shadow teacher is an experienced teacher specialized in working with special needs children who need individual help inside a mainstream classroom (Milner 2009). Shadow teachers help the special needs children not only with academics, but in facilitating the interaction and communication between them and their colleagues, and class teachers as well. If the child with a mental disability receives partial inclusion, it is better for him to have her special education teacher, who teaches her in the special education school, or resource room in the mainstream school, as her shadow teacher. That way, the shadow teacher would be able to easily tackle the child's strengths to build on them, and weaknesses to focus on improving them (Pisula and Łukowska 2012).

The shadow teacher is also responsible for preparing the appropriate instructional materials that the special needs student needs for the lesson to be simplified according to the child's mental capabilities. Moreover, the class teacher usually respects the learning and comprehension pace of the majority of the students and teaches accordingly. However, children with mental disabilities in the inclusive classrooms usually advance at a slower pace compared to their peers, and here the role of the shadow teacher becomes very important (Milner 2009).

For this research study, I interviewed twelve shadow teachers. I chose the teachers according to their experiences. When I interviewed the founders of the special education schools I chose, I asked them if I could interview shadow teachers who were experienced in working in the three types of schools; special education, national and international mainstream schools. Nine of the teachers worked as both a special education teacher in a special education school and as a private shadow teacher for a child with a mental disability.

All of the shadow teachers in my sample were supportive of inclusive education for children with mental disabilities in general, however, they had different concerns in the case of Egypt specifically (Emam and Mohamed 2011). The twelve teachers agreed with the argument that inclusive education benefits children with mental disabilities more than children without disabilities, but it benefits both. All the teachers believed that the social benefit of inclusion was more significant and vital than the academic benefit for children with mental disabilities, not only to reduce the degree of social exclusion and/or marginality they experience, but also to learn the basic communication skills they need to become social beings (Momberg 2008). However, shadow teachers' attitudes towards inclusion varied according to the type of school children with mental disabilities went to, whether a national or international mainstream school.

Most of the shadow teachers in the sample automatically drew comparisons between their experiences in national and international mainstream schools, in a variety of aspects. First, there were differences in teachers', parents' and students' awareness of mental disabilities. Second, the implementation strategies of inclusive education in both types of schools differed drastically. Third, class teachers' attitudes towards children with

mental disabilities varied from being encouragingly accepting to extremely marginalizing. Fourth, the attitudes of parents of children without disabilities towards inclusive education also varied drastically between both extremes in the different types of schools.

Shadow Teachers in National Mainstream Schools

I interviewed 6 shadow teachers working with children with different mental disabilities, such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, and attention deficit hyper activity disorder (ADHD), in two national mainstream schools, but the information introduced in this section was collected from the twelve shadow teachers, since they all had experience in working in national and international mainstream schools.

The Effect of Lack of Awareness

The shadow teachers reported finding a lack of awareness about mental disabilities among the students and teachers, and pervasiveness of myths and misconceptions about what a child with a mental disability was like, what a mental disability was, and who a shadow teacher was. Moreover, shadow teachers reported attending a maximum of one awareness session, if any, about mental disabilities at the beginning of each school year to acquaint parents' of children without disabilities with the types of mental disabilities new special needs students have who would be included in their children's classrooms that year. Although awareness sessions play a remarkable role in abolishing the misconceptions about mental disabilities, they rarely take place in national schools (Momberg 2008). One of the teachers said:

It is not the shadow teacher's responsibility to familiarize children without disabilities with the different types of mental disabilities, and how to deal with students with special needs. The school should organize several information sessions about mental disabilities, and inclusive education throughout the academic year, to help the teachers, parents and students understand, and consequently accept special children, but this does not happen. I find myself responsible for introducing the child with mental disability to his colleagues, and I try to explain to the class what type of disability he has, how to deal with him and try to facilitate their communication together. At the beginning I thought this was only the case in my class, but after years of working experience and after hearing my colleagues' complaints about the same issue, I found out that I was not the only one. Shadow teachers are always asked to create an inclusive setting with no aid as if we are the only ones responsible for implementing inclusion.

The majority of the shadow teachers in my sample reported finding difficulties in the process of implementation of inclusive education in national mainstream classrooms. As for inclusive education to be effectively implemented, class teachers, shadow teachers and parents of children without mental disabilities should play a role in facilitating the inclusion experience for both the children without disabilities and children with disabilities (De Boer, Piji and Minnaert 2010). On the other hand, most of the shadow teachers reported that they solely played that role in national mainstream schools due to the lack of awareness about mental disabilities.

Marginalizing Children within the Inclusive Setting

One of the shadow teacher's roles is to facilitate the communication between the class teacher and the child with a mental disability, but the majority of shadow teachers in my sample reported that one of the main challenges they usually face in national mainstream schools is communicating with the general education teachers. The shadow teacher should help the students with mental disabilities and the class teachers understand one another, especially if the student's mental disability affects his/her communication skills and speech (Milner 2009). However, a large number of class teachers in national mainstream schools prefer to directly communicate with the shadow teachers accompanying children with special needs and ask them questions instead of asking the child which results in marginalizing students with mental disabilities within the inclusive setting, thus destroying the main purpose of mainstream education (Gaad 2011). One of the shadow teachers said:

> The class teacher rarely pays attention to the special needs child except when he is doing a wrong behavior, otherwise the teacher talks to me, and asks me to explain this part to him, or asks me to take him outside until he is calmer, if he is irritated, but she does not direct a conversation to the child himself at all.

Another shadow teacher also said:

> The child I am accompanying at the mainstream school has cerebral palsy, but she understands people very well. Her speech is not severely impaired, as she has been having speech therapy for years. Although she understands what the class teacher is saying and is capable of answering her back, the

teacher ignores her presence and talks to me instead of her, and when I asked the teacher why was she doing this, she said "you know better how to deal with her," and she does not even try to communicate with her.

Power Relations between Teachers and Lack of Collaboration

Shadow teachers alleged that general education teachers in national mainstream schools usually have issues of leadership and control over their own classrooms and students, and experience distress and discomfort when having another teacher in the classroom (Rosenzweig 2009). Cahill and Mitra stated that, "general education teachers feel anxious and resentful when working with special education teachers" (2008: 150). This might be resulting from general education teachers' lack of awareness about the impact of collaborative teaching in the inclusive setting.

Shadow teachers also mentioned that the majority of general education teachers in national mainstream schools neglect the fact that having a shadow teacher in class could be an asset and would facilitate the success of implementing inclusive education. Rosenzweig (2009) also stated that "little experience in dealing with other teachers in collaborative situations may cause general education teachers to neglect special educators as a resource to help them improve their knowledge and skills needed to teach their inclusive classes" (p. 20).

Research revealed that in the early stages of the inclusion process, older teachers, and the ones with more teaching experience, are more likely to perceive the shadow teacher as someone "evaluating" and "watching" them in the classroom, which makes them more inflexible and affects their attitudes towards students with mental disabilities

negatively (Gaad 2011). Moreover, it was repeatedly reported that whenever the shadow teacher suggests something in class to help the student with special needs, the class teacher perceives the other teacher's actions as intrusive by overstepping the boundaries of classroom rules, and interfering in his/her teaching strategies and methods. Furthermore, class teachers sometimes create a competitive relationship with shadow teachers in the inclusive setting, especially when the former's attitude towards inclusion is negative (Avramidis and Kalyva 2007). One of the shadow teachers said:

> Whenever I give a comment or suggest something in class that might help the student I am accompanying, or maybe help the teacher deal with him, she takes it as if I am offending her and invading her territory. There is no competition between us, and there is no place to have such a competition since we both should be achieving the same goal together, and giving the special student the special care he needs, not fight over leadership and see who has more power over what to be said in class. The class teacher is actually the one who should be in control over the class, but this does not mean that we as shadow teachers should not get involved in maximizing the benefit that the student with the mental disability receives by participating in making him understand by different means.

Some class teachers also reinforce the marginalization of students with mental disabilities in mainstream classrooms by excluding them from participating in classroom activities with their colleagues (Milner 2009). A number of shadow teachers recounted that if they do not take the initiative of making the children with mental disabilities participate in classroom games and activities, class teachers would not do that on their

own. Also, when children without disabilities see their class teacher ignoring the special needs student, they are most likely going to imitate the teacher's behavior and, as a result, inclusion loses its meaning, and the special students receives neither academic nor social benefits of inclusion, but experiences feelings of exclusion.

In addition, shadow teachers asserted that the rigidity of class teachers varied from not correcting the special needs student's homework, given the fact that the shadow teacher assists him while doing it, to not allowing the shadow teacher to attend the examinations with the students in order to be fair to the rest of the students. However, one of the shadow teachers said:

> If the child with the mental disability is used to having his shadow teacher
> in class and suddenly he's not allowed to have her during the exams, he
> would be confused, and unable to perform well even if the exam was
> suitable for his mental capacities. Some teachers think that when they do
> not allow the shadow teachers to attend the exam, they are being fair to the
> other students, but that is not correct, they are just being unfair to the
> special needs child.

The Creation of Obstacles and Barriers

National mainstream schools use the Egyptian curriculum enforced by the Egyptian Ministry of Education, which was not designed to accommodate for children with different mental capabilities (Emam and Mohamed 2011). Shadow teachers reported that children with mental disabilities in primary school levels, enrolled in national mainstream schools always struggle in third and sixth primary, since the examinations are

standardized all over the governorate, not created at each national school individually like the rest of the primary school grades. As a result, children with mental disabilities take the same exams as their counterparts who have no disabilities, and the percentage of failure is high since they receive no accommodations in the exams according to the type and severity of the disability (Momberg 2008).

Another obstacle that children with mental disabilities face is the class teachers' inflexibility in accepting less classwork and homework from them according to their capabilities, and evaluates them using the same standards used with their peers (Gaad 2011). One of the shadow teachers stated:

> I have been a shadow teacher for the same child for four years, now he is in third primary for the second time. He was unable to pass the government's exams because they do not do exceptions while correcting the papers of children with special needs. The problem is not in failing, because actually his parents are enrolling him in a mainstream school to have the social benefit of inclusion, and have a social life outside his special education school. But, his class teachers never understood that the social aspect to inclusion mattered most so they need to involve him in class discussions and activities instead of treating him as a failure.

How Parents Influence their Children

Children in the classroom are curious about the child who has a shadow teacher accompanying her, and they ask questions about why s/he needs more help, who is this person who comes with her in class, and endless other curious questions. However,

whenever children stop asking questions, and start avoiding the child with the mental disability, the shadow teacher would automatically know that their parents, especially their mothers, asked them to ignore or avoid that child (Gena 2006).

