

**An exploratory study on educating learners with ASD in primary
inclusive setting in Saudi Arabia, issues, attitudes, and challenges**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to facilitate the development and understanding of inclusive education for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Saudi Arabia. The study is located within Riyadh, a city in Saudi Arabia. The culture and religion of Saudi society are central themes in this study. ASD is a complex disorder due to its characteristics, which include a lack of social skills, communication difficulties, and behaviour problems. A range of qualitative methods were adopted; interviews with twenty general education teachers (GT) and special education teachers (SET) as well as participant observation in five schools. The research seeks to identify the attitudes and practices of primary school teachers in terms of their support for children in mainstream schools. The study shows that teachers are mostly supportive and have positive attitudes toward the inclusive education of learners with ASD. The study shows barriers to inclusive education, for example, lack of time, overcrowded classrooms, curriculum, attitudes, lack of training, teaching methods and school environments and the extent to which mainstream school buildings and classrooms are suitable for inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in general and, more specifically, for students with ASD. Another factor that emerged from the study to support inclusive education was peer tutoring. All the teachers involved in the study are qualified in education but they need additional training and knowledge about inclusion and ASD. Finally, the study provides some practical recommendations as well as some ideas for future research and other activities.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Research paper entitled 'Is there a relationship between the training and experience of teachers in Saudi Arabia and the ability to improve the education of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder?' in Saudi Scientific International Conference October 2012, Brunel University, United Kingdom.
- Research paper entitled “Inclusive education in Saudi Arabia: cross-cultural perspective on the effect of culture and society towards inclusive education in schools.” in Saudi Scientific International Conference February 2014, Edinburgh, United Kingdom.
- Poster paper entitled “the effects of using peer tutoring to promote access of students with autism to inclusive education in Saudi Arabia” in Saudi Scientific International Conference February 2014, Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASD Autism spectrum disorder

CDSI Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information

DSEN Department of Special Education Needs

DEES Department for Education and Skills

EFA Education for All

F Female

GT General Teacher

IQ Intelligence Quotient

M Male

MoE Ministry of Education

PT Peer Tutoring

SEN Special educational needs

SET Special education teacher

UN United Nations

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The first chapter sets out the thesis outline, as well as highlighting the main issues; this includes a rationale for doing the study as well as aims of the study followed by the research questions. The concept of disability in Saudi Arabia is explored and situated within a social, cultural, political, historical as well as a medical context. The chapter will discuss philosophical approaches that inform this study and which provide the basis for the methods used to conduct this research. The introduction includes a personal account of the researcher's position within the thesis. Finally, the chapter concludes with the structure of the thesis overall.

There are a few publications on inclusive education in the context of the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East (Gaad, 2011; Alkhateeb et al., 2016). No other studies on aspects of teaching and learning for children with Autism Syndrome Disorder (ASD) have yet investigated inclusive education in the Saudi context. The commitment of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to implement inclusive education encouraged an assessment of existing provisions and the possibility of introducing new approaches as a contribution to the growth of inclusive education in Saudi Arabia.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this study is that in Saudi Arabia there are around 515 students with ASD in SEN special schools and mainstream schools ([Ministry of Education, 2007] cited in Al Mousa, 2014, p. 13). Furthermore, other students with ASD are in private institutes at a high cost of about 30,000 SR (7000 GBP) per year to each student, and there are other children with ASD on a waiting list to join programmes and benefit from these services (Beheiri,

2004). There are 22 programmes for the inclusion of students with ASD in Saudi Arabia (Alhaznawi, 2010). According to the mainstream education statistics, the number of students with ASD outside of inclusive education is more than the number of students with ASD being educated in public schools in Saudi Arabia. Many students with ASD do not have the right to enter public schools, as some schools reject them because they do not have trained staff or teachers or suitable curricula, and face a negative attitude from students and parents. Schools that have head teachers and teachers with this negative view of students with ASD can affect whether such students are included. In 1996, the MoE in Saudi Arabia introduced a legal process and policies to help ensure that all students with disabilities are included in mainstream schools as soon as is practicable (Almgloth, 1999; Abdullah, 2001; Alrwsan, 2006).

In Saudi Arabia, the number of schools with pupils that have a primary special education need related to ASD increased from three inclusive settings in 1998 to 52 in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008). Some students with ASD attend mainstream schools, and others attend special needs schools (Ministry of Education, 2008). This highlights the need to evaluate the evidence base in order to identify best practice in the education of children with ASD in special and mainstream settings. Several researchers have identified how students with developmental disorders, including students with ASD, have impacted on learning and education in mainstream schools (Kasari et al., 1999).

The number of children with SEN, particularly students with ASD, entering ministry schools has been increasing, supported with special education services in classrooms (McLeskey et al., 1999). Saudi Arabia has an increasing number of students with ASD who are able to enter public schools in different regions in the country (MoE, 2010). Therefore, general teachers

and SEN teachers are facing many challenges in offering support to students with ASD in inclusive classrooms, who were historically provided for in different educational settings (Hastings and Oakford, 2003). The recent inclusion of students with ASD is of interest to the MoE in Saudi Arabia. Many schools followed the plan of the Secretariat for Special Education in activating the role of public schools based on the principle of equality, and see the public school as a suitable place for an educational system to be established for all students in order to eliminate the problems, difficulties or issues that students with ASD might have, and for them to be included without prejudice.

1.3 Inclusive Education – Global and National

Although the focus is on Saudi Arabia, inclusive education is a global concept. In 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held the Salamanca World Conference and reached an agreement that education is for all, regardless of differences (UNESCO, 1995; Florian, 1998a). This new conceptualisation suggested inclusive education as an approach, where SEN children share classes with other children in state schools. UNESCO (1994) stated that:

- Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,
- Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,
- Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,
- Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,
- Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving

education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

(UNESCO, 1994, p. viii-ix).

In the past century, children defined as having SEN were isolated from society because they were thought to be different (Winzer, 1993). It was strongly believed that some children could not be educated (Bickel, 1998). In some countries, responsibility for health or social welfare did not lie with the Ministry of Education (Booth and Ainscow, 1998).

Recently, views on the exclusion of students with disabilities have changed around the world (Cigman, 2007), following the UNESCO statement at the Salamanca World Conference in 1994, where countries reached an agreement that all children have the right to be educated, despite their differences (Florian, 1998b). Therefore, inclusive education was suggested as a new approach, whereby all children are educated in the same class as their peers regardless of differences between students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities (Hornby, 2003).

According to the Salamanca Statement that was issued after the conference: “the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes is building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix). Moreover, in 1997, a Green Paper entitled “Excellence for All Children Meeting Special Educational Needs” introduced by the Labour government in the UK gave public support to the Salamanca Statement, which implied expanding mainstream schools to accommodate a wide range of needs. In 2001, an improvement policy was introduced by the same government through the SEN and Disability Act to enhance the education environment. This was followed by the SEN strategy “Remove

Barriers” in 2004 for 1.5 million children categorised with SEN (House of Commons Education and Skills select Committee, 2006).

The new approach recognises that children with ASD need educational interventions that are constructed from an understanding of their circumstances, together with knowledge and understanding of the individual child’s needs (National Research Council, 2001). Moreover, about 75% of students with ASD will face additional learning difficulties, although those with high levels of intelligence might be able to coexist in a particular class setting; for example, a class related to maths or engineering (Park and Chitiyo, 2009). There are different degrees of ASD severity, although there is no correlation between degrees of severity and intelligence levels, at least in the early years (Kasari et al., 1999).

Education of children with ASD should entail teaching them as individuals, as their needs vary and they have as many general learning needs as other children in the class. The teacher should use these needs and differences as a way of understanding how a child is behaving and how they can be assisted and supported, which would not be easily achieved as a result of high-quality practices or general understanding based on personal and professional experience (National Research Council, 2001). It is common for children with ASD to attend educational/recreational programmes and care facilities in Saudi Arabia based on an incorrect diagnosis (Shamey, 2001). In contrast, the UK, Canada, USA and Australia have a long history of inclusive education for children with ASD. These countries have the largest evidence base and resources to educate children with autism in mainstream schools. Recently, many developing countries have moved towards more inclusive education in their education systems. These include Egypt, India, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, Lesotho, Uganda, Vietnam, Yemen and of course Saudi Arabia (UNESCO, 2001; Mittler, 2002).

What is so interesting about the Saudi case is that the segregation between males and females in education, and also in the community generally, has had a deep impact on the structure of the concept of inclusivity in Saudi Arabia. One of the important features that strongly influence culture and social life, including education systems in Saudi Arabia, is the segregation of genders. This segregation has influenced teachers physically, socially and psychologically. For example, in girls' schools due to limitations on the role and function of women in Saudi society female teachers are less available and not so accessible for consultation, support and advice.

Gender in Saudi Arabia has been widely debated though without taking into account the unique cultural history of Saudi Arabia's society by some researchers. Hence, Islamic religion, and the fact that Saudi society is governed by conservative regulations and rules, creates a cultural impact that affects all aspects of Saudi life (Lipsky and Harris, 1959; Murphy, 2011). In other words, cultural impact is one of the main factors affecting inclusion in Saudi society. The unique interaction between inclusive education policies and segregation in society opens the debate to many unanswered questions. Nevertheless, the nature of Saudi culture, which is shaped by religion and tribal values, shows that segregation in the education system between young male and female learners can be still be considered to fall within the parameters of inclusive educational practices.

1.4 Focus of the Research

The main focus of this research is inclusive education for ASD. Inclusive education provides and constructs equal opportunities in order to give a better-quality educational environment for students and hence "to create a better quality of life for all our students to bring them to a society that accepts difference" (Specht, 2013, p. 45).