In this study, after interviewing mothers of children without disabilities in national mainstream schools, I concluded that they were not very supportive of the notion of inclusive education. In addition, the shadow teachers supported that conclusion, since they mentioned that even curious and friendly students, who used to approach children with mental disabilities to get to know them, changed their attitudes towards them. And when they are asked about the reason, most of them would say they are afraid of children with mental disabilities, as they would harm them, although they were not afraid in the beginning. Then when the children are asked again, they would finally say that they are obeying their mothers' orders. One of the shadow teachers recalled a dialogue that happened between her and a student in the playground at school:

Teacher: Hi, Do you want to come to play with us?

Student: No, not today,

Teacher: As you wish, but is there something wrong? Did Omar bother you? (pseudo names are used)

Student: No, but he is going to harm me.

Teacher: But you have been playing with him for three weeks now, and he never harmed you, did you see him harm anyone?

Student: No, but mammy said that he has autism and kids who have this illness might hit others or injure them.

Teacher: Omar has autism, your mother is right, but it is not an illness, and you have been very friendly with him, and he is happy when you are around, he would never harm you, and also I am here all the time, so nothing bad will happen.

Student: Sorry I can't, mammy said No.

Although the student himself had no worries before and enjoyed being around the special needs child, his attitude towards him changed because of his mother's understanding of autism.

Shadow teachers in national mainstream schools mentioned that not all the class teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusion, but compared to class teachers in international mainstream schools, teachers' attitudes in the latter were more supportive of the notion of inclusion and more effective in implementing inclusive education.

Shadow Teachers in International Mainstream Schools

I interviewed 6 shadow teachers working with children with different mental disabilities, such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, and attention deficit hyper activity disorder (ADHD), and intellectual disabilities (once called mental retardation) in two international mainstream schools, but the information introduced in this section was collected from the twelve shadow teachers.

Awareness Campaigns and Open Days

Shadow teachers mentioned that there are different awareness campaigns that educate people about different intellectual and developmental disabilities, not only in the two schools in this study, but in a large number of international schools in Egypt (Khorshed 2014). Some

international schools arrange awareness sessions by professionals in the fields of child psychology, educational psychology and mental disability specialists to acquaint mothers of children without disabilities about the differences, to be able to implement inclusive education effectively, and reduce the challenges of its early stages. One of the shadow teachers said:

> I worked in national mainstream schools for a couple of years before working as shadow teacher in an international school. The way that international schools try to integrate children with mental disabilities in all the school's activities and events is obvious and tangible. For example, "World Autism Awareness Day" is on the 2nd of April. The school, started to actually raise awareness about autism during the months of February and March last year, and the year before, and prepared for a big event on that specific day for all the parents and students to learn about it in an interesting and funny, yet informative way. But in national schools, trips, fun days, and extracurricular activities at school are usually targeting "normal" children and children with disabilities are excluded from such events.

Moreover, they emphasized that children with mental disabilities in international mainstream schools are not excluded from the school events, in class activities, and extracurricular activities. One of the shadow teachers mentioned that some international schools organize "fun days" two to three times a year at school, and they are always careful to include activities specifically for children with mental disabilities, with interesting prizes and rewards to reinforce the children being part of the event. Another shadow teacher also emphasized that the events planners of an international mainstream school used to have individual meetings with the shadow teachers of all

elementary school students with mental disabilities to design suitable activities according to the children's points of strength, to comfortably integrate the children in the school's fun activities. In the words of one of the shadow teachers:

> There were three children with mental disabilities in different elementary school grades last year who were good at mathematics. The event planner of the school organized a calculations game during the school's fun day, and the children enjoyed it very much, and also the parents of children with mental disabilities experienced real inclusion for the first time since they are used to seeing their children marginalized from the society as a whole. The look of appreciation that was very clear in their eyes was priceless.

Teachers' Cooperation and Mutuality

Class teachers and shadow teachers should assist one another in teaching students with mental disabilities and integrating them in the classroom. Rosenzweig (2009) stated that "inclusive and collaborative models are only possible when there is on-going teamwork between special and general education teachers" and ultimately "they will better support students with special needs" (p.20).

In this research study, I observed that class teachers working in international mainstream schools have more positive attitudes towards inclusive education for children with mental disabilities compared to class teachers in national mainstream schools. A number of shadow teachers in my sample attested that there are regular meetings between shadow teachers and class teachers to discuss the material, teaching plans, strategies,

activities and follow up on the student's performance with one another. Also, both teachers share thoughts about overcoming the child's weaknesses and cooperatively design techniques to build on his/her points of achievement. This way, both teachers are mutually responsible for the special needs student in the classroom; he/she is not the mere responsibility of the shadow teacher on his/her own. One of the shadow teachers elaborated:

> Not all the international schools that I worked in implement the strategy of having regular meetings between shadow teachers and class teachers, but all of them has the concept of cooperation between both teachers and room aids to have an actual conversation, and a discussion for the benefit of the special needs student, without the hassle of arguing over interference and classroom ownership that I have experienced in national mainstream schools.

Being Part of a Group

One of the main differences between inclusive classrooms in national and international mainstream schools is teachers' reinforcement to children without disabilities to accept children with disabilities. In most international schools, Shadow teachers and class teachers cooperate with one another to design in-class activities that would allow children with mental disabilities to participate. They also share in reinforcing students without disabilities to encourage students with disabilities to share in the activities. Class teachers and shadow teachers usually reward the groups that accept

children with disabilities in their teams by making the whole class applaud for them or by giving them more candy. One of the shadow teachers said:

> In-class activities are usually designed around the special needs student's points of strength in order to encourage him to participate and work on his/her social integration at the same time. We also try to make the students without disabilities eager to have the child with disability in their group. For example, I am working with a child with Down's syndrome who is very good at the "spelling bee" game, so the class teacher would say: "which lucky group will have Sarah (pseudo name) as part of the team?" to encourage the students to include her in the game. The child's feeling of being wanted by the group boosts his/her self-esteem and makes him/her perform better.

In one of the schools, teachers encourage children to deal with the special needs student by creating a chart where the she writes the names of the top five cooperative students of the week. Students who assist the child with mental disability in writing, playing, eating or performing any task, are considered "cooperative". This chart works as encouragement for students without disabilities.

Flexibility and Accommodation

The international mainstream schools in my sample implemented either British or American elementary school curricula. Children with special needs usually need accommodations in the school curricula regarding the lessons and teaching strategies (Allan 2010). In partial inclusion, students with mental disabilities do not attend all the

school lessons, they only learn what is appropriate for their mental abilities (Momberg 2008). In Egypt, most children with mental disabilities in international schools basically learn only English and Arabic. Some of them have the capability of learning mathematics as well. A fewer number learn science and social studies.

The shadow teacher, who also works with the same child in both the mainstream and special education schools, is responsible for focusing on the academic material in the latter. Shadow teachers stressed on the importance of teaching the child the lessons ahead of time, before the class teacher explains new things in order to introduce him/her to the new material respecting his/her own pace of understanding. The interaction between class teachers and shadow teachers allows the latter to set a teaching schedule depending on the class teacher's teaching plan, and to implement it weeks beforehand. That is one of the main benefits of interaction between both teachers, which according to a number of teachers, rarely exists in national mainstream schools.

There is another major difference between national and international mainstream schools. In the latter, class teachers are more accepting of doing accommodations for students with mental disabilities in the exams. One of the shadow teachers said:

I have been working with this student for three years in two different schools. The first school was a national mainstream school, and the second is international. The child has cerebral palsy, and his motor functions are impaired. In the first school, the class teacher did not allow me to write for him in the exams, although she knew he was unable to hold the pencil on his own. When his parents complained, the primary school principal asked the teacher to give him the exam orally, and the teacher insisted to do it

without my presence in the classroom. He performed badly because it was the first time for his teacher to directly communicate with him. When he changed the school, he was able to take the exams orally in my presence with the class teacher in the classroom.

Another type of accommodations for children with mental disabilities that class teachers offer is eliminating the parts in the material that are beyond the child's mental capabilities, and giving him/her a special exam paper that mainly focuses on the parts he/she is able to grasp. A number of shadow teachers mentioned that sometimes there are lessons that children with mental disabilities will find extremely challenging, even when different teaching strategies are used to simplify them, so skipping those lessons becomes the only solution in some cases. In such occasions, the shadow teacher and the class teacher contact the department's chair at school and explain to him/her their trials so he/she would permit them to give that child a special midterm with some amendments. One of the shadow teacher said:

> Sometimes the class teacher makes some amendments by removing the challenging questions from the exam and recalculating the exam grade according to the number of questions, and sometimes she replaces the challenging questions with other questions, to give all the students the same number of questions. I believe that both ways are fair.

Inclusion Outside of the Classroom

This research study revealed that mothers of children without disabilities in international mainstream schools have positive attitudes towards inclusive education,

compared to those in national mainstream schools. One of the crucial comparisons that shadow teachers made between both types of schools was the mothers' acceptance and willingness to involve children with mental disabilities in their children's social life outside of the school. A number of shadow teachers mentioned that they were invited to accompany children with special needs to attend birthday parties at home, in clubs and in different places outside the school. They also mentioned that this was never the case in national mainstream schools. One of the shadow teachers said:

> In the national school, children received invitation cards to celebrate their friends' birthday parties, but the child with disability never received one of those cards. I worked with five children with mental disabilities in different national schools, and they were never invited to birthday parties or events outside the school by their colleagues' parents. But when I started working as a shadow teacher in international schools, it was completely different. Sometimes the child is invited to the party with his parents, and sometimes I receive a card as well to accompany him. I attended a few birthday parties with the girl I am working with right now, and it makes a magnificent effect on the child to celebrate something with her colleagues outside the school. During the party, the parents were welcoming our presence very much and gave her great attention to make sure she was enjoying her time.

A few shadow teachers mentioned that not all the mothers of children without disabilities in international schools have positive attitudes towards children with mental

disabilities, but at least compared to national schools, supporters to inclusive education are greater in number. One of the shadow teachers noted:

> Of course not all the mothers of normal children in international schools have no concerns about their children being friends with special needs children. The main concern is always about safety, and this is something between all mothers who enroll their children in national or international mainstream schools. But when the safety is assured, those who enroll their children in international schools are more likely to change their minds.