The government of Saudi Arabia has developed an inclusive Education for All (EFA) policy, for all schools in the Kingdom (MoE, 2006). The overarching goal is to provide EFA over a 20 years period, to include all students with disabilities within public schools and reduce the number of special needs schools across the country (Ministry of Education, 2010). Inclusive education has increased through a growing number of learner support programmes, although the difficulty in implementing such a programme can not be underestimated: “when the subject of inclusive education is introduced one cannot help thinking of its demands and all it calls for, it seems like raising an umbrella against a storm” (Charema, 2010, p. 87). In inclusive school environments, teachers and students of typical developmental ability might be expected to foster awareness, understanding and acceptance of students with SEN (Diamond, 2001). However, enrolling SEN students in inclusive classrooms does not always guarantee that teachers will understand and accept these students’ disabilities in the school community (Nikolarazi et al., 2005).

The movement towards EFA in Saudi Arabia’s schools has increased the number of students with a disability accessing mainstream primary schools. This movement has had a number of impacts on the schools, making them more ethnically diverse and bringing in a variety of disabilities and a range of social and educational backgrounds. However, secondary schools have been slow to catch up with this movement to include more disabled students, in contrast to primary and intermediate schools (Alkhashrami, 2003).

Changes in society are reflected by changes within the educational system; education and society are associated with each other and cannot be separated: “schools are a microcosm of a macro-society ... reflecting and shaping cultural values and norms” (Connor, 2013, p. 121).

Booth and Ainscow (1998) explored cultural and political contexts related to the inclusion/exclusion process. Ainscow (1998) argued that focusing on disability in education allows for “alternative ways of looking at the phenomena of educational difficulty based on a different sets of assumptions that lead to different explanations, different frames of reference and different kinds of questions to be addressed” (p.8). Identifying teachers’ beliefs about the drivers, barriers and factors associated with the development of inclusive classroom practices is an important step in understanding how the policy of inclusive education can be implemented. This study explores the attempt to include inclusive education in Saudi Arabian schools in the context of socio-cultural issues in Saudi Arabia, which differ from those of Western cultures. The role of culture is very important in improving and supporting inclusive education. The change towards a more progressive culture helps to build a more inclusive society and change negative attitudes.

Peer tutoring (PT) is a common approach to teaching students, and has been used in schools to include students with ASD (Gena, 2006; Laghi et al., 2015; Whalon et al., 2015). These shifts in the education system have implications for teaching and learning processes as well, alongside developments such as inclusive pedagogies. PT has emerged as a significant strategy for inclusive education. It is by no means the only approach, but it does take into account the ways in which students learn, rather than being based on myths regarding the way students should learn (Mitchell 2008). Most studies on the efficiency of PT and inclusive education have been carried out in Western countries and cultures (e.g. Tudge, 1990; Kamps et al., 1994; Kamps et al., 1997; Carter and Kennedy, 2006; Gena, 2006; Harper et al., 2008), yet they have not focused on ASD. This research provides a necessary exploration of PT in a Muslim majority country using qualitative methodologies, interviews and open observations.

1.5 Significance of the Study in Relation to Saudi Arabia

Inclusive education in Saudi Arabia is still being implemented in schools, and no other studies concerning theoretical understanding of the growth of inclusion policies and practice in Saudi Arabia are available to date. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous studies have explored inclusive education in Saudi Arabia using a qualitative approach to gather data. Since the MoE is committed to implementing inclusive education, this is a good opportunity to evaluate the drivers of educational inclusivity. The research was motivated by a desire to evaluate existing terms and practices of implementing new approaches in Saudi Arabia, in order to improve inclusive education practices.

A recent UNESCO (2015) report on Education for All Global Monitoring highlighted that there are around 58 million children out of school around the world and double this number of children who will not be able to finish their primary education despite improvements to education systems around the world. Also, the report points out that the poorest children are ‘‘ four times more likely not to go to school than the world's richest children, and five times more likely not to complete primary school’ (p. ii). The report concludes that inequality in education has risen mostly among the disadvantaged, poor people and people with SEN. Another OECD (2012) report stated that almost one in five children do not reach a required level of skill to support living in society. Moreover, students from poverty backgrounds are more likely to be a low performer, which suggests that social and personal conditions are barriers to achieving educational expectations. Ainscow (2016) argues that ‘‘ the major challenge facing education systems around the world ... [is]... that of achieving equity’’ (p.2).

Ainscow (2016) argues for the importance of making a link between the inclusion of learners with SEN and equity. Establishing rights for learners in terms of, fairness and justice helps to

transform education for the benefit of all learners within the school, as well as between-and beyond-schools. This can be done by creating an individual school development plan. Equity is a complex issue that varies from school to school. Ainscow (2016) suggests that equity issues arise in three main areas in education;

- Within school factors that require understanding of diversity in terms of achievement, gender, ethnicity, social background, cooperative teaching approaches and facilities
- Between school factors including access to opportunities, as well as the possibility for collaborations
- Beyond schools factors such as demographics, policy, economics, cultures, histories and local conditions.

Saudi Arabia has been a leader in the Middle East on the issue of learning inclusion, being the first country in the region to implement mainstreaming into schools (UNESCO, 2010). As a UNESCO report (2010) stated the Saudi response has been based on the aim to encourage positive attitudes towards persons with SEN in a cost effective manner and by the MoE developing effective regulations to promote inclusive education in schools. There is recognition in Saudi policies for inclusive education and the significance of the role of the teacher (MoE, 2015).

1.6 Medical and Other Models

As well as cultural issues, an important aspect of this study is the way in which disability is perceived through different models: social, medical, bio-psychosocial and human rights models. The social model of disabilities identifies people with impairments as disabled in terms of the social context (Oliver, 1990). It arose in response to critiques of the medical

model of disability (Hughes and Paterson, 1997). In contrast, the medical model is based on a concept of “normality”, and is loaded with scientific implications (Hughes and Paterson, 1997). The ambition to include all students, even those with special needs, regardless of the severity of the disability, in one ordinary school system, may not be realised unless people understand the dissimilarities between the medical and social models of disability (Ainscow, 2005). The bio-psychosocial model is concerned with three important elements to understand disability: biological, psychological and social (Engel 1977; Waddell 2002). The human rights model is based on cultural citizenship; this concept means full inclusion into a group with the capability to influence and having an important voice in crucial decisions (Rosaldo, 1994). The medical model tends to be the most predominant and is supported by the diagnostic history of ASD, which will be explored later in this thesis. These models will be explored in further details in Chapter Three.

1.7 Researcher’s Role, Position and Experience

The main reason for this study relates to the researcher’s own background as a former SEN teacher, who specialised in educating students with ASD and behavioural and emotional disorders. The researcher’s own experience of teaching in this context was that some teachers did not believe in their SEN students’ ability to learn and some of them even felt these students were incapable of daily independent activities such as eating, cleaning and so forth. When the researcher started teaching children with disabilities, significant improvements were made in terms of their academic skills, which reinforced the researcher’s belief that such students can be educated using the same teaching strategies as those used for students without disabilities. Furthermore, the researcher’s professional background provides the experience needed to carry out this kind of research, as the researcher has developed an

enthusiastic interest in the area of inclusive and special education, which has been a challenge in education and for educators to develop education for all (Ainscow, 1999). The researcher did a Masters on Inclusion Studies, carrying out research in a UK school which used inclusion practices.

1.8 Research Aims and Questions

1.8.1 Research Aims

This thesis explores teachers' views about the concept of inclusive education in a Saudi Arabian context in schools, and includes students with ASD, as well as exploring the main drivers and barriers to inclusive education. The research aims to understand, through a phenomenological exploration, teachers' attitudes and views concerning the nature of inclusion in Saudi Arabian culture and society. This will enhance the notion and practice of inclusion and enable inclusive education to be applied within most schools in Saudi Arabia today in a way that reflects the progressive elements of Saudi Arabian society. Specifically, the study seeks:

- To explore teachers' experiences and attitudes towards developing more inclusive primary classrooms for SEN children, with specific reference to ASD
- To identify drivers/barriers to the development of inclusive classroom practices in primary schools in Saudi Arabia for ASD learners

1.8.2 Research Objectives

- To explore the concept of inclusion of students with ASD in primary schools in Saudi Arabia
- To explore teachers' attitudes in teaching students with ASD in inclusive education

classes in primary schools in Saudi Arabia.

1.8.3 Research Questions

In order to address the research aims and motivations, the study seeks to answer a set of research questions which have emerged out of a review of the literature on this topic and the researcher's own experience as a classroom teacher. The questions are:

1. How have inclusion policies and practices evolved in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the barriers to developing inclusive practices in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?
3. What are the drivers for the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?
4. How do teachers understand the concept of inclusion for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?
5. What are the main factors that support/limit inclusive education in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?
6. What are the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?

1.9 Research Methodology

1.9.1 Philosophical Approach

The research is based on a phenomenological approach towards studying the nature and meaning of events, wherein the reality of social life is constructed by and through a participant's experience. The phenomenological method is "generic enough to be applied to any human or social science, including sociology, anthropology, pedagogy, etc. The only

difference is that one assumes the attitude of the discipline within which one is working” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 11).

Therefore, applying the phenomenological approach to research means studying phenomena in the social world in terms of the way things are presented through lived experience and awareness; here, the phenomenological researchers’ objectives are met when they reach a rich, reliable description of their participants’ life experiences (Berg, 1998; Cohen et al., 2007; Bryman, 2008).