CONCLUSION

Shadow Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education

This study revealed that shadow teachers in national and international mainstream schools in Egypt are supportive of inclusive education for children with mental disabilities under certain conditions. The twelve shadow teachers in the sample believed that inclusive education offers children with mental disabilities the social environment they need in order to learn social skills and interact with children their own age, and also gain an academic benefit. However, the shadow teachers mentioned some criteria in order for inclusive education to meet its main purpose of educating and integrating children with disabilities and enabling them to have their right to education. First, schools should raise awareness about the types of mental disabilities to acquaint parents and teachers with ways of dealing with and students with special needs. Second, schools should also have the needed materials and equipment to implement inclusion. There should be resource rooms for children with mental disabilities, small number of children in each

class to accommodate for having a shadow teacher accompanying each special needs student, and the flexibility to accommodate the school's academic curricula according to each student's mental capacities and type of disability (El-Ashry 2009). Third, teachers in mainstream schools should be familiar with the different types of mental disabilities and experienced in having diverse learners in the same classroom (Emam and Mohamed 2011). In addition, class teachers should have the ability to accept the existence of other teachers in the same classroom, and cooperate with them to maximize the academic and social benefits of inclusion. Moreover, teachers should be able to continuously complement and manipulate a variety of teaching strategies to fit the diverse nature of the inclusive classroom (Ganyaupfu 2013). Fourth, shadow teachers themselves should be keen on integrating children with mental disabilities with their colleagues in the mainstream school, not just focusing on the children's academic achievement. Furthermore, they should encourage the students to be independent by only aiding them to perform some tasks, not by taking the lead in doing everything for the student.

Shadow teachers mentioned that if the above criteria were not met, inclusive education would not be effective. Also, they emphasized that international rather than national mainstream schools in Egypt more closely met the criteria for successful inclusion. In a nutshell, shadow teachers in this study supported inclusion, and had positive attitudes towards the enrollment of students with mental disabilities in international mainstream schools. On the other hand, a large number of them argued that inclusion was not effectively implemented in national mainstream schools, and compounded the problem of the marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt, by marginalizing them within the inclusive setting. Therefore, shadow teachers

agreed to the implementation of inclusive education only under certain conditions, and preferred special education to national mainstream schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

Inclusion Experiences From Mothers to Professionals

INTRODUCTION

Children with mental disabilities experience high degrees of marginalization from Egyptian society as a whole, and from the educational system in particular. Disability professionals in Egypt have been trying to adopt Western inclusive education system in order to address the issue of the marginalization of children with special needs, and include them at schools, as a milestone for a broader type of inclusion. The question remains, is the way inclusive education is implemented in Egypt tackle the issue of marginalization of children with mental disabilities?

The first section of this chapter addresses the different types of mothers' reactions to having a child with a mental disability. The focus on the mother is crucial since she plays an immensely influential role in her child's life. Mothers are capable of aiding teachers and disability professionals in including their children in society, helping them develop new skills, and sustaining the efforts that special education teachers exert (Bindu 2009). Also, mothers who reject believing that their children have a mental disability, or mothers in denial, and on the opposite extreme, overprotective mothers, indirectly influence the failure of inclusive education and compound the behavioral and social problems of their children. Since mothers play a serious role in the success and failure of inclusion, there is a detailed section in this chapter addressing the types of mothers, and how disability professionals analyze their impact on their children and on the notion of inclusion.

Another part of the chapter is addressing attitudes of mothers of children with mental disabilities who enroll their children in national, international, and special education schools, towards inclusive education. Reasons behind the mothers' school preferences are examined in this chapter as well. It also focuses on the issues and difficulties that mothers face and the positive and negative outcomes of inclusion that they observe on their children. The second half of the chapter addresses the professionals' attitudes towards inclusive education in Egypt, and their opinions about whether it is a key to addressing the issue of the marginalization of children with mental disabilities, or not. Professionals in this chapter are: primary school principals in national mainstream schools, elementary school principals in international schools, founders of special education schools and activists promoting inclusive education in international NGOs in Egypt.

In this chapter, the attitudes of mothers of children with mental disabilities are addressed with the attitudes of professionals working in the field of disability and/or inclusive education since the mothers themselves have become disability professionals in a sense. Parents of children with mental disabilities play the most significant role in the child's life. A research study conducted in Cairo, Egypt revealed that a very high percentage of mothers of children with mental disabilities prefer not to work and to stay at home in order to give the child the full attention he/she needs, thus the mother is the main influencer in the child's life, since they have direct contact with their children most of the day (Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz 2011).

DISABILITY PROFESSIONALS' EXPERIENCES WITH MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES IN EGYPT

Disability professionals in my sample shared the same opinion about the significance of the mothers' role in the success or failure of the inclusion of their children. There is a large number of research studies focusing on the needs of children with mental disabilities, the struggles and obstacles they face, the services they are provided with or the ones that they lack, the different types of education they receive, the different teaching strategies they receive, and many more. But, these research studies are about the child with a mental disability. A very small number of studies have been conducted to address the psychosocial problems that parents of children with mental disabilities experience, although they are the most influential actors in the child's life (Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz 2011).

El-Kashef (2001) argued that mothers' reactions to having a child with a mental disability and the psychosocial problems they face start the moment their child is diagnosed which includes a series of different stages. Mothers' reactions to disability vary from one mother to another and last variably from a short to a life-long period of time. A number of disability professionals in Egypt agreed with El-Kashef's argument and mentioned observing mothers of children with mental disabilities passing through those stages. The denial stage was the most commonly mentioned stage. One of the founders of a special needs school said:

> Mothers of children with mental disabilities usually pass through a stage
> of denial before experiencing anger, frustration and then acceptance.
> Denying the existence of any problems with their children is the most

common thing. Signs of mental disability that are reflected in the child's behavior are usually dismissed and overseen by the parents, and surprisingly this happens even among parents of children with severe and obvious mental disabilities. You think that the parent would do anything to make sure that the child is fine, which is true, and denial is part of making sure that the child is fine! Passing the denial stage and actually believing that your child has a mental disability is the hardest stage and we see it every day with mothers from all social classes and educational levels and with all the personal differences between them, denial stays as a common factor."

Another disability professional highlighted that:

Trying to include a child with a mental disability in the society and in the educational system is a very hard process, since stigma still accompanies disability in Egypt, especially mental disabilities. Trying to include a child whose mother is in denial of the existence of a problem makes inclusion much harder. It becomes more challenging to the teachers, shadow teachers and psychologists working with the child who focus their efforts towards one goal, which is fighting the marginalization of this child from the society. But they lack a major source of support for the success of inclusion, which is the mother! How could those professionals working with the child to be able to include him in the society or at school or whatever, whereas in fact his mother is not even admitting that he has a disability, and of course this intensifies the child's issues?

Overprotection is Limiting, Not a Sign of Care

Another type of mothers' reaction to having a child with a mental disability that might impact the child's development is overprotection. Some mothers are overprotective and afraid to allow their children to achieve new skills (Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz 2011). A number of professionals in this research study mentioned that overprotection is the second most common behavior of mothers who have children with mental disabilities, after denial. The founder of a special education school explains:

We have children with mild and sometimes moderate disabilities, but we achieve well in modifying their behaviors and prepare them well enough to be mainstreamed with regular children in general education classrooms. But there are mothers who prefer to keep their children in special education classrooms to protect them from the outside world. On the other hand, there are parents who have children with more severe disabilities who do their best to have their children mainstreamed in general education schools to have a social life and make friends. I agree that children with mental disabilities suffer from discrimination and marginalization, so their parents have the right to be scared of mainstreaming them. But, being overprotective sometimes makes the child lose the chance of living a richer life and gain better social and communication skills, because his disability is not affecting him to a high extent, but his mothers' decisions and overprotection are limiting his chances.

Additionally, the chair of the inclusion program in one of the international mainstream schools in Cairo, and a disability professional in Caritas Egypt, mentioned that mothers

of children with mental disabilities are more likely to be overprotective than mothers of children without disabilities. Also, a number of general education teachers and shadow teachers reported struggling with overprotective mothers as a problem more than the main challenge of educating their children. The elementary school principal of one of the schools confirmed:

> Last year, we had only two children with mental disabilities in the second grade, and they were in different classrooms. I was dealing with two completely opposite mothers. One was really overprotective and visited my office at least once every two weeks to report a concern about her child, and the other did not even show up for the parents' meetings. I talked to the school psychologist to advise me about how to deal with both mothers. I thought they were only different personalities, but the psychologist told me something different. That mothers of children with mental disabilities sometimes are overprotective, and they want to control everything to protect their children, fearing that they would be in situations that they would not be able to handle, and others may ignore their children. They would not ignore them because they reject them, but they would detach themselves from the child's life as much as possible. Those mothers more likely depend on the shadow teacher to handle the schoolwork and only come to school if there is a major issue to be discussed.

This is in line with what Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz (2011) argued, "some parents detach themselves physically from the child, but provide adequate physical care" (p. 140).

Rejecting the child might result from feelings of helplessness that the mother might experience, or feelings of guilt towards the child for being responsible for their disability. Youssef (2003) argued that, mothers of children with mental disabilities sometimes have feelings of **rejection** towards their children because of grieving the "loss of their perfect child" and having a child with a disability instead (p. 32). One of the disability professionals working in the inclusion unit in Caritas elaborated:

> We see mothers of children with different mental disabilities resenting their children all the time. The majority of them have other healthy children. They focus their attention on the "normal" children and reject the child with the disability. They bring their children to us every day and they do not ignore educating them or taking care of them, but neither the mother nor the child are emotionally attached. We have some children here who are much more attached to their special needs teachers than they are to their mothers, which is unhealthy, but you cannot make the mother "feel" her child. This detachment makes it harder for us to implement inclusive education, although those children are in the inclusion unit. We cannot implement inclusion if the child is marginalized at home. Mothers who reject the disability of their children make inclusion nearly impossible for the child, since the basic foundation of implementing inclusion is lacking, which is sharing an inclusive and "normal" social life at home and with the close family members.

Different Forms of Denial

A number of disability professionals in Egypt gave the mothers the same categorization as El-Kashef. They mentioned that in the adjustment stage, mothers could be in a state of denial that is different from the denial stage that was mentioned above. El-Kashef argued that some mothers do not deny the existence of the mental disability, but they deny that their child (who has the mental disability) cannot perform certain tasks, so they tend to push the child very hard to achieve more. The founder of a special education school in Cairo said:

> Mothers, who "verbally" admit that their child has a mental disability and actually enroll him in a special education school, but deep inside they refuse to hear the sound of reality, struggle most. They tend to push the child so hard in order to convince themselves and prove to others that he is as capable as "normal" children. They never feel satisfied or acknowledge any improvement in their child's behavior or performance. They always want much more, which burdens the child and at the same time, they never feel satisfied because they are trying to achieve something that isn't achievable. There is a fact that their child has a mental disability, and he can be taught to do many things on his own, and he can be educated and learn do feed himself, dress himself and perform certain tasks on his own, but he would never be as independent as children without mental disabilities.

In an interview with an Egyptian child psychiatrist, she said that encouraging the child with or without a mental disability to achieve more is beneficial and helps children

to try harder to gain new skills and to learn not to give up easily. On the other hand, it is unhealthy to push the child beyond his/her limits; this would not be considered an encouragement, but a burdening pressure on the child, and a demotivator as well. Also, acknowledging children's minor achievements works as a reinforcer and encourages them to push themselves harder towards their limits, without adding unnecessary negative pressure on them.