Consequently, a phenomenological approach involves the study of what is rationally required for any type of experience to be different or the same, while not being a study of facts; the empirical is always subject to transformation (Bryman, 2008; Giorgi, 2012). This assumption that underpins a phenomenological approach to research is reflected within the qualitative methods that are used. The types of method used in this research are semi-structured interviews with teachers to explore their understanding of inclusive education ideologies from their experiences of classroom practice as well as observation of educational interactions in inclusive classroom settings. Additional concerns related to the research position of this study will be discussed in detail in the methodology, Chapter Five.

1.10 Scope of Study

This study focuses on the inclusive education practices of primary school in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The research was done by interviewing 20 teachers and open observations in five schools. The learners were aged from 7 to 12 years old. The intention was to acquire rich data

that can deepen our understanding of the provision of inclusive education in Saudi Arabia in relation to ASD/SEN students.

The research seeks to identify the attitudes and practices of primary school teachers in terms of their support for children in mainstream schools. The study shows that teachers are mostly supportive and have positive attitudes toward the inclusive education of learners with ASD. The study shows barriers to inclusive education, for example, lack of time, overcrowded classrooms, curriculum, attitudes, lack of training, teaching methods and school environments and the extent to which mainstream school buildings and classrooms are suitable for inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in general and, more specifically, for students with ASD; as well as other factors that support inclusive education, for example, small teacher strategy and peer tutoring. The study seeks to extend the literature review into the area of critical pedagogy, using the work of Dewey (1938), Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) as inspirations to enhance the practices of inclusive education.

1.11 Thesis Structure

Following on from the scope of the study above, below the rest of the thesis is organised as follows:

Chapter two describes the social and political context out of which the Saudi approach to the implementation of inclusive education has emerged. Also it includes an account of the Saudi education system and its adoption of inclusive education practices, with a review of the policies which have been implemented by the Saudi government in this area of social concern. Chapter three reviews the ways in which SEN/ASD is defined and understood through a range of different models, including the medical, social, bio-psychosocial and human rights

models. The chapter includes the way in which ASD is defined as a medical condition, looking at some explanations for its causes. The key issue for this chapter is the way in which ASD is understood has an important bearing on the practice of teachers in the classroom. As will be seen from the research findings, teachers' having little knowledge about ASD can have a detrimental effect on the learning experience of SEN/ASD students.

Chapter four reviews the literature on the inclusive education concept in relation to SEN/ASD in general, as well as more specifically in the context of Saudi Arabia. The review looks at barriers and drivers to inclusive education in Saudi Arabia, including curricula, lack of time, school support, the size of the classroom, and a key issue for this research, teachers' attitudes. A central aspect of this research is pedagogical approaches, including PT. The final section of the chapter refers to authors: John Dewey, Paulo Freire and bell hooks, who have developed participatory pedagogies as a way of thinking through how the practice of peer-tutoring can be substantiated and developed.

Chapter five involves a full description of the research approach used, including the philosophical perspective in relation to the ontological and epistemological issues that are a central part of knowledge construction. This methodological framing includes a justification for the research paradigm that has been selected, together with an account of the data collection, analysis and sampling method, as well as a discussion of validity, reliability, subjectivity and ethical issues.

Chapter six presents the findings from the interviews with teachers and observations of classroom practice with a focus on learners with ASD and inclusion practices. According to the literature review and the findings from the research, the important drivers that support the education inclusion movement in Saudi Arabia are religion, and social justice; another key

issue revealed by the research is teachers' salaries. In contrast, barriers to inclusive education in Saudi schools can be seen in the lack of time and training given to teachers, crowded classrooms, inflexible curricula, teaching methods, teacher attitudes and school environments. Furthermore, the biggest issue in teaching students with autism is that teachers feel that they are not able to deal with them because they do not have experience of the appropriate teaching style or strategies. As well as these drivers and barriers, this research will show a number of key themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data: (a) the inclusion concept, (b) key factors, (c) the autism concept, (d) the inclusive pedagogy concept. As the data will reveal, an emerging pedagogical strategy is peer teaching, where 'pupils are small teachers'. The chapter includes a critical reflection on the relationship between the interviews and the observations: in what way they supported each other in terms of how the material from the interviews matched the activities observed in the classroom, and what else, if anything was revealed by the observations that was not discussed in the interviews.

Chapter seven critically reviews the findings in relation to the current research in this field in order to be able to state the contribution to knowledge of this thesis, and to discuss the main issues raised by this study. Chapter eight presents a summing up of the research main findings and the theoretical and methodological contribution to the field. Further, practical implications are elaborated in relation to significant findings and the limitations of the study. Finally, the study provides some practical recommendations as well as some ideas for further research.

Chapter Two: Research Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes social, cultural and religious elements of Saudi Arabia's unique context, with reference to its adherence to Islam and cultural principles about disabilities. It also describes the political context of the implementation of SEN inclusive education for ASD students. This political context will include a review of recent Saudi Arabia government policy.

2.2 Brief Background of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is located in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula in south-west Asia. The Kingdom is bounded by Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan to the north, Oman and Yemen in the south, Bahrain and Qatar to the east, and the Arabian Gulf and the United Arab Emirates in the west by the Red Sea. The Kingdom occupies approximately 2,250,000 square kilometres (868,730 square miles) and is the largest country in the region. Saudi Arabia is located in a central position between the east and west countries of the world; thus, its location is referred to as the Middle East, which distinguishes it from surrounding countries. It is the birthplace of Islam and home to ancient civilisations (see Figure 2.1).

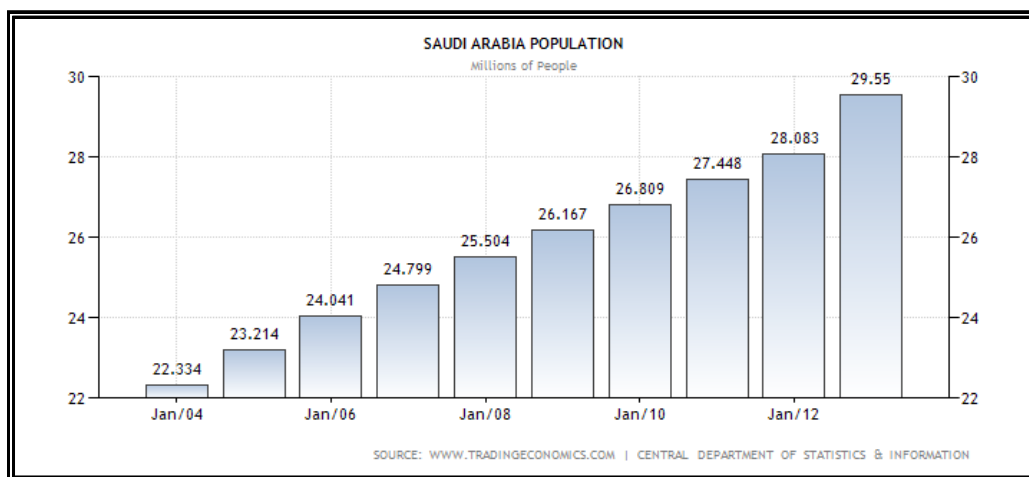
Figure 2-1 Map of Saudi Arabia



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2013)

The Kingdom's population has grown dramatically in recent years, increasing by 2.9% in 2012, according to the Saudi Central Department of Statistics and Information (CDSI) (2012). Most of that growth has been due to an exceptionally high birth rate, rather than immigration. In 2012, the Central Department of Statistics' Demographic Survey placed the total population of the Kingdom at 29,195,895 of which 50.9% are male and 49.1% female. (see Figure 2.2).

Figure: 2-2 Saudi Arabian Population



Source: CDSI (2012)

Currently, it is estimated that 51% of the Saudi population is under the age of 25, and around 37% under the age of 14 (CDSI, 2012). Therefore, in the Arabian Gulf countries, where approximately 60% of the population is below 30, it has one of the most youthful populations in the world. The growing number of youth and children highlights the importance of education and the question of how to accommodate similarities and differences in school. This puts a lot of pressure on schools and teachers.

2.3 Saudi Arabia's Culture

Saudi is a religious and conservative society. Moreover, its most powerful cultural symbols are those associated with the Islamic religion. More than one thousand years ago Islam brought not only a religion, but also a new approach to living, which integrated improvements in legal and political concepts and practices, and a Saudi identity that was universalistic and cosmopolitan. Saudi society and culture are mostly determined by the Islamic religion. Certainly, all characteristics of culture and social life in the country are associated with the Muslim identity and Islamic faith. In Saudi Arabia, culture and social life are constructed based on many religious principles. These ethical aspects and values start from personal relations within the family and extended family, and intertribal values, all of which form part of a complex network of instructions given to individuals from within the Holy Book, the "Qur'an". In practice, Islamic religious conviction covers every aspect of people's lives, every day in all locations. Islam places an emphasis on education as a religious duty for all males and females. According to Al-Salloom (1989):

"Islam dictates that learning is an obligation for every Muslim, man or woman. This obligation, which gives education the status of a religious duty, is the cornerstone of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is the foundation upon which the state builds its educational responsibilities, and in light of which, the citizen performs duties towards him/herself, his community, and his religion".

(Al-Salloom, 1989, p. 37).

Islam encourages its followers to understand the importance of education and equal opportunities for everybody. However, inclusive education is quite new as a policy in schools, though the concept can be dated back more than a thousand years ago based on Islamic

principles, which always consider there to be no difference between people, and only differences in behaviour and attitudes. The researcher grew up understanding these values in relation to home and school.

From the researcher's personal observations, religious influences within culture and society on one's conduct are all pervasive, and it is therefore not possible to address educational issues and inclusive education in Saudi Arabia without referring to them as important religious features, and to give a clear picture of this aspect as the context of the study (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012; Hassanein, 2015). In fact, it is important to understand that society places education in extremely high esteem. Society and education are seen as indivisible, and the reason for education and the value for those involved in it have their basis in religion. Furthermore, in Saudi society, local tradition dictates that females and males are strictly segregated in terms of social life. This is reflected in the educational system in the country, whereby boys and girls at all levels are segregated in terms of school buildings and teaching staff. Finally, many roles and features are defined by the society and culture within the country, and religious aspects and roles are helpful in shaping inclusion in real life, which reflects on people's lives as individuals and on the whole of society.

2.3.1 Saudi Arabia's Religion

2.3.1.1 Islamic Principles

Saudi Arabia is considered to be a Muslim country whose political system is inspired by Islamic values and ethical rules. Islamic philosophy holds a positive attitude towards needy individuals and those who are in a disadvantaged situation (Morad et al., 2001; Miles, 2002b;

Hassanein, 2015). Further, Muslims are encouraged to help needy people in order to improve their lives and promote justice in society (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012; Hassanein, 2015).

Islamic values are reflected very clearly in the local political system and the culture. Therefore, in order to understand Saudi Arabia it is important to understand Islamic teaching, which serves as a basis for Muslims' way of life, attitudes and behaviour, including the concept of disability. Miles (2002a) believes that to understand any given society there is a need to understand people's cultures, and this is particularly the case with regard to attitudes towards disability. Thus, the following section briefly elaborates on the Islamic perspective about individuals with special needs and their rights.

2.3.1.2 Islam and Disability

The Qur'an is the holy book of Muslims and the Sunnah, containing the teachings of Prophet Mohammad, which are the foundation of the majority of Muslim beliefs. Awareness of the general notion of disability within these two main sources is crucial to understand Saudi Arabia's stance.

Islam has given a great amount of attention to all groups of society; each of which has its own rights, including individuals with special needs. Bazna and Hatab (2005) conducted a study with the objective of examining the Qur'an for understanding disability in an Islamic context, based on examples of physical conditions, such as being blind, deaf, lame, intellectually disabled and having leprosy. An example of such from the Qur'an (Chapter 48, Verse 17) is the following:

“There is not upon the blind any guilt or upon the lame any guilt or upon the ill any guilt. And whoever obeys Allah and His messenger – He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow: but whoever turns away- He will punish him with a painful punishment”.

In addition, other general terms, such as weak, sick, orphaned and needy individuals, are also referenced. For example, the Qur’an (Chapter 76, Verse 8-9) states:

“and they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, [saying] we feed you only for the countenance [i.e., approval] of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude”.

According to Al-Aoufi et al. (2012) the word 'disability' as a term was not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an, but the notion of disadvantaged people is mentioned and used to refer to people with special needs. Furthermore, society is responsible for taking care of such individuals and is responsible for improving their condition as an act of social responsibility encouraged by the Qur’an. Less fortunate people with disadvantaged situations (e.g. lack of some physical capacity) are believed to be a result of barriers produced by society. Thus, social pressure is exerted on individuals to contribute to the process of creating a society that is fair to people with special needs (Barakat, 1993; Bazna and Hatab, 2005). Social responsibility and justice are supported by Sunnah, as well (Morad et al., 2001; Bazna and Hatab, 2005; Al-Aoufi et al., 2012; Hassanein, 2015), with two hadiths stated below; according to Prophet Mohammad,

“The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever” (Volume 32, number 6258:).

The other Hadith states that “the person is not one of us who is not merciful to our youth and respectful of our elders”. Thus, Islamic values and philosophy promote the sense that being merciful, showing solidarity, cooperation, being respectful and helping each other (e.g. disable people) show the real ethos of Islam (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012).

The next section will show the way in which these values and principles are reflected in the ways in which education is organised by the government in Saudi Arabia.

2.4 The Saudi Arabian Educational System

The education sector is under the responsibility of the MoE as the main provider of public education in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the curriculum, textbooks and syllabus are the same throughout the whole country, and education policies and rules are subject to government control. Ministry policies are compatible with Islamic laws and culture (MoE, 2012).

2.4.1 The Ministry of Education

The MoE is responsible for public education from ages 5 to 21; this age group incorporates primary schooling, which is the focus of this thesis. The MoE was established in 1954 and holds primary responsibility for boys’ education, and also girls’ schooling since 2002. In 2015, the MoE took the responsibility for Higher Education and became the authority responsible for higher and public education. Special needs and adult education are all currently under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education; however, it was only a few years ago that the MoE took on responsibility for the education of all children, including those with disabilities. Before that, responsibility for children with disabilities was the responsibility of Health and Social Welfare Policy Departments. This change happened as understanding of SEN and

disabilities evolved, which reflected the rights of these individuals to be included both within and outside of school and, in a wider sense, in society. This helped to change attitudes and beliefs regarding the capabilities of these individuals not only to learn, but also to be useful members of communities. In addition, this change of responsibility for SEN from the Health and Social Welfare Policy Departments to the MoE was a significant movement towards greater inclusion.

General education in Saudi Arabia comprises three levels: elementary, intermediate and secondary. Education is compulsory from age of 7 to 18 for all males and females. The MoE controls schools throughout 42 educational districts across the country. The main role of the educational districts is to ensure links between the Ministry and the schools. Moreover, there are two types of school – special education and mainstream. The Saudi government has improved educational opportunities for all children, including those with disabilities; the next step is to increase the number of students included in mainstream schools, particularly students with severe disabilities or ASD (MoE, 2012).

The Department of Special Education Needs (DSEN) at the MoE was established in 1962, initially to serve students with visual, hearing and intellectual impairments (Al Mousa, 2007), but now the DSEN (MoE, 2014), serves other categories of students with:

- Gifts and talents
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual impairment
- Physical disability
- Learning difficulties

- Autism
- Emotional and behavioural disorder
- Multi-disabilities
- Speech and language disorders

Furthermore, Saudi policy on disability assures education, medical care, rehabilitation, and financial support free of charge to persons with disabilities and their families (MoE, 2014). According to Al Mousa (2007) 1990-1991 was the start of integration programmes for students with SEN in mainstream schools, and the latest study, made by Alquraini in 2010, stated that 61,089 students benefited from 3130 programmes of segregated and integrated education in public schools in 2007. Further, students with SEN are eligible for a variety of educational services such as access provision for an Individual Education Plan (IEP). In addition, students with severe disabilities are taught separately in special education needs institutes (MoE, 2008).

The MoE provides a description of the education environment for students with SEN in general, and with ASD in particular, recommending two types of classroom: SEN and inclusive. The Ministry stresses the right to educational opportunities for all children with SEN and offers suggestions on structuring learning environments to allow for flexibility to accommodate these groups. The Ministry identifies two categories of schools; special needs schools for teaching students with disabilities, and general schools (Al-Mousa, 2007; Alquraini, 2010).

Shamey (2001) and Abdullah (2001) outlined four types of inclusive classroom in public schools for teaching students with SEN in general, including students with ASD:

- 1) Fully inclusive classrooms: These classrooms allow students with SEN to join other students without SEN in the same classrooms, join in with activities and learn in the same way. A condition of entering this kind of classroom is that these students have a very high level of performance, and thus should not interfere with the other students or their learning progress.
- 2) Inclusive classrooms that have consultant services: for students with SEN who have entered public schools, these services provide advice for students with SEN, including those with ASD, and for teachers and parents. The role of consultant services is to identify areas of need and provide suggestions for teaching and for the management of this kind of classroom. Moreover, consultants provide an individualised education plan (IEP) for each student with difficulties in the classroom.
- 3) Inclusive classrooms with a tutor teacher service to help students with SEN to understand academic skills and improve social and communication skills: This service is usually located in resource classrooms. One tutor teacher is in charge of students with disabilities.

Inclusive classrooms with an external visitor teacher: this service is for students with SEN and includes students with ASD.

The categories of integrated classrooms for students with disabilities in public schools include:

- Full-time special classrooms, which are attended by students with SEN. These students can join other students without disabilities in some activities.
- Half-day special classrooms, which only include students with SEN, but with access to general classrooms.

According to Alquraini (2012) students with mild learning disabilities receive their education in typical classrooms, while students with mild and moderate cognitive disabilities receive their education in separate classrooms, in public schools, with some support from special education services. Furthermore, “more than 90% of male students and 65% of female students with special educational needs in Saudi Arabia are mainstreamed in regular schools” (Al Mousa, 2007, p.2). However, recently, students with ASD have been included in mainstream classrooms in Saudi Arabia at an increased rate, and these students often lack the social skills needed to interact effectively with their typical peers. This has led to the adoption of PT as an effective strategy, and the inclusion of more students with ASD in mainstream classrooms. This will be confirmed by the findings in this research study

The curriculum for teaching students with ASD in integrated classrooms should be suitable for all abilities and ages of students with ASD, and should be adopted from the practicalities of public education that are developmentally suitable for them. The curriculum for teaching students with ASD should highlight classroom environments in which suitable activities can be conducted that may help students with ASD. Moreover, the general goal for the education of children with ASD is to prepare them to lead normal, independent lives (Al Mousa, 2007).

2.4.2 Inclusive Education and SEN in Saudi Arabia

Prior to 1958, education of people with visual impairment was initiated by individuals and charity organisation according to Alquraini (2012). Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, the government took the responsibility to provide free education for people with visual and hearing impairments and intellectual disability. In the 1980s and 1990s, the education service included the autism category within services for SEN (Aldabas, 2015). In the mid 1990s, Saudi Arabia joined the 92 countries that signed the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994),

and it has now been just over two decades since the Salamanca Statement was adapted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education Access and Quality (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement focuses on the building and development of inclusive schools for all children, as illustrated in the following statement:

Schools should accommodate children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic, or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas and groups.