The primary school principal of one of the mainstream schools in New Cairo reported an incident with the mother of a student with special needs who was mainstreamed into a general education classroom. She said that the mother admitted that her child had an intellectual disability and he had a shadow teacher accompanying him, but she denied the fact that there were some activities at school that the child could not participate in, and should not be pushed to perform them for his own safety. However, the mother interpreted his exclusion from those activities as "intentional exclusion" to her son from the teachers' side, and it was the principal's fault that she did not penalize the teacher. The mother knew that her son had a disability, but "she refused to believe that there were differences between her child and his colleagues. She did not deny the existence of his disability, but denied the implications of having such a disability." Dealing with mothers who have this type of denial is hard, and implementing successful inclusion for their children usually fails, even if it were successful, they would not "interpret it as successful".

The Impact of Faith, Religiosity, and Belief in Destiny on Mothers' Acceptance

A number of child disability professionals in Egypt mentioned that a large number of mothers of children with mental disabilities experience feelings of guilt towards their children. A child psychologist working with parents of children with mental disabilities, in a special education school in Cairo elaborated:

I meet the parents who come for the first time to our special needs school, and talk to them about assessments and programs that we will be using with their children, but my job is to hear their concerns and answer their questions, as they are usually parents in the phase of being shocked and lost immediately after knowing that their child has a mental disability. Feeling of guilt is very frequent. Some mothers blame themselves for holding the "genes" that caused their child's disability. Others say, maybe it is from my part of the family…all of these feelings are in the phase of searching for an understanding, an answer, the cause of the disability and then they begin to gradually accept their fate.

Some mothers of children with mental disabilities may reach the acceptance phase, which is the final stage after suffering from denial, frustration, and guilt from knowing that their child has a mental disability (Awadallah 2010). "It is only in the final stage, that of acceptance, that the parent is able to work optimally toward goals of care for this child" (Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz 2011: 140). Not all mothers reach acceptance, and the ones who reach it start to recognize the child's feelings, value and needs. Although the process of acceptance is tough and filled with pain and frustration, the child's parents "can emerge from it with a firm conviction that they are parents of a very

special child and that he is an individual worthy of respect from others and themselves"
(Youssef 2003: 45).

Disability professionals in my sample argued that religion played a crucial role in facilitating the acceptance phase for mothers of children with mental disabilities. This is in line with El-Kashef (2001), Youssef (2003), Nassef (2008), Awadallah (2010), and Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz (2011) who highlighted the role of religion in Egypt in influencing people's behavior. They argued that the lower the socioeconomic status of people, the more religion influences them, and the more they would attribute illnesses and disability to God's fate and His destiny which they are inclined to accept. Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz's study about parent's reactions to having a child with a mental disability revealed that almost 75% of parents of children with mental retardation in the sample, who accepted their child's disability, did not suffer from psychosocial problems. The parents came from a low socioeconomic background, and the authors attributed their acceptance to the strength of their religiosity and belief in God's fate. On the other hand, a large number of disability professionals, and special education school owners in my sample mentioned that the role religion played in influencing mothers' acceptance to their children's disability in Egypt was not only among those from lower socioeconomic classes, but among people from the upper social class as well. A number of disability professionals in my sample working with children with mental disabilities from upper-class families mentioned the most commonly said verses from Quran and Hadith that mothers use are:

"If Allah loves a people, then He afflicts them with trials. Whoever is patient has the reward of patience, and whoever is impatient has the fault of impatient" (Musnad Ahmad 23122)

"These shall be granted their reward twice, because they are steadfast" (Al-Qasas 28: 54)

"Whoever tries to be patient, Allah will give him patience, and no one is given a better or vaster gift than patience" (Imam Malek 7)

"Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear" (Qu'ran, *Al-Bakara* 2.286)

"Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account" (Qu'ran, *Az-Zumar* 39:10)

"Await in patience the command of your Lord…" (Qu'ran, *At-Tur* 52:48)

"And be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient" (Qu'ran, *Al-Anfal* 8:46)

"And seek assistance through patience and prayer…" (Qu'ran, *Al-Bakara* 2:45)

"Except for those who are patient and do righteous deeds; those will have forgiveness and great reward" (Qu'ran, *Hud* 11:11)

Moreover, disability professionals stressed the fact that the strong impact of religion on the acceptance of mothers of children with mental disabilities in Egypt was not only among the Muslims, but Christians as well. They asserted that the use of religion in accepting crisis and overcoming hardships was embedded in Egyptian culture, not Muslim culture per se. One of the professionals in Egypt who has been working in the field of special education for twenty years said:

In Egypt, there is no difference between Muslim and Christian mothers. I have been dealing with both for decades, and faith in God and accepting His destiny is the same among both. Christian mothers usually say "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (Thessalonians 5:18), and Muslims say a different versus from the Quran that hold the same meaning. The main thing that makes Egyptian mothers of children with disabilities, or with chronic illnesses accept their fate is their belief in God's destiny, and this is dominant among Egyptians from all social classes. When mothers reach acceptance, dealing with the child's disability becomes much easier. In the field of child disability, exerting effort with the mother is as important as the effort exerted with her child himself, as she is one of the main factors of sustaining and facilitating the success of the development we try to achieve with the child.

MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES IN EGYPT

I interviewed a total of 18 mothers of children with different mental disabilities, in special education schools, national and international mainstream schools. I also interviewed a total of 9 disability professionals; elementary and primary mainstream school principals, founder of different special education schools, and disability professionals working in NGO's. I was aiming to know the mothers' experiences and attitudes towards national and international mainstream schools in Egypt. I also wanted to know disability professionals' attitudes towards inclusion, and whether they saw it as key to addressing the issue of the marginalization of children with mental disabilities.

Patterns emerged after interviewing mothers and disability professionals, and there were some influential factors that shaped their attitudes towards inclusion.

Types of Schools and the Different Purposes for Inclusion

Educational background and class background are strongly correlated and intertwined. Socioeconomic status very much influences people's degree of education, therefore, the widely accepted argument is that people from a lower social class especially in the so called "developing world", are less likely to be aware of the new research studies and technologies due to their poor status, which would make them rigid to accepting change (El-Ashry 2009). In this research study, the economic factor of social class was not the main influential factor marking the distinction between mothers' different attitudes towards inclusion. On the other hand, mothers' level and type of education, which are among the components of class, played a significant role in formulating mothers' attitudes. The fees of national and international mainstream schools chosen in the sample, were closely related, therefore the financial factor was not of serious significance. Khorshed (2014) argued that, mothers tend to enroll their children in the same type of schools where they received their education. Mothers who graduated from national universities, were more inclined towards preferring national mainstream schools, and those who were educated abroad or in private universities preferred international schools more. One of the mainstream school principals noted:

> You might think that the main difference between mothers who prefer to
> enroll their children in national or international mainstream schools is
> social class, the affordability of the schools and mainly materialistic

reasons. But from my personal experience, mothers' level of education and type of education are the main factors influencing their type of school preferences. The majority of the children here at school are partially included in different mainstream schools, and parents more or less fall in the same socioeconomic category that is why I am saying that it is not about the money. But working mothers are different from stay-at-home moms, mothers who received national university education are different from mothers who graduated from AUC or studies abroad. Also, mothers with a master's degree, or PhD are different. It is not merely economic or at least that's my own opinion based on long personal experience.

Mothers of children with mental disabilities who enrolled their children in national and international mainstream schools viewed inclusive education differently. Mothers who enrolled their children in both types of schools believed in the benefit of inclusive education for their children, and wanted to give them their right for being educated among their typically developing peers, but the purpose of inclusion was different among both types of mothers.

The majority of mothers of children with mental disabilities in the Egyptian national mainstream schools were looking for the academic benefit of inclusion. However, mothers of children enrolled in the international school schools focused their attention on giving their children the social benefit of inclusive education, regardless of the academics. One of the mothers who enrolled her child in an international school said:

My son has autism, and he is in grade three now. I chose this school specifically to engage my son socially. He has been going to a special

education school since he was two, and still he goes part time, and he is excelling academically, but that is not what I am looking for. I wanted him to play with other children, make friends, and learn how to interact with others appropriately. This is what I wish for. I feel a million times more proud when his teacher tells me that he participated in a class activity, or played with his colleagues in the playground, than when she tells me that he did all his homework correct or got the full mark on the exam. Let's be honest, social skills are much more important than academics, without interacting with people, he will live segregated from the outside world all his life, and his father and I will keep living in a parallel universe with him. After enrolling him in this mainstream school, he is more calm when he sees people outside the school compared to how irritated he used to feel, he developed language faster and now he is actually able to make a conversation, and he barely spoke before. I can definitely see the difference in his behavior.

Another mother who enrolled her child in an international school said:

I cannot say that academics are not important, but they are not the reason why I enrolled my daughter in a mainstream school. The special education teacher focuses on the academic part in the special needs school, every day for three hours, and she also gives her extra private lessons at home twice a week to keep with the pace of the class. But I do not care about her grades or academic achievements in the mainstream school; I am always looking for a change in her behavior and social skills. The first year of

inclusion was hard on her, and she did not gain remarkable social skills, or maybe she gained them but they showed later on. But the second and third year, there was a significant change in the way she talked, dressed, and even played. She is more cheerful now, she plays with children her age, she even has friends and she attends birthdays. She would not have had this if she only went to the special education school. She would have been as good as she is now, academically or maybe better, but gained absolutely no social skills, which are more important for the child than learning English and mathematics.

Dr. Dahlia Soliman, the founder of Egyptian Autistic Society (EAS) mentioned that a large number of children at her school are partially included in mainstream schools, and parents choose the type of school according to what they want their children to get out of going to school. Also, special education teachers at EAS focus on the academics with children, and they accompany the children in mainstream classrooms to help them interact with other children their own age, but most of the parents' who choose to enroll their children in national mainstream schools are not looking for the social dimension of inclusion.

Mothers' Inclusion/Marginalization Experiences that Shape their Attitudes

Mothers of children with mental disabilities in Egypt experience different ways of treatment that might play a role in shaping their attitudes towards inclusive education. Moreover, there was a pattern that emerged after comparing mothers' experiences of enrolling their children in national and international mainstream schools in Egypt.

Inclusion experiences of their children were different. More positive attitudes were reported from mothers of children with mental disabilities in international schools, and experiences of marginality and exclusion were more among those in national mainstream schools.