(UNESCO, 1994, p. 6)

However, according to a global UNESCO study (2008), countries around the world have many different meanings of inclusive education. Even within one country, the meaning of inclusive education can be defined in different ways, from region to region, city to city, or even school to school (UNESCO, 2008). For example, in the UK, inclusive education is no longer confined to special needs but is offered to a variety of students from different classes, ethnicities, languages, religions and abilities (Mittler, 2000 ;Ainscow et al., 2006). However, in Saudi Arabia inclusive education is still associated with disability or special needs education. Slee (2004) argued that inclusive education is a very diverse concept. He pointed out that inclusive education has lost its original meaning, and he also refuted medical and psychological definitions of educational difficulties. On the other hand, Ainscow et al. (2006) provided a six-way classification of thinking about inclusion, where inclusion is (1) a concern for disabled students and others categorised as “having SEN”; (2) a response to disciplinary exclusion; (3) related to all groups seen as vulnerable to exclusion; (4) about developing schooling for all; (5) intended to enable EFA; and (6) a principled approach to education and

society.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has recently in the 2000s introduced and implemented an inclusive EFA policy, and aims to implement this in all schools throughout the Kingdom (MoE, 2010). The goal the MoE wants to achieve within 10 years is to include all students with disabilities in public schools and reduce the number of special needs schools around the country (MoE cited in Weber, 2012, p. 91). That implies preparing more teachers in pre-service courses in inclusion and SNE. Inclusive education has increased through a growing number of learner support programmes, such as early-intervention programmes, which help learners to feel more included (Charema, 2010). According to recent statistics (MoE, 2016) no less than five students on average in a regular primary schools need special education services. The MoE provides services to students with disabilities, including those with ASD, through partial to full inclusion in the general education classroom. Hence, ‘‘over 233 programmes and institutes have been developed to meet the needs of the recent Inclusion Project’’ (Gaad, 2011, p. 20).

However, inclusive education has also come under considerable criticism by researchers who argue that inclusive education cannot use a simple ‘‘one size fits all’’ approach. In addition, it is described as a ‘‘troubled concept’’ because many people define it differently, and there is little agreement about what the term covers and excludes (Borthwick-Duffy et al., 1996; Hornby, 1999). There is considerable argument about how to define students’ individuality and ability in inclusive classrooms and how a school culture is supposed to be shaped to overlap with the inclusive education idea.

The nature of Saudi society helps to give a clearer picture of inclusive education in a

particular society, and also how it works in terms of gender segregation. Segregation between males and females in education, and also in the community generally, has had a deep impact on the structure of the concept of inclusivity in Saudi Arabia. Thus, one of the important features that strongly influence culture and social life, including education systems in Saudi Arabia, is the segregation of genders. This segregation has influenced teachers physically, socially and psychologically. It has been believed that this is due to the religious narrative of Islam and tribal culture in Saudi Arabia, as it is similar to Kuwaiti society which shares tribal roots and values; both states' inclusion practices are determined by religion and culture (Al-Shammari and Yawkey, 2007). However, the segregation issue is quite controversial in Saudi Arabia and under scrutiny by members of the society; where to draw the line between cultural and religious values is not yet determined, and beyond the scope of this research.

Moreover, Lipsky and Harris (1959) found that gender in Saudi Arabia has been widely debated, though without taking into account the unique cultural history of Saudi Arabia's society. Hence, they clarified that Islamic religion, and the fact that Saudi society is governed by conservative regulations and rules, creates a cultural impact that affects all aspects of Saudi life (Lipsky and Harris, 1959; Murphy, 2011). This had an impact on the understanding of the inclusion concept, and as a result on the structure of inclusivity programmes set up in Saudi Arabia. Segregation based on gender might be seen from some Western researchers' perspectives as a contradiction of the inclusion notion, but in Saudi Arabia it is not necessarily the case. In the researcher's view, as a teacher and a woman, segregation is not fraught with dilemmas and serious issues that demand attention. In fact, it is positive for inclusion, as it respects the differences between genders and enables students to concentrate on their education, especially in high schools.

2.4.3 Inclusive Education Policy

Inclusive education involves teaching more than one student with disabilities in the general classroom with their peers, as well as in the whole school through counselling and collaboration (MoE, 2016). Integration and inclusion can be translated into the Arabic term *Damg*. The understanding of *Damg* in mainstream teaching practice has evolved to reflect the latest changes in Western perspectives towards inclusion, although the word itself remains unchanged. However, the meanings of ‘integration’ and ‘inclusion’ in Saudi Arabia are not the same. The official document ‘‘Special Education Policy’’ defines integrated education as educating students with learning difficulties in mainstream schools and giving them special education needs services (MoE, 2015). Moreover, it is defined in Arabic literature as “providing places in general schools for children with special needs so that they are able to integrate with their peers, learning and socialising according to plans and programmes that take account of the needs of each child individually” (Al- Mousa, 1992, p. 208). Furthermore, the policy documents state that provision of free and appropriate education for all, including those with SEN, is compulsory.

MoE policies and procedures determine how Saudi schools conduct assessments, the diagnosis of pupils with SEN, and how individual education plans and behaviour modification plans should be operated. The MoE’s policy on inclusion and the concept of the “least restrictive environment” in the form of a blended system of segregated/integrative education is implemented. However, this system reflects an ethos of integration, rather than a full concept of inclusion, as this has been found to be more appropriate and effective for children who cannot be accommodated in mainstream schools.

Policy is an important element in understanding inclusion practices in the Saudi educational context. The Saudi educational policy document dates back to the 1970s and was last updated in 1995. In general, it supports the right to education of both genders, from general education to higher education. Section 8 relates to education for students with disabilities and explains this in four main articles, as follows (MoE, 1995):

- 188 – The government is responsible for educating students with SEN (whether intellectual or physically disabled) by putting in place a variety of special education and training curricula to suit their capabilities.
- 189 – This type of special education seeks to take care of disabled students and provide them with the needed Islamic values and general culture. It also trains them in suitable skills for learning in the given education system to enable them to achieve to the best of their abilities.
- 190 – Curricula for the visually impaired should emphasise religious teaching, the Arabic language and science.
- 191 – A well-established plan should be laid down for each educational stage to ensure the promotion of steady progress.

Other articles in this document emphasise the right of all citizens to free education to ensure equality and a decent life governed by Islamic values and beliefs. Further, these articles govern public and private schools' practices to ensure equal access to students with all different types of disabilities. However, students with severe disabilities are not

accommodated in mainstream schools. Published in 2010, there is another important document dedicated specifically to students with autism, entitled “The guide to organising educational and learning programmes for students with ASD”. The document consists of 12 pages and eight articles guiding school practices. The first article defines autism and how it can be recognised in a student. The second article sets down 8 aims for teaching students with ASD, as follows:

1. Provide the student with Islamic beliefs and values to govern their behaviour.
2. Provide the student with knowledge and tailored academic and occupational skills.
3. Develop the self-efficiency of the student.
4. Develop the social competence of the student.
5. Provide the student with knowledge and language skills.
6. Provide the student with safety skills and correct health habits.
7. Develop the physical skills and fitness of the student.
8. Develop appropriate art skills for the student.

Article 3 states the places where these services should be provided: autism institutes, intellectual disability institutes or separate classes in mainstream schools. The next article lays down the five conditions of entry to such places. First, the student should be no less than 6 years old and no more than 15 years old. Second, the student should have the ability to benefit from the programme. Third, the student should have been diagnosed correctly by a specialist team. Fourth, the student should be under initial evaluation and supervision for one semester before full acceptance. Finally, official approval is required from a special committee for admission based on established guidance for institutes and special education programmes.

The document continues by laying down three criteria for diagnosis of autism in Article 5. The first criterion consists of a lack of social engagement, a lack of social communication and behavioural issues (e.g. repetitive behaviour). Second, developmental delays appear before 3 years of age. Finally, there is clear absence of the RETT symptoms in female students. The last three articles are concerned with special curricula, academic skills and the important aspects needed to deliver SEN education to students with ASD.

Full inclusion in regular schools is accomplished through the provision of special education support programmes, such as resource rooms, peripatetic teachers and teacher-consultant programmes. In these programmes, students with mild learning difficulties are educated alongside their normal peers in regular classrooms during most of the school day, with some adaptations to the curriculum mainly provided in resource room sessions (Alquraini and Dianne Gut, 2012).

The process of pulling out students with disabilities from regular classrooms is governed by factors such as the student's need for special education services, the nature of their disability, the severity of their disability, the grade in which the student is enrolled and other variables that the educational situation dictates to both the special education teacher and the regular classroom teacher (Al-Mousa, 2010).

2.4.3.1 Policies on Inclusion of Students with ASD

Students with ASD started to join mainstream schools from 1990 to 2000 in special education classes (Aldabas, 2015). International policies highlight an agreed right for all children to be educated inside the mainstream schools (UNESCO, 1994; UN, 2006). While legislative documents within Saudi do reflect this value, the general education policy guides the

government in providing the right education for all individuals, including those with SEN. Policy documents about inclusive education for children with ASD state that high-functioning learners with ASD should be included alongside their peers in regular classes. In contrast, for students with ASD who have severe disability or low IQ, whether they are placed in mainstream schools or special education institution is decided by a committee from the MoE (MoE, 2015). Although MoE and school policy is not fully enforced, it emphasizes the concept that all students with different disabilities should be educated within the mainstream school but not all children have to access general education classes and curriculum. In order to fulfil this policy schools have established special education needs classes within mainstream schools, run by special education needs teachers and following a special education curriculum as a way of providing education for students with ASD. This is more social inclusion than academic inclusion, and not within the mainstream class except perhaps on a part time basis, depending on school policy. For instance they may join their peers in lunch breaks. Schools are consequently including students but are unsure what is needed to offer as a suitable educational experience for students with ASD. This issue is highlighted by this research study.

Inclusive education for students with ASD has been extended in some primary and intermediate schools in Saudi Arabia, but has yet to be carried over to secondary schools. Inclusive education is still in its infancy in Saudi schools (Al Abduljabber, 1994b; Alhaznawi, 2010; Abed et al., 2014). The MoE is generally positive toward treating all students as individuals and providing free education and support, with specific focus on ASD. In regard to ASD policy, it mentions conditions that should be met before children with ASD can be admitted to school. These are:

- Aged from 6 to 21 years.
- Face no obstacles in accessing educational programmes.

- Child should be diagnosed by a committee made of specialist teams.
- To be observed for a full semester before the final decision is made regarding their acceptance.
- The committee would direct the ASD child to an institute special education programme or appropriate school.
- The child's appearance should be up to standards.
- The child does not have infectious diseases (MoE, 2014).

Every student with autism has the right to have the same chances that any other student has, regardless of differences or disabilities, every student has the right to join the education system. However, there are conditions on access for children with ASD, such as severity of the disorder and IQ level. Also, the problem is clear that students with ASD can be directed to programmes for special education or school but children who have other disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, are directed to institutes (MoE, 2014).The MoE offers range of services to help students with ASD to be more included in society, such as;

- Early interventions.
- Education service in less isolated environments according to the severity of their disabilities.
- Behaviour modification (Applied Behaviour Analysis).
- Assessment of student progress before and after interventions.
- Priority in training interventions to independence, social and communication skills.

- Teaching and learning skills (i.e. cognitive skills, basic academic skills, personal safety skills and occupational preparation).
 - Support for families (information about ASD, training and involvement in the interventions educational programmes)
- (MoE, 2015).

These policies are implemented in schools with close supervision from DSEN. It aims to ensure that teachers are aware of SEN students and know how to deal with them.

2.4.3.2 Education of Students with ASD

In Saudi Arabia, the number of schools with pupils that have a primary special education need related to ASD increased from three inclusive settings in 1998 to fifty two in 2008 (MoE, 2008). Some students with ASD attend mainstream schools, and others attend special needs schools (MoE, 2008). Researchers have identified how students with developmental disorders, including students with ASD, have impacted on learning and education in mainstream schools (Kasari et al., 1999), but there are still too few studies on ASD provision in schools (Kelly et al, 2016). This highlights the need to evaluate the evidence base in order to identify best practice in the education of children with ASD in special and mainstream settings in Saudi Arabia.

2.5 Summary Remarks

This chapter has explored the social and political context out of which the Saudi approach to the implementation of inclusive education has emerged. The chapter set out the structure of

the Saudi Arabian education system and the ways in which it has taken up inclusive education for SEN/ASD students as a matter of public concern, including the policies that have been developed and implemented. The next chapter focuses more specifically on the issue of SEN/ASD and the ways in which it is understood, diagnosed as well as some explanations for why it occurs.

Chapter Three: Models of Understanding Disabilities and ASD

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and describes the ways of thinking about disabilities and how they are recognised and assessed, as well as containing a discussion of the different models through which SEN/ASD are understood: the medical, social, bio-psychosocial and human rights models. The medical contextualisation, including the symptoms and causes of ASD, is discussed. As the study emphasises, the combination of these factors has an effect on the way in which SEN/ASD students are dealt with within a school and the classroom environment.

3.2 Models of Thinking on Disability

People with special needs face many difficulties and experience a range of types of social exclusion because of their disabilities. Although the definition of disability is a complex phenomenon and it is difficult to define and measure, it is still important to know and understand what disability is and what constitutes a disability (Zaidi, 2011). Recent literature on the meaning and measurement of disability has highlighted that “not even the most harmonised formal definitions and questionnaires guarantee comparable international data” (Zaidi, 2011, p. 5).

A lot of people have impairments, for instance those who use glasses, but they are not usually excluded from social or educational situations. Yet, people who are deaf and use hearing aids may be excluded because of communication barriers. There are many types of disabilities, such as physical, visual and hearing impairments, learning difficulties, emotional difficulties, cognitive health issues, ASD, behavioural disorders, and speech and language impairments. In addition, some health issues, including HIV and AIDS, form part of this debate. To more fully understand approaches to disabilities it is necessary to explore the main perspectives

from which disability is understood: the medical model and the social model (Barton, 1997), bio-psychosocial models (Engel 1977; Cooper, 1997; Waddell 2002), as well as the human rights-based model (Klasing et al., 2011). The following sections will discuss these models in depth.

3.2.1 The Medical Model

This model has its origins in the 18th century, when there appeared to be a more scientific consideration of the reasons for impairments and a sense of confidence in medical science's capability of treatment, or at least overcoming some of the difficulties faced by disabled persons (Lawrence, 1994). Moreover, a number of people with disabilities, frequently for political reasons, were considered socially incurable and were placed in long-stay institutions and special schools (Bury, 1992). Medical models view a child's deficit at an individual or micro level. According to Gallagher (2014), the medical model takes an objective view about disability as an individual issue and bases results on quantitative data, such as an intelligence quotient (IQ) test (Kauffman and Hallahan, 2005; Gallagher et al., 2014).

The medical model is supported by assessments of impairment from an ability point of view, as opposed to "normality", or what is considered usual (Durkheim, 1982). The medical model views the person with a disability as a problem (Lawrence, 1994) that needs to be modified to fit into the world as it is. Usually, it focuses on the disability, more than the actual needs of the person (Rieser, 2000).

This approach to disability highlights dependence, backed up by stereotypes of disability that bring about disappointment, fear and patronising attitudes (Fisher and Goodley, 2007). The power to transform people with disabilities tends not to appear within the medical and connected professions, with their focus upon treatment, normalisation and science. In an

educational context, students with special needs are handed over to those with professional expertise (Bury, 1992). Medical professionals such as doctors make decisions that can influence where students with special needs go to school, the type of support they get, the benefits they are permitted, their ability to work or whether they are allowed to have children. The medical model sees disability as an illness that requires medical interventions (Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Barnes and Mercer, 2004; Dewsbury et al., 2004; Areheart, 2008), for more details see figure 3.1.

A lot of people with disabilities build up negative views of themselves and experience feelings of low self-esteem and low achievement status, which supports their poor self-evaluations of their importance and value (Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Kauffman and Hallahan, 2005). The medical model has contributed to this in terms of environmental and social attitudes, leading to a cycle of dependency and segregation that is difficult to break (Areheart, 2008).

Figure: 3-1 Medical Model



Source: Harris and Enfield (2003, p. 172).

Medical model views are supported by the media, books, films, comedians, language and art. This thinking of the medical model has been supported in the media, leisure, work and education (Areheart, 2008). In schools, for example, SEN are seen as the problem of the individual, who is seen as different, faulty and having complex needs that must be considered

and treated as normally as possible. However, this model is now beginning to be rejected. Many people with disabilities strongly consider that dealing with people with disabilities as needing to adapt to the existing environment or, if this is not possible, caring for them in specific institutions, is wrong (Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Dewsbury et al., 2004; Areheart, 2008). As will be shown in my findings and is evident from the literature, based on a scientific understanding of what is considered to be normal (Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Dewsbury et al., 2004).

3.2.2 The Social Model

The Disability Movement has supported a different way of looking at disability, which entails the social model (Crow, 1996; Hughes and Paterson, 1997). This view begins from the point of looking at all people with disabilities – including both adults and children – and their right to fit into, and be valued within, a shared society. Therefore, it focuses on the child as a valued individual at a macro level. The social model looks at people with disabilities in terms of their strengths, and not simply for the impairments they have. In addition, it looks at the physical, educational and social barriers that hold them back, and obstructions, whether at school, home or work. The social model describes concepts like disability, handicap and impairment in terms of having different meanings (World Health Organization, 1980). The World Health Organization (1980) identified the meaning of impairment, disability and handicap as follows:

- ‘Disability is defined as: any restriction (resulting from impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.
- Impairment is “any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function”
- Handicap is defined as “a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents fulfilment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social or

cultural factors for that individual.” (United Nations Division for Economic and Social Information, 1983, p. 3).

The social model of disability identifies that a person with impairments is disabled because of the way society is set out (Oliver, 1990). The social model was created in response to a critique of the medical model of disability (Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Gallagher et al., 2014). It considers disability as a consequence of the way society is viewed (Hughes and Paterson, 1997) and understands that people with disabilities face different kinds of separation, obstacles and barriers to their natural involvement. These barriers to participation can be divided into three types: attitudinal, such as low expectations and ignorance, usually driven by culture and religion; environmental, which includes physical isolation affecting all elements of life, for example lack of access to buildings and facilities; and, institutional, wherein the legal differentiations mean that those with disabilities are excluded from rights enjoyed by others – for instance, they are not allowed to marry, have children or go to school or university. These three kinds of barriers leave people with disabilities powerless to take control of their personal lives (Crow, 1996).