Some mothers of children with mental disabilities and special education professionals in the sample mentioned that sometimes mothers experience the same degree of marginalization from the Egyptian society as their children. They specifically mentioned mothers, not parents, since mothers are mainly the primary caregivers in Egyptian households, specifically in the existence of a child with a disability (Mohamed and Abd El-Aziz 2011). Moreover, since having a child with a mental disabilities is something costly, in order to afford for their special education, mainstream education and private courses, fathers of special needs children are more likely work longer hours and spend more time outside the home (Michell 2005). The marginalization of mothers of children with mental disabilities sometimes starts from the close family members. One of the mothers recalled:

> How should I expect my child to be accepted in the society and fairly
> included, while his aunts and uncles are not including him in the family
> and not treating him as a family member? When my son turned four, my
> cousins and close friends stopped inviting us to their children's birthdays,
> Ramadan iftar, and other family events because they were always afraid
> that my son would hurt their children. He has autism and he used to bang
> his head against the wall before having behavior adjustment. He never
> actually hurt anyone, and they are his family, I would understand that

others would not want their children to play with him out of ignorance and lack of awareness, but I was not expecting this from my family and my husband's family as well. I refused when his special education teacher told me that he was ready to be included in a mainstream school. I preferred special education. It was safer for him as I knew for sure that he spent 8 hours every day with people who accepted him, understood his condition, and treated him justly. I was afraid that he would be included in a mainstream school and get bullied and discriminated against.

Another mother of a child with cerebral palsy said that her child was partially included in a national mainstream school, and the mothers of his colleagues in class avoided talking to her at parents' meetings and school events. The mother said:

I am treated as if it is my fault that my son has a mental disability. Mothers avoid me, and ignore my presence. Sometimes I hear them saying "she is 'his mother'" and they keep staring at me in parents' meetings. I talked to his class teacher before about the fact that my son is the only one in class who is never invited for birthday parties, and she responded as if it was normal. She did not try to include him with other children well, and help them accept each other. She also had problems with his shadow teacher whenever she tried to talk to other children to play with him or get to know him. This is not inclusion, but I have to keep my concerns to myself because he was rejected from four different schools, and this was the only one that accepted him, so I cannot even think about changing the

school. Every day I feel that the society is punishing us for a crime we have not committed.

Some disability professionals in Egypt shared the argument that a large number of mothers of children with mental disabilities enroll their children in mainstream schools although they know that their children would not be not fairly included, and might experience a degree of marginality. Dr. Dahlia Soliman mentioned that there are no fixed criteria or a unified model for inclusive education in all mainstream schools, each mainstream school has its own rules, thus each child with a mental disability and their parents have different inclusion experiences. Soliman added that only a very few schools in Egypt are implementing inclusion effectively, and in international schools it is more flexible since there is more awareness among teachers working in international schools and there is more flexibility in the curricula to accommodate diverse learners. A mother of a child with Down's syndrome said:

I enrolled my daughter in a special education school when she was three, and then she was ready by the age of five to be enrolled in a mainstream school. I refused because whenever I took her to the club or the supermarket, people would keep staring at us, and mothers usually forced their children to avoid playing with her in the playing area in the club. I did not want her to face this alone at school. In the special education school they kept convincing me that she had very good social skills and by refusing to enroll her in a mainstream school I am harming her. I agreed to enroll her in a national mainstream school, and my experience was not good. Teachers did not welcome her presence in the classroom and they

did not encourage other children to play with her. Also, mothers of her colleagues made me feel bad each time we met at school. She was good academically because her shadow teacher focused with her on academics in their one-to-one sessions, so I wanted her to go back to the special education school fulltime. The special education school principal convinced me to try to enroll my daughter in an international mainstream school instead. I did not want to try again because I hated seeing her unhappy every day after school. But her special education teachers convinced me to meet mothers of children with mental disabilities who enrolled their children in that international school and hear their experiences. When I met them, I was relieved to hear this from people who shared the same concerns about the marginalization of our children and the fear of bullying. I enrolled her in the international school the next year, and the same shadow teacher was accompanying her, there was a great difference between both educational systems. She goes to birthdays now, and I do not feel uncomfortable among mothers of other children. I still feel that we are treated differently and still people stare at her, but this is much less in the international school.

Age of the Mother

There are different studies arguing that the age of the mothers of children with disabilities is an influential factor in forming their attitudes towards inclusive education. Some studies found that younger mothers were more accepting of inclusive education,

and had more positive attitudes towards it (Michell 2005, Kalyve, Georigiadi and Tsakiris 2007). On the other hand, in my sample, mothers' age group varied from mid-twenties to early forties but I found there were no significant patterns distinguishing between the attitudes of younger and older mothers. This was in line with Balboni and Pedrabissi (2002), Tafa and Manolitsis (2003), De Boer, Piki and Minnaert (2010) who found out that mothers' age an insignificant factor influencing attitude formation in their studies. One of the disability professionals in Egypt observed:

> I know there are a number of studies comparing the attitudes of young and older mothers of children with disabilities towards inclusive education, their acceptance to their children's disability, but from my personal experience, I cannot say that this is applicable in the case of Egypt. Mothers' educational background is the most significant factor in shaping their attitudes towards including their children in mainstream schools. Of course mothers' degree of awareness about disabilities is also as significant, but mothers' age does not matter.

Another disability professional working in the UNICEF found:

> When I was working in the States, I saw that younger mothers of children without disabilities had more positive attitudes towards inclusive education compared to older mothers. Also, older mothers of children with mental disabilities preferred special education classes to mainstreaming their children. But, when I came to Egypt, I did not notice a gap in mothers' age affecting their opinions about enrolling their children in special or mainstream schools. The fear of bullying, and marginalization

of children with mental disabilities in mainstream schools is understandable since stigma and stereotyping mental disabilities still seriously exist in Egypt, that's why I cannot call a mother who refuses inclusive education an "overprotective" mother, and her "age" is not the influential factor here, shaping her attitude towards inclusion. However, it is the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the society that has been taking place for years.

DISABILITY PROFESSIONALS' DIFFERENT OPINIONS ABOUT INCLUSION

The elementary school principal of one of the international mainstream schools in Egypt argued that each teacher has a different inclusion experience, in every academic year, influenced by a number of significant factors. First, the teacher's personality, familiarity with special education teaching techniques, and training influence his/her attitudes towards inclusion. Second, students without disabilities in the classroom either facilitate the inclusion experience for the teacher, or complicate it. Whether they had children with mental disabilities with them in the classroom before, and whether their parents are familiar with and supportive of inclusion or not, impact their inclusion experience. One of the disability professionals agreed with Cassady (2011) that "it is unknown if the benefits of inclusion outweigh the stress it can place on a teacher and their students because each classroom is filled with unique individuals" (p. 6).

The Categorization of Inclusion Actors

Elhoweris and Alsheikh (2006) conducted a study in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) about teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. They classified teachers into the following categories according to their attitudes: Environmentalist, legalist, and conservative. The first group believed in the possibility of making the environment of the mainstream classroom in the general education schools meet the needs of diverse students without alienating or stigmatizing children with mental disabilities academically or behaviorally. The second type of teachers viewed inclusive education as a legal issue and placed importance on granting children with disabilities their right for education. They also viewed inclusive education as beneficial for both students with and without disabilities. Those two categories of teachers were supportive of inclusion. However, the last category, the conservative group had concerns about inclusive education and viewed it as "an inappropriate approach for academic, as well as social success, for all students" (p. 117). They believed that children with and without disabilities have different needs, so in order for them to receive appropriate and fair education, they should be placed in different classrooms. In line with Elhoweris and Alsheikh's categorization of teachers, professionals working with children with mental disabilities, founders of special education schools, general and special education teachers, and mothers of children with and without disabilities in this research could be classified into the legalist, environmentalist and conservative categories.

The majority of mainstream school principals and founders of special education schools, and shadow teachers in my sample fall under the legalist and environmentalist categories. They argued that mainstream education was the milestone for fighting the

issue of marginalization of children with disabilities in Egypt. Moreover, they viewed inclusion from a rights-based perspective. They believed that there should be educational reform in Egyptian schools in order to accommodate for educating diverse learners in the same classrooms. However, mothers of children without disabilities and general education teachers had different attitudes towards inclusion, some were conservative and resisted inclusion, and others were environmentalists.

Professionals' Different Views of Inclusive Education

Disability professionals in my sample shared the belief that inclusive education had social and academic benefits for both children with and without disabilities. Some of them viewed that the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools in Egypt would pave the way for wider inclusion of persons with mental disabilities in the society as a whole. Other believed that inclusive education would not be successful unless there was a change in the way Egyptians viewed, understood and dealt with mental disabilities. One of the special education professionals stated:

> I believe in the importance of inclusive education, and I support the idea
> that children with mental disabilities should not be segregated, and should
> be educated with children their own age, and socialize with them. But I
> feel that we are not ready to implement this right now. Some schools
> already started, but I think that's not "real inclusion". It should start by
> raising awareness in the whole society, trying to change the whole
> stereotypical image of mental disability, focus on educational reform and
> then start thinking about the implementation of inclusion.

Some disability professionals argued that children with mental disabilities in Egypt would not be granted their rights for education unless there is a major reform in the infrastructure of the educational system as a whole. The system should be able to educate "normal" children first, then target children with disabilities, because currently it marginalizes both types of children. This group of disability professional argued that inclusive education that is being implemented in Egypt now is not addressing the issue of the marginalization of children with mental disabilities, since there are major steps that should be taken before its implementation. First, there should be enough awareness about disabilities to be able to deal with stigma and stereotyping. Parents of children without disabilities should have the awareness that would make them accept inclusion. Second, general education teachers should have special education and inclusive education strategies as part of their basic training to be able to handle diverse learners in the same setting. Third, curricula should be adjusted. They also argued that some schools started implementing inclusion without the fundamental prerequisites that were just mentioned therefore, inclusion was not successful in them.

One of the special education schools founders said that in a large number of mainstream schools in Egypt, students with mental disabilities are only "physically" present, and for this to change, there should be a unified definition and method of implementation of inclusive education in Egypt. There should be a set of criteria that all mainstream schools follow in order to ensure the implementation of successful inclusion education. Founders of special education schools and mainstream school principals in my sample agreed with Kilanowski-Press, Foote and Rinaldo (2010), who said that:

It appears that the desire to measure and improve the quality of inclusive

special education practices has been impeded by the need to provide a common understanding of what is meant by inclusion to facilitate communication and offer a starting point from which to measure the success of inclusion efforts, (p. 44) and since there is no one model of inclusive education that suits every country's circumstances, caution must be exercised in exporting and importing a particular model. While countries can learn from others' experiences, it is important that they give due consideration to their own social-economic-political-cultural-historical singularities' (Mitchell 2005, p. 19).

The other group of disability professionals argued that if we wait for a change in the educational system, awareness to spread, and acceptance among individuals in the society, inclusion would never be implemented. Inclusive education should be the first step, and raising awareness about mental disabilities and correcting the myths and misconceptions about them should go hand in hand. One of the supporters of inclusion said:

If we waited for the time to be "right" to implement inclusion of persons with mental disabilities in the society, they would forever suffer from marginality! There is no right timing or right circumstances. People are starting to know about inclusive education in Egypt, it is not very well implemented yet, but day after day people know more about it. Raising awareness should be an ongoing process, and never stops. Disability professionals should focus on educating educators, to be able to be heard widely and reach a point where implementing successful inclusion becomes possible.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, mothers of children with mental disabilities, and disability professionals highlighted the fact that there is a difference between the ways inclusive education is defined and implemented in national and international mainstream schools in Egypt. The major differences in mothers' attitudes towards inclusive education is not a matter of differences in social classes and resources, but matters of distinction influenced by a number of factors. Mothers' educational background, influence their school choice for enrolling their children. Moreover, teachers working in national schools have different educational backgrounds compared to the ones working in international mainstream schools, which played a role in influencing the teachers' attitudes towards having diverse learners in the same classrooms. Thus, influencing the inclusion experiences of mothers of children with mental disabilities. The more accepting the teacher to inclusion, the less the special needs student is marginalized within the inclusive classroom, therefore, the more the acceptance of mothers to mainstreaming their children in general education classrooms.

Disability professionals in Egypt asserted that mothers' school preference is directly related to the mothers' educational background and purpose of including their children. Most of the mothers who enrolled their children in national mainstream schools were looking for the academic benefit of inclusion, and ignoring the social dimension. Some of them accepted the marginalization of their children within the mainstream classrooms in national schools since they had no other alternatives after their children were rejected from international mainstream schools. It is more of a resignation than an acceptance.

Disability professionals in Egypt supported the notion of inclusive education, and believed in the importance of the social benefit of inclusion to curb the marginalization of children with mental disabilities from the educational system. On the other hand, their attitudes towards inclusion was different, since some of them believed that there should be educational reform before the implementation of inclusion in Egypt, in order to be successful. Other disability professionals believe inclusive education to be the first step for introducing the Egyptian society to means of curbing the marginalization of children with mental disabilities, and it should be implemented simultaneously with educational reform.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Inclusive education became the commonly accepted trend in education in Western societies, and it is becoming to take place in Egypt. However, the inclusion experience in Egypt is different, since the educational system as a whole is in a need for major reforms in order to be efficient for students without disabilities, and to accommodate for diverse learners. Although inclusive education has been taking place in most of the Western societies for a few decades, social stigma and negative stereotypes are still tied to persons with mental disabilities. However, social stigma, discrimination and marginalization of children with mental disabilities are more severe in Egypt and the global south. The main questions raised in this research study were whether inclusive education addresses the issue of the marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt or not, and what are the different attitudes of mothers, teachers and disability professionals towards inclusion. This research was based on 67 semi-structured, in-depth interviews and patterns that emerged after interviewing mothers and teachers from different schools in Egypt that showed a distinction between private national and international mainstream schools. Inclusive education is defined differently in both types of schools, and the purpose for inclusion is different among mothers who send their children to either type of school, which makes the inclusion experience in Egypt drastically different in national and international schools.

Mothers of children without mental disabilities in national schools were less supportive to the notion of inclusion education, compared to mothers of children without disabilities in international schools. The main difference between both types of mothers

was not the economic aspect to social class, since all the schools in the sample were closely related in their tuition fees. However, mothers' educational background and type of schooling played the most significant role in choosing their children's type of school, and in forming their attitudes towards inclusive education. Most of the mothers of children without mental disabilities in national schools graduated from national schools and universities, lacked awareness about mental disabilities, which resulted in having a large number of myths and misconceptions about mental disabilities. Moreover, they encouraged their children to ignore or avoid special needs children in their classrooms, mainly because of their fear of violence. Furthermore, a number of mothers did not support mainstream education due to their concerns about children with mental disabilities being bullied and discriminated against in the inclusive classrooms. Another common concern the mothers shared was that inclusive education would not grant their children the right of having their teacher's undivided attention that they need. However, mothers of children without mental disabilities in the international schools, either studied abroad, or graduated from private universities. Additionally, all of the mothers in the sample supported inclusion and they reported observing positive impacts of inclusive education on their children's behavior. Some of the mothers witnessed that their children became more tolerant to difference, and showed more patience and understanding when dealing with children with disabilities even outside the school. In addition, mothers asserted that the schools made awareness campaigns about disabilities for the parents and teachers. Also, the schools organized different events and fun days in order to integrate children with and without mental disabilities together not only in the academic settings, but also in social gatherings and playtime.

Teachers working in national mainstream schools and international schools also had different opinions about inclusive education. Most of the teachers in the national schools showed negative attitudes towards inclusion, for a number of reasons. First, teachers lacked awareness about mental disabilities, thus they did not have the needed knowledge to teach diverse learners in the same classroom in order to make the suitable accommodations for students with mental disabilities. Second, teachers in the national schools did not study special education as part of their college education, and the schools they worked in did not offer enough training sessions for mainstreaming children with and without disabilities. Third, teachers showed negative attitudes towards having shadow teachers in their classrooms, as teachers commonly complained that they experienced feelings of "unease", "discomfort", and the sense of being watched, and having their classrooms invaded, in the presence of another teacher in the classroom. Fourth, teachers complained about the recurrent complaints and concerns they received from parents of students without disabilities in their classrooms because of the presence of a child with special needs. General education teachers in the international schools also mentioned that mothers of children without disabilities sometimes reported their concerns about their children's safety around students with autism, however, the teachers' had more positive attitudes towards inclusion compared to general education teachers in the national schools, and assured the mothers on their children's safety. One of the major distinctions between teachers in both types of schools was their relationship with shadow teachers. Although teachers in the national schools reported feelings of discomfort, teachers in international schools stressed the fact that the success of inclusive education was based on the formation of a collaborative relationship between general education and

shadow teachers, and this was also highlighted by the shadow teachers in the sample. There were factors that reinforced the formation of a wide gap between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in both types of schools. In the international schools, awareness sessions about disabilities were more frequent. Also, teachers working in the international schools had some background about mainstream education, child psychology and special education before working in an inclusive setting. Moreover, teachers highlighted that the international schools' curricula gave more room for making the needed accommodations for children with mental disabilities, compared to the Egyptian Ministry of Education's curricula followed by the national schools.

While interviewing mothers of children with mental disabilities in national and international mainstream schools, there were differences in their purposes of enrolling their children in mainstream instead of special education schools. Most of the mothers who enrolled their children in the international schools were looking for the social dimension of inclusion, and focused on academics in the special education schools. However, most of the mothers who enrolled their children with special needs in the national schools were focusing on their children's academic achievements, and were accepting of the fact that they are not socially involved at the school.

All the shadow teachers in the sample believed in the social benefit of inclusive education for children with mental disabilities. On the other hand, most of the shadow teachers emphasized that not all mainstream schools in Egypt implement inclusion properly, and reinforce the marginalization of children with mental disabilities within the inclusive setting. Shadow teachers reported that in order to implement successful inclusive education, general education teachers must work cooperatively with shadow

teachers in order to tackle the special needs children's strengths to build on them and weaknesses to strengthen them. On the contrary, shadow teachers asserted that in the national mainstream schools, cooperation between both types of teachers rarely took place, which led to the marginalization of children with mental disabilities within the inclusive classroom.

A number of disability professionals in Egypt agreed with the shadow teachers' opinions that inclusive education was mandatory for granting children with mental disabilities their rights for education, and for strengthening their social and communication skills while interacting with children without disabilities of their own age. All of the disability professionals in the sample shared the concern that the Egyptian educational system implemented in national schools was not ready for accommodating for diverse learners. Thus, they believed that major education reforms needed to take place in order to implement effective and successful mainstream education. Among those reforms, were changes in the curricula, intensive special and mainstream education for general education teachers, and raising awareness about mental disabilities in the Egyptian society in order to educate people about diversity and reinforce acceptance, thus inclusion. However, some disability professionals believed that since the Egyptian model to inclusive education was not implemented successfully in the national schools, educational reforms should take place first, before the implementation of inclusive education. Another opinion was that a number of special education schools and mainstream schools have already started raising awareness about mental disabilities and inclusion. Moreover, in Egypt, we are learning from the inclusion experiences in the international schools that some of them are implementing it successfully. Therefore,

inclusive education should take place in the national schools by adopting the international schools' successful models, while reforming Egyptian educational system simultaneously. In other words, some disability professionals believed that waiting for educational reform before implementing inclusive education in national schools would not be a successful way of tackling the issue. However, inclusion should start taking place alongside educational reforms, not afterwards.

In my opinion, Western models of inclusive education could not be applied to the Egyptian context. Some modifications need to take place before implementing inclusion in order not to marginalize children with mental disabilities. There should be a clear definition for inclusive education in the Egyptian Ministry of Education first, and there should be clear cut purposes for inclusion, whether academic, or social or both. General education teachers' training to teach diverse learners in the same setting should be part of the teachers' college education, and among their extracurricular activities. Raising awareness about mental disabilities, and the issue of marginalization of persons with disabilities should be addressed in the media, mainly television. Awareness, campaigns should take place, an example of this was "Lighting Egypt in Blue" that The Egyptian Autistic Society organized on the 2nd of April, 2016 to spread autism awareness. I believe that raising awareness about disabilities while working on the Egyptian curricula and training the teachers would facilitate the process of implementing successful inclusive education for children with disabilities. I do not believe that there is an ultimate goal that should be reached before implementing inclusion, since I believe that the educational system should be in a state of continuous structuring and restructuring and reforms. But, there should be minimum preparations before implementing inclusion, in order for it not

to be more marginalizing for children with disabilities, as it is the case in some national mainstream schools in Egypt.

I found that there might be a connection between Bourdieu's Theory of Consumer Taste Formation, and gap between the attitudes of mothers who enrolled their children in national and international schools, towards inclusive education. Taste in Bourdieu's theory refers to the consumer's preference and individualistic choice. In this theory, Bourdieu rejects the commonly accepted idea that taste is an innate choice of human intellect (Douglas and Anderson 1994). For Bourdieu, taste or the person's preference is socially conditioned and his/her specific choices reflect a social hierarchy that is constructed and maintained by the class of social dominance to enforce their distinction and distance from the rest of the classes in the society. Therefore, Bourdieu argues that taste is a "social weapon" that marks off and defines the high from the low classes in different matters, ranging from food and clothes to literature, arts and music (Douglas and Anderson 1994: 71).