According to the social model, a disability does not just depend on the person, but also on environmental factors, which can be immobilising or non-facilitating in many ways. If a person in a wheelchair can drive a car from home, to a workplace and other buildings that are accessible, they can handle their life and act normally regardless of their disabilities (Dewsbury et al., 2004; Ashby, 2012). The social model proposes that people with disabilities are at a disadvantage due to a difficult variety of institutional prejudices that are similar to racism or sexism. The disability movement believes the “cure” for the problem of disability lies in changing society. Many impairments in the world are created by war, food shortages,

lack of clean water, lack of safety, abuse or mistreatment, and these have to be dealt with more strongly, rather than, as with the medical model, just responding to the impairments and disabilities resulting from them (Fine and Asch, 1988).

Figure 3.2 below sets out and summarises the social model of disability; as Harris and Enfield (2003) suggested, it sees a person with a disability as being part of a disabling society that ignores their needs, resulting in limited rights, jobs and education, and discrimination because of their differences, as well as poor services, poverty, and inaccessible buildings and transport, which exclude and separate them from social life (Hughes and Paterson, 1997; Harris and Enfield, 2003).

Figure: 3-2 Social Model



Source: Harris and Enfield (2003, p. 172).

The medical model views people with disabilities as 'faulty', and applies a diagnosis that labels the degree and type of impairment. This impairment becomes a focus of attention, assessment and monitoring, while imposing programmes and therapy to attend to specific needs. In addition, adopting segregation and alternative services leads to normal needs being put on hold for a period of time, followed by re-entry if the person's case is deemed normal

enough or permanent exclusion otherwise. This model does not consider the importance of society, which is left unchanged (Mason and Rieser, 1994; Rieser, 2000).

On the other hand, the social model views the disabled person as valued and examines the strengths and weaknesses defined by themselves, their parents and others. It also aims to identify the barriers and issues and develop a solution, designing programmes based on needs and outcomes and providing necessary training for parents, teachers, peers and professionals. Diversity is welcomed for all learners, despite their differences, with the emphasis on developing relationships and acts of nurture as intrinsic aspects of a caring society (Mason and Rieser, 1994).

The World Health Organization (2001) adopted the social model. This model has significant implications for the education system. Discriminatory attitudes toward special needs are not innate, but are learned through interaction with inequality and the ignorance of others. Thus, challenging prejudice against special needs has to start in schools (Shakespeare and Watson, 2001). The fight for the inclusion of all students, including those with special needs, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, in one ordinary social system will not make any headway unless people understand the differences between the medical and social models of disability (Ainscow, 2005).

3.2.3 Bio-Psychosocial Model

The bio-psycho-social model is concerned with three important elements to understand disability: biological, psychological and social (Engel 1977; Waddell 2002). These are defined as follows:

- Biological: the physical or mental health condition.

- Psychological: the mental, intellectual and emotional state.
- Social: the social context and life experience.

Through this triangular aspect, a person with a disability or who is categorised as handicapped is diagnosed by a medical team comprising physiology and psychology professionals. However, this does not mean that the bio-psychosocial model is a complete medical model, as the impact of the social context and the environment on people with a disability is also significant. This model is a more comprehensive way of thinking about disability, as it blends both the medical and the social model as well as adding a psychological dimension (Waddell , 2002; Page and Wessely, 2003; Burton, 2003; Waddell et al., 2003).

Alongside this model is the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001) which considers the interaction between the two main aspects of this matter: a person's health circumstances and contextual factors.

- Functioning and disability aspects:
 - Body structures and functions (impairments)
 - Activities and participation (limitations and restrictions)
- Contextual factors:
 - Personal factors
 - Environmental factors

According to these models, disabilities and their apparent limitations are often imposed by the way society is structured for healthy people (Duckworth, 2001). There is agreement that

human handicap and disability can be understood not only with reference to the disability as if it were a medical condition, but according to a bio-psychosocial model as a comprehensive perspective that includes biological, psychological and social aspects (Engel 1977; Waddell 2002). This model is currently accepted as the most complete framework for assessing disability and rehabilitation (Davis et al., 1992; Post et al., 1999; Wade and de Jong, 2000).

3.2.4 Human Rights Model

3.2.4.1 The Fight for Equality for People with Special Needs

To fully understand equality in relation to students with disabilities, it is important to discuss the term "cultural citizenship". The term "cultural citizenship" guarantees people's right to be different and to participate in a democratic society. Moreover, it states that in a democracy, social justice means equity between all people regardless of race, disability, religion, disease, class and gender, where no one group is inferior to another. The concept means full inclusion into a group with the capability to influence and having an important voice in crucial decisions (Rosaldo, 1994).

Over the last three decades, people with disabilities have fought and won a human rights-based approach to disability. It is starting to be accepted that prejudice, discrimination and stereotypes, or simply negative views and attitudes towards disability are not acceptable in modern society. Civil rights movements for a more democratic society have led to legislation, and the enactment of laws and provisions, that guarantee the right to equality for a wide range of differences in society. The disabilities movement in the 1960s was encouraged by civil rights movements such as African-American and women's rights movements in the USA (Shapiro, 1993). In addition, the UK's Disability Discrimination Act (1995), alongside similar movements in many other countries, such as Australia, South Africa and India focus on

human's rights and equality. Moreover, the United Nations implemented the Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in 1993, to ensure that all students in mainstream schools have equal rights.

In all these approaches, the focus is on the removal of discrimination and obstruction through effectual civil rights legislation, based on the idea that adjustments must be made within services, buildings, transport, workplaces, environments, communications and equipment to allow people with special needs to gain access. Negative attitudes and practices leading to discrimination are forbidden, and if organisations isolate people with disabilities this can be challenged.

3.2.4.2 Background to the Disability Movement

The disability movement, which is shaped and led by disabled people themselves, emphasises three aspects: the social model of disability, independent living and civil rights (Oliver, 1996a). In addition, this movement criticises the medical model. The social model, according to Oliver (1983), arose from a paper entitled "Fundamental Principles of Disability", published by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976, which stated that disabled people are unnecessarily isolated from participation in society (UPIAS, 1976). The main argument revolved around the idea that barriers should be lifted in society to allow people with disabilities to access and benefit equally to others (Oliver, 1983; 2004). The second aspect is independent living for disabled people, as they paradoxically need help to self-care for themselves. The Direct Payments Act 1996 paved the way for disabled people by providing money directly to them in order to hire carers to help them in their day-to-day activities (Hasler et al., 1999). This started a debate among professionals as to whether this is an appropriate way for disabled people to achieve autonomy and control over their lives, or whether it causes total reliance on carers to improve their life (Oliver 1989;

Zarb and Nadash, 1995). The third aspect pertains to civil rights, which began in the 1970s in UK. Despite the existence of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, people with disabilities believed their rights were denied (Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 1991). Thus, people with disabilities demanded more rights to be full members of society, as legislation lagged behind and further work needed to be carried out for their demands to be accepted by the Disability Rights Commission (Oliver and Barnes 1998; Barnes et al., 1999).

However, the disability movement observes the difficulties people with disabilities experience, such as the barriers that limit them and their life chances (Tomlinson, 1982). These include school and higher education, decisions about work and appropriate work environments, the right of entry to entertainment and other facilities, private and public transport, finding the right housing, and personal, family and social life. The next section discusses the understanding of students with ASD reflects the ways of thinking of disability models, and looks more closely at ASD in terms of causes, diagnoses and symptoms.

3.3 Impart of Disability Models on Understanding of ASD

3.3.1 Definition of ASD

Leo Kanner is an American psychiatrist who first identified ASD in 1943. He described 11 children who were being treated at John Hopkins University Medical School: they had three common characteristics and were dissimilar from other children (Powers, 2000). He described the aspects of children with ASD as starting with deficiencies in social skills, language, speech and behaviour (Kanner, 1943). However, this developmental disorder includes five kinds of ASD: autism disorder “classical”, Asperger syndrome, Rett’s syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder and pervasive developmental disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

The most common of these are autism disorders: “classical”, Asperger syndrome and pervasive developmental disorder, and these are the most likely to be seen in schools. Rett’s disorder and childhood disintegrative disorder are unlikely to be seen in schools because they are extremely rare (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). However, the definition of ASD according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) is a developmental disorder that “... is characterized by severe and pervasive impairments in several areas of development: reciprocal social interaction skills, communication skills, and the presence of stereotyped behaviour, interests, and activities” (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, p. 69).

DSM-3 (1980) was the first to include ASD as a separate category, named infantile ASD. In 1987, infantile ASD was renamed as autism disorder. DSM- 4 (1994) was the first to include the term Asperger syndrome in ASD. The diagnosis of ASD changed from DSM- 4 to DSM-5. DSM-5 (2013) stated that Rett’s is no longer classified as ASD, and the term “Asperger” has also been dropped. Thus, the labels of classic ASD, Asperger syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder and pervasive developmental disorder have been replaced with the umbrella term “Autism Spectrum Disorder”. In addition, DSM-5 avoided ASD sub-groups such as social communication disorder, which is not defined as part of ASD, but is included as it identifies DSM-5 as separate category. In addition, DSM-5 uses two domains of impairments: social communication interaction and repetitive patterns of behaviours (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The researcher agrees with removing Rett’s from the ASD category, but feels that removing Asperger syndrome will lead to confusion among the people diagnosed with it. The

researcher is also not in favour of the new category called social communication disorder, because the researcher believes it is an important element of ASD.

To be classified within the ASD spectrum, children have to show at least three types of related behaviour, including a lack of interest in social relations, a lack of communication and repeated activities, without imagination in play or other activities (Shamey, 2003). These behaviours may be accompanied by other disturbances in behaviour, such as hyperactivity and a lack of concentration, severe bouts of anger or difficulty in sleeping, or these children may exhibit behaviour that is harmful to themselves or others, or in some cases develop epilepsy (Abdullah, 2001).