After interviewing mothers of children with and without disabilities in both national and international schools, and found the differences in their attitudes towards inclusive education, I found out that there are some factors that might have influenced the formation of their attitudes. Mothers' type of education, their type of interactions and their "close societies", the neighborhoods they were living in, and their personal experiences of traveling or living abroad for some time, studying in international schools, private universities and studying abroad might have played a role in the formation of the differences in their attitudes. It is not the economic difference between the two groups that formed that gap between their preferences and attitudes, since mothers who enrolled

their children in the four schools I chose, paid high tuition fees and the schools closely fit in the same category price wise, but the difference was mainly in the socio-cultural aspect of class. Perhaps mothers who enrolled their children in international schools accepted inclusive education to be a distinctive criterion differentiating between them, and others in the society, showing that they were more aware of the commonly accepted "western" trends of education. Moreover, their acceptance to inclusive education and their imitation of the western models of education would highlight them as the "open-minded" class in the society and give them more prestige. In my opinion, further research could be done to investigate whether the concepts of "distinction" and differentiation between social classes according to people's "taste" creates a market for international schools in Egypt? In other words, do international school owners implement inclusive education and use it as a distinctive, prestigious trend to create a market for their schools? Is Bourdieu's theory adopted in marketing for international schools in Egypt?

Limitations of the Study

This research study was targeting people from one social class, the upper social class. It did not investigate the attitudes of people from different social classes towards inclusive education, which might result in different outcomes according to the type of school and people's level of education.

This study depended on in-depth interviews, which resulted in 115 hours of recorded information about people's attitudes towards inclusion. The study did not encompass all the information and patterns that emerged in the interviews. Further research should be done in order to make use of all the information gathered from the

main actors who control the success or failure of the implementation of inclusion in Egypt.

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<u>**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**</u>

Is Inclusion the Key to Addressing the Issue of Marginalization of Children with Mental Disabilities in Egypt?

<u>**Category I**</u>
1. Mothers of children without mental disabilities in a language/international school that does not allow inclusion
2. Mothers of children without mental disabilities in a mainstream school that allows inclusion
3. Mothers of children with mental disabilities enrolled in special education schools
4. Mothers of children with mental disabilities who enrolled their children in mainstream schools

<u>**Category II**</u>
1. Professionals working for children with mental disabilities in special needs schools/owners of special education schools
2. Professionals supporting inclusion in the mainstream schools/mainstream school principals

<u>**Category III**</u>
1. Teachers working for children with mental disabilities in special needs schools
2. Teachers working in mainstream schools that implement inclusion
3. Teachers working in language/international schools that do not allow inclusion

<u>**Questions to all the 10 categories**</u>
1. What is the highest educational degree that you received?
2. What type of school did you go to?
3. What neighborhood do you live in?
4. May I know your age, or age range?
5. Did you have colleagues with mental disabilities with you at school or at university?

<u>**First Category - Mothers**</u>
1. Interviewing mothers of children without disabilities in a language/international school that does not allow inclusion
1. What do you know about mental disabilities?
2. What are the most common mental disabilities that you see in children?
3. Do you have children with mental disabilities in your family or friends?
4. Have you ever had direct contact with a child with a mental disability?
5. What do you know about special education schools?
6. What do you know about mainstream schools?
7. Do you know a child with a mental disability that goes to one of the mainstream schools?
8. Why did you choose this type of school to enroll your children?

9. Do you know whether it allows inclusive education or not?
10. Do you think it is better for children with mental disabilities to be enrolled in the same classroom with children without disabilities?
11. If your children's school decided to apply inclusive education in the classrooms, would you consider enrolling them in another school?
12. According to the mother's preference, I would ask about why she chose this choice in particular. Why is it good to have diverse learners in the same classroom? OR what are your concerns if your children had colleagues with mental disabilities with them in the same classroom?
13. Please explain to me whether you are concerned that children with mental disabilities would have a negative impact on your children or not?
14. Do you think that children would discriminate against children with mental disabilities?
15. Should the school play a role in introducing children to other children who have mental disabilities?
16. (If the answer to number 15 was No, then why not? and if it were a yes, then do you think this would teach your children how to tolerate difference?)
17. Are you concerned that teachers would give more attention to children with mental disabilities and this would affect the quality of education your child is receiving?
18. (If number 17 was yes) If one-to-one tutoring was offered to children with mental disabilities, would you still be concerned that the teacher would have divided attention that might influence your child?
19. In your opinion, who benefits more from inclusive education, children with mental disabilities or children without disabilities? Why?
20. Do you know any NGO or international institute promoting for inclusive education?
21. Why do you think the number of special needs schools is increasing, although inclusive education started being accepted here in Egypt?
22. If your child decided to have a friend with a mental disability, would you be concerned about your child's safety? Or you would encourage him to be friends together?
23. Do you think tolerance to difference could be taught? If yes, then how? If no, then why?
24. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?
25. Is it different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?
26. Do you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in Egypt? How?
27. If the answer to 26 was yes, what do you think are ways to tackle the issue of their marginality?
28. Do you think that including children with mental disabilities in schools with children without disabilities a successful way of integrating them in the society?

2. Interviewing mothers of children without disabilities mainstream school that allows inclusion

1. What do you know about mental disabilities?
2. What are the most common mental disabilities that you see in children?
3. Do you have children with mental disabilities in your family or friends?
4. Have you ever had direct contact with a child with a mental disability?
5. What do you know about special education schools?
6. Did you know about mainstream schools before enrolling your children in one of them?
7. Did you specifically choose this school because it allows children with mental disabilities to be included in the same classroom with other children?
8. Where did you learn about mainstream schools?
9. Do you think it is better for children with mental disabilities to be enrolled in the same classroom with children without disabilities?
10. Why do you think it is good to have diverse learners to be in the same classroom?
11. Does your child complain about having children with mental disabilities with him in the classroom?
12. Does your child mention feeling unease or discomfort while dealing his colleagues who have mental disabilities?
13. Do you think that the mainstream school helped your child become more tolerant to difference?
14. Does this type of school help your child deal with persons with disabilities with ease even outside the school?
15. Did your child ever mention being afraid of any of the children with mental disabilities? If yes, how did you feel about this? Did you consider changing schools?
16. Do you sometimes have concerns that children with mental disabilities would have a negative impact on your children?
17. Do you sometimes witness or think that other children would discriminate against children with mental disabilities in the classroom?
18. Did you ever have concerns about the teacher's attention with children with disabilities in the classroom and how it would affect the quality of education your child is receiving?
19. Does the school offer total inclusion or partial inclusion?
20. Is one-to-one tutoring offered?
21. If yes, would you accept inclusion if one-to-one tutoring was not offered?
22. In your opinion, who benefits more from inclusive education, children with mental disabilities or children without disabilities? Why?
23. Was there a situation outside school where your child showed a high degree of tolerance to difference?
24. Why do you think the number of special needs schools is increasing, although inclusive education started being accepted here in Egypt?
25. Does your child have a close fiend from school with mental disability?
26. Do you encourage your child to talk to and be friends with his/her colleagues who have a mental disability?
27. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?

28. Is tolerance to different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?
29. Do you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in Egypt? How?
30. If the answer to 29 was yes, what do you think are ways to tackle the issue of their marginality?
31. Do you think that including children with mental disabilities in schools with children without disabilities a successful way of integrating them in the society?

3. Interviewing mothers of children with mental disabilities enrolled in special education schools

1. What type of mental disability does your child have?
2. Why did you choose special education?
3. Is special needs school only part of your child's education, or the main one?
4. If it is a part of it, what is the other part? Are they integrated with other children even for a few hours during the week?
5. Did you try to enroll your child in a mainstream school?
6. If yes, then why didn't s/he go? If No, then why haven't you tried?
7. Did you find it difficult to enroll your child in a school? If yes, what were the hardships that you faced?
8. Do you think it is better for your child or for children with mental disabilities in general to be enrolled in the same classroom with other children?
9. If you have a chance to enroll your child in a mainstream school, what would be your concerns?
10. Do you feel that your child is being treated fairly in school (or getting as good of education compared to children without disabilities?
11. If No, what are the reasons for this inequality in your point of view?
12. Do you believe that special education is good enough for your child?
13. Does your child mention feelings of discrimination against him/her?
14. Do you feel that your child's life would have been easier even with the existence of his/her disability if people were more tolerant to difference in Egypt?
15. Do you feel that the Egyptian culture supports tolerance and acceptance to difference or not? In what way?
16. Do you think that children with mental disabilities are viewed differently in Cairo than they are in Lower and Upper Egypt? How?
17. Do you think that children without disabilities should learn how to deal with and tolerate children with mental disabilities at school or at home?
18. Do you try to integrate your child with other children? Where?
19. If you were to enroll your child in a mainstream school, would you be concerned that the teacher would have divided attention?
20. Why do you think the number of special needs schools is increasing, although inclusive education started being accepted here in Egypt?
21. Do you encourage your child to talk to and be friends with other children who do not have a mental disability?
22. Do you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in Egypt? How?

23. If the answer to 22 was yes, what do you think are ways to tackle the issue of their marginality?
24. In your opinion, does including children with mental disabilities in schools with children without disabilities a successful way of integrating them in the society?

4. Interviewing mothers of children with disabilities who enrolled their children in mainstream schools

1. What type of mental disability does your child have?
2. Why did you choose mainstream school for your child?
3. Is this his/her first school or did you try special needs school first?
4. Is s/he receiving one-to-one tutoring at the mainstream school?
5. Why do you prefer mainstream schools to special needs?
6. Where did you learn about mainstream schools?
7. Did you find it difficult to enroll your child in a school? If yes, what were the hardships that you faced?
8. Do you think it is better for children with mental disabilities to be enrolled in the same classroom with children without disabilities?
9. Why do you think it is good to have diverse learners to be in the same classroom?
10. Does your child mention feeling unease or discomfort while dealing his colleagues at school?
11. Do you think that the mainstream school helped your child become more sociable and outgoing?
12. Does this type of school help your child deal with others without disabilities outside of school with ease?
13. Did your child ever mention being afraid of other children? If yes, how did you feel about this? Did you consider changing schools?
14. Did he/she ever complain of having trouble in communicating with colleagues and/or teachers?
15. Do you have concerns regarding inclusion? What are they?
16. Do you sometimes witness or think that other children would discriminate against children with mental disabilities in the classroom?
17. In your opinion, who benefits more from inclusive education, children with mental disabilities or children without disabilities? Why?
18. Do you feel that your child is being treated fairly in school (or getting as good of education compared to children without disabilities?
19. Why do you think the number of special needs schools is increasing, although inclusive education started being accepted here in Egypt?
20. Does your child have a close friend from school without a mental disability?
21. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?
22. Is tolerance to different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?
23. Do you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in Egypt? How?
24. If the answer to the last question was yes, what do you think are ways to tackle the issue of their marginality?

25. Do you think that including children with mental disabilities in schools with children without disabilities a successful way of integrating them in the society?

2ⁿᵈ Category – Professionals
1. Interviewing professionals who work with children with mental disabilities in special needs schools/owners of special needs schools.
1. What types of mental disabilities is this school specialized in?
2. What is the most common mental disability that you always encounter here?
3. Why did you choose to open or work for a special needs school?
4. Do you have children with mental disabilities in your family or friends?
5. Have you ever had direct contact with a child with a mental disability?
6. Do you prefer special education to mainstream education (inclusion)? If yes or no, explain the reasons please.
7. Is your school contracting with a mainstream school to share in partial inclusion teaching techniques? Why?
8. Is your school contracting with specific sports clubs in order to integrate children with mental disabilities with other children without mental disabilities?
9. Do you believe that children with mental disabilities benefit more when they are in the same classroom with children who share their same type of disability?
10. Is having diverse learners in the classroom confusing to children with disabilities or children without disabilities or both with varying degrees? Please explain.
11. Please explain to me if some children need special education as part of their learning process and then they join mainstream schools later on?
12. Please explain to me whether you think that children without disabilities would have a negative psychological impact on children with mental disabilities if they joined the same classroom or same sports team or not?
13. Please explain to me whether you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in the Egyptian society or not? How?
14. What are the differences between the exclusion of children with mental disabilities from the society and their marginality, if there is a difference? Please explain
15. Would inclusion of children with mental disabilities in the same classroom with students without disabilities tackle this issue of their marginality or exclusion or both or neither? Please explain
16. What are the reasons behind the marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
17. What are the reasons behind the exclusion of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
18. Why do you think the number of special education schools is increasing although the world is now calling for inclusion?
19. Do you believe that inclusion is becoming something "politically correct"?
20. Please explain to me whether you think tolerance to difference could be taught to children and adults or not
21. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?

22. Is it different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are those differences?

2. Professionals supporting inclusion in the mainstream schools/mainstream school principals
1. Is inclusion newly implemented in this school?
2. Why did you implement inclusion?
3. Who works with children with mental disabilities in the school?
4. Is there total or partial inclusion here?
5. In the case of partial inclusion if applicable, do you refer the students to special education schools or do you have special needs classes here?
6. What are the types of mental disabilities that are allowed to be included in mainstream classrooms here?
7. What is the most common mental disability that you always encounter here?
8. Do you have children with mental disabilities in your family or friends? Did this influence your decision to implement inclusion?
9. What do you think of special education?
10. In what cases do you recommend special needs schools?
11. How do you facilitate the process of integration of children with and without disabilities together in the early stages?
12. Who do you think benefits more from inclusion, children with or without disabilities?
13. Is having diverse learners in the classroom confusing to children with disabilities or children without disabilities or both with varying degrees? Please explain.
14. Please explain to me whether you think that children without disabilities would have a negative psychological impact on children with mental disabilities if they joined the same classroom?
15. What are the most commonly reported concerns from parents of children with disabilities about inclusion?
16. What are the most commonly reported concerns from parents of children without disabilities?
17. Please explain to me whether you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in the Egyptian society or not? How?
18. What are the differences between the exclusion of children with mental disabilities from the society and their marginality, if there is a difference? Please explain.
19. Would inclusion of children with mental disabilities in the same classroom with students without disabilities tackle this issue of their marginality or exclusion or both or neither? Please explain
20. What are the reasons behind the marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
21. What are the reasons behind the exclusion of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
22. Why do you think the number of special education schools is increasing although the world is now calling for inclusion?
23. Do you believe that inclusion is becoming something "politically correct"?

24. Please explain to me whether you think tolerance to difference could be taught to children and adults or not.
25. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?
26. Is it different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?

Third Category – Teachers
1. Teachers working with children with mental disabilities in special needs schools (special education)

1. What is the highest degree of education that you received?
2. What type of school did you attend?
3. Can I know your age? Or even age range?
4. What types of mental disabilities is this school specialized in?
5. What is the most common mental disability that you always encounter here?
6. Why did you choose to work for a special needs school? OR Why did you specialize in special education?
7. What did you study in order to be a special needs qualified teacher?
8. Do you have children with mental disabilities in your family or friends?
9. Have you ever had direct contact with a child with a mental disability before working here?
10. Do you prefer special education to mainstream education (inclusion)? If yes or no, explain the reasons please.
11. Is your school contracting with a mainstream school to share in partial inclusion teaching techniques? Why?
12. Did you need to have extra-curricular courses and trainings in order to be able to deal with children with mental disabilities?
13. When you graduated to be a teacher, did you already have the needed knowledge to teach diverse learners? Or was the focus on specifically "normal" children?
14. What are the resources that the teacher needs in order to be able to teach diverse learners?
15. What are the needed resources that the school needs in order to have diverse learners in the same classroom?
16. In your opinion, is the lack of resources in Egyptian public schools the main factor in the unavailability of the process of inclusion?
17. Is your school contracting with specific sports clubs in order to integrate children with mental disabilities with other children without mental disabilities?
18. Do you believe that children with mental disabilities benefit more when they are in the same classroom with children who share their same type of disability?
19. Is having diverse learners in the classroom confusing to children with disabilities or children without disabilities or both with varying degrees? Please explain.
20. Please explain to me if some children need special education as part of their learning process and then they join mainstream schools later on?
21. Please explain to me whether you think that children without disabilities would have a negative psychological impact on children with mental disabilities if they joined the same classroom or same sports team or not?

22. Please explain to me whether you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in the Egyptian society or not? How?
23. What are the differences between the exclusion of children with mental disabilities from the society and their marginality, if there is a difference? Please explain.
24. Would inclusion of children with mental disabilities in the same classroom with students without disabilities tackle this issue of their marginality or exclusion or both or neither? Please explain
25. What are the reasons behind the marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
26. What are the reasons behind the exclusion of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
27. Why do you think the number of special education schools is increasing although the world is now calling for inclusion?
28. Please explain to me whether you think tolerance to difference could be taught to children and adults or not
29. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?
30. Is it different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?

2. Teachers working in mainstream schools that implement inclusion

1. What is the highest degree of education that you received?
2. What type of school did you attend?
3. Can I know your age? Or even age range?
4. Is inclusion newly implemented in this school?
5. Were you working here before inclusion was implemented? If yes, how did you feel when they told you that you were going to have diverse learners in the your classroom?
6. Is there total or partial inclusion here?
7. In the case of partial inclusion if applicable, do you refer the students to special education schools or do you have special needs classes here?
8. What are the types of mental disabilities that are allowed to be included in mainstream classrooms here?
9. Did you need to have extra-curricular courses and trainings in order to be able to deal with children with mental disabilities?
10. When you graduated to be a teacher, did you already have the needed knowledge to teach diverse learners? Or was the focus on specifically "normal" children?
11. What are the resources that the teacher needs in order to be able to teach diverse learners?
12. What are the needed resources that the school needs in order to have diverse learners in the same classroom?
13. In your opinion, is the lack of resources in public Egyptian schools the main factor in the unavailability of the process of inclusion?
14. What did you study in order to be a qualified teacher to have diverse learners in your classroom?

15. What is the most common mental disability that you always encounter here?
16. Do you have children with mental disabilities in your family or friends? Did this influence your decision to work with diverse learners?
17. What do you think of special education?
18. In what cases do you recommend special needs schools?
19. How do you facilitate the process of integration of children with and without disabilities together in the early stages?
20. Who do you think benefits more from inclusion, children with or without disabilities?
21. Is having diverse learners in the classroom confusing to children with disabilities or children without disabilities or both with varying degrees? Please explain.
22. Please explain to me whether you think that children without disabilities would have a negative psychological impact on children with mental disabilities if they joined the same classroom?
23. What are the most commonly reported concerns from parents of children with disabilities about inclusion?
24. What are the most commonly reported concerns from parents of children without disabilities?
25. Please explain to me whether you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in the Egyptian society or not? How?
26. What are the differences between the exclusion of children with mental disabilities from the society and their marginality, if there is a difference? Please explain.
27. Would inclusion of children with mental disabilities in the same classroom with students without disabilities tackle this issue of their marginality or exclusion or both or neither? Please explain
28. What are the reasons behind the marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
29. What are the reasons behind the exclusion of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
30. Why do you think the number of special education schools is increasing although the world is now calling for inclusion?
31. Do you believe that inclusion is becoming something "politically correct"?
32. Please explain to me whether you think tolerance to difference could be taught to children and adults or not
33. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?
34. Is it different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?

3. Teachers working in language/international schools that do not allow inclusion
1. What is the highest degree of education that you received?
2. What type of school did you attend?
3. Can I know your age? Or even age range?
4. What do you know about mental disabilities?
5. What are the most common mental disabilities that you see in children?

6. Do you have children with mental disabilities in your family or friends?
7. Have you ever had direct contact with a child with a mental disability?
8. What do you know about special education schools?
9. Do you know what is a mainstream school?
10. Do you know a child with a mental disability that goes to one of the mainstream schools?
11. Why did you choose to work in a school that does not allow inclusion?
12. When you graduated to be a teacher, did you already have the needed knowledge to teach diverse learners? Or was the focus on specifically "normal" children?
13. What are the resources that the teacher needs in order to be able to teach diverse learners?
14. What are the needed resources that the school needs in order to have diverse learners in the same classroom?
15. In your opinion, is the lack of resources in public Egyptian schools the main factor in the unavailability of inclusion?
16. Do you think it is better for children with mental disabilities to be enrolled in the same classroom with children who share their same type of mental disability?
17. If your school decided to apply inclusive education in the classrooms, would you accept having diverse learners in your classroom? Why, why not? What are your concerns?
18. Should the school play a role in introducing children to other children who have mental disabilities?
19. In your opinion, who benefits more from inclusive education, children with mental disabilities or children without disabilities? Why?
20. Do you know any NGO or international institute promoting for inclusive education?
21. Why do you think the number of special needs schools is increasing, although inclusive education started being accepted here in Egypt?
22. Do you think tolerance to difference could be taught? If yes, then how? If no, then why?
23. Please explain to me whether you think children with mental disabilities are marginalized in the Egyptian society or not? How?
24. Is it different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?
25. Do you think are ways to tackle the issue of their marginality?
26. What are the differences between the exclusion of children with mental disabilities from the society and their marginality, if there is a difference? Please explain.
27. Would inclusion of children with mental disabilities in the same classroom with students without disabilities tackle this issue of their marginality or exclusion or both or neither? Please explain
28. What are the reasons behind the marginalization of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
29. What are the reasons behind the exclusion of children with mental disabilities in Egypt?
30. Why do you think the number of special education schools is increasing although the world is now calling for inclusion?

31. Please explain to me whether you think tolerance to difference could be taught to children and adults or not. How?
32. Do you think that the Egyptian culture encourages people to accept difference (including persons with disabilities) or not? How?
33. Is it different here in the Cairo than in Upper and Lower Egypt? If yes, then what are the differences?