It usually becomes apparent prior to the age of 3, with the average starting point of behavioural differences at 15 months (Hutton and Caron, 2005). Moreover, one aspect of ASD that differentiates it from other disabilities is that it refers to a spectrum or multiple types of similarly related disorders. The symptoms range from mild cognitive, social and behavioural shortages to harsher symptoms, in which children may suffer from cognitive impairment and lack of speech (Jordan, 1999).

Around one third of children with ASD do not speak (Mesibov et al., 1997). One of the most common signs of ASD is a lack of typical social interaction (Richman, 2001). For instance, children with ASD appear to prefer to be isolated, may appear not to care about other people, struggle to interpret social signs, and differ in their play skills from typically developing children (Guldberg, 2010). The majority of children with ASD are diagnosed in their first three years (Richman, 2001; Shamey, 2003) via three aspects, social interaction problems, communication and repetitive behaviours as discussed below:

Social interaction problems show in the early years, when the child does not display eye contact with its mother as regular children do, and will not interact with the mother or father, such as by smiling. They also do not react to the feelings of others or deal with them as other children do; for example, if they see their mother crying or sad, they do not react to the situation with compassion, as other children may react. In addition, the child may not show care for the existence of others and may prefer to play alone, as they do not like to interact with other children (Shamey, 2003).

Difficulty Communication there is a weakness in linguistic expression or a delay in speech; for example, the child sometimes uses strange words or repeats the last word or phrase of the sentence they have heard (Abdullah, 2001). They may also have difficulty in the use of pronouns; for example, they may not say “I want a drink” but rather, “Mark wants a drink” (Shamey, 2003). Some children with ASD do not speak, but can communicate using pictures or sign language, or cry if they want something (Simpson, 2005).

Children with ASD show ***repetitive behaviour*** as they prefer routines rather than change, such as not wanting to change their clothes or food preferences, and they like to organise their own environment (Jordan, 2001). They exhibit repetitive behaviour, such as in the way they move their hands or legs (Abdullah, 2001). Most commonly in two categories, Asperger disorder and Rett’s disorder, these children exhibit a different capacity to play, in that it lacks imagination. For example, children with ASD can put their toy cars in order or recognise part of the car, such as the door, without imagining it on the road or how it works (Simpson, 2005). ASD is a lifelong disability, but with training and learning about the debilitating effects on the lives of children or adults with ASD the impacts can be reduced (Shamey, 2003).

Furthermore, many students who are diagnosed with ASD have IQ scores that classify them

as having an intellectual disability, while just 25% to 33% have an IQ score ranging between average to above average (Heflin and Alaimo, 2007). ASD is a neurological disorder caused in the first three years of life. ASD is a complex disorder that impacts brain development, and affects many functions of perception, imagination and intention (Trevvarthen et al., 1998). Some children with ASD have moderate to severe cognitive disabilities and intelligence disabilities (Simpson, 2005).

3.3.2 Prevalence of ASD

Since the early 1990s, the number of people diagnosed with ASD has increased globally from 1 in 2,000 to at least 1 in 500 children (Jordan, 1999). It is more common in boys than girls, by a ratio of almost 1:4 (Breakey, 2006; Autism Speaks, 2016). ASD now affects between 60 and 100 of every 10,000 children below the age of 9 (NIASA, 2003). The number of children with ASD has increased in the new millennium, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2000), which revealed that the prevalence of an ASD disorder can range from two to 20 out of every 10,000 individuals. Another study, conducted by King Abdulaziz University for Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia on the population with ASD, found that one out of every 180 children is born with ASD, which is equivalent to 120,000 children affected. Results from this study show that ASD is one of the least prevalent disabilities in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the rate of ASD has increased in the last decade (cited in Al Wazna, 2008, p.35).

3.4 Diagnosis and Causes of ASD

3.4.1 Diagnosis of ASD

ASD is a lifelong disability that affects brain function and the development of social skills,

communication, and cognitive growth. This leads to isolation and exclusion of the individual with ASD. ASD appears in the first three years of an infant's life (Volkmar, 1998; Baron-Cohen et al., 2006; Rajendran and Mitchell, 2007; Ben-Arieh and Miller, 2009; Hussein et al. 2011; Al-Ayadhi and Halepoto, 2011; Adibsereshki et al., 2015; Pruett et al., 2015).

ASD assessment is required if the child has any related symptoms, such as social disabilities, cognitive impairments, communication and language difficulties, and repetitive behaviours. The symptoms are important signs when diagnosing ASD. According to MDS-5 (2013), ASD diagnoses must meet four criteria labelled as A, B, C, and D as shown in table 3-1 below:

Table: 3-1 Diagnostic Criteria of ASD

<p>A. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by the following, currently or by history (examples are illustrative, not exhaustive; see text):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, ranging, for example, from abnormal social approach and failure of normal back-and-forth conversation; to reduced sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; to failure to initiate or respond to social interactions.2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviours used for social interaction, ranging, for example, from poorly integrated verbal and nonverbal communication; to abnormalities in eye contact and body language or deficits in understanding and use of gestures: to a total lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication.3. Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships, ranging, for example, from difficulties adjusting behaviour to suit various social contexts; to difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends; to absence of interest in peers. <p><i>Specify</i> current severity: Severity is based on social communication impairments and restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour.</p> <p>B. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities, as manifested by at least two of the following, currently or by history (examples are illustrative, not exhaustive; see text):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects, or speech (e.g., simple motor stereotypes, lining up toys or flipping objects, echolalia, idiosyncratic phrases).2. Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behaviour (e.g., extreme distress at small changes, difficulties with transitions, rigid thinking patterns, greeting rituals, need to take same route or eat same food every day).
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3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus (e.g., strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or preservative interests).

4. Hyper- or hyporeactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment (e.g., apparent indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, visual fascination with lights or movement).

Specify current severity:

Severity is based on social communication impairments and restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour.

C. Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period (but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities, or may be masked by learned strategies in later life).

D. Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning.

E. These disturbances are not better explained by intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) or global developmental delay. Intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder frequently co-occur; to make comorbid diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability, social communication should be below that expected for general developmental level.

Source: MDS-5 (2013, p. 50–51).

Diagnosis is conducted by a specialist (e.g. neurologist, doctor, psychologist) based on six aspects of the child's development (Meslbov et al., 1997; Cumine et al., 2000) as stated:

- 1) Medical assessment (if any brain damage).
- 2) Assessment of behaviour (using the Behaviour Rating Scale and Direct behavioural observation)
- 3) Psychological assessment
- 4) Educational assessment
- 5) Communication assessment
- 6) Functional assessment (occupational therapist and sensory integrative function)

Finally, as noted above, ASD is complex and the cause not yet clear. There is clarity about the symptoms, assessment approaches, and interventions that might reduce the symptoms and

facilitate inclusion of those with ASD.

3.4.2 Causes of ASD

The causes of ASD are currently unknown (Ryan et al., 2011) and most research has focused on both genetic and environmental factors (NIASA, 2003). Starting with genetic factors, structural and chemical differences in the brains of children with ASD have been found in the first trimester of development of the foetus, (Ryan et al., 2011). These results, together with increased prevalence among relatives with a history of ASD, have given more weight to potential genetic causes, rather than the connection to biological theory. Apart from genetic causes, another potential cause is a compromised immune system resulting from exposure to early vaccinations, such as Thimerosal (Shamey, 2003), rather than environmental factors such as infections, poor nutrition, diseases, poor care or viruses, especially in early childhood (Volkmar, 1998; NIASA, 2003; Baron-Cohen et al., 2006; Rajendran and Mitchell, 2007; Ben-Arieh and Miller, 2009; Adibsereshki et al., 2015; Pruett et al., 2015).

ASD is a hidden and complex disorder, as mentioned above. Hence, there is no clear cause (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, American Psychiatric Association, 2013, Farrugia, 2009). However, there are various justifications and explanations of ASD within biological and psychological theories. At the present time, the causes of ASD are debatable and there is no clear evidence thereof. The three key factors -below- that may cause ASD are discussed in the next sections:

- 1) Biological
- 2) Psychological
- 3) Cognitive

3.4.2.1 Biological Causes

Since the discovery of ASD by Leo Kanner in 1943, who suggested a genetic contribution to ASD (Cumine et al., 2000; Autism Speaks, 2016), no results from studies carried out on families and twins have isolated a particular gene that could be a cause of ASD disorder. However, the existing medical model suggests a biological starting point for ASD, based on the assumption that a number of genes might be responsible for damage in the brain, which may lead to successive ASD symptoms (Baron-Cohen, 1993; Newschaffer et al., 2007). However, much of the existing work based on biological assumptions remains approximate and more research is needed.

Another theory posits environmental causes; for instance:

- Disease during pregnancy
- Medication during pregnancy
- Birth trauma
- Diet
- Preservatives in food, and vaccines
- Pollutants

The environmental causes are a hypothesis, but there is no evidence to support any link between them as causes and ASD (Baron-Cohen, 1993). In contrast, the multiple pathway model is a more comprehensive strategy by which to understand the causes of ASD (Greenspan and Weider, 2006). Greenspan and Weider (2006) suggested in this model that ASD is caused by a combination of both genetic and environmental factors. It has also been suggested that the parent's age is a factor in ASD, since older parents are more likely to have children with ASD than younger parents (Lampi et al., 2013). Lampi et al. (2013) confirmed this by examining the links between parental age and ASD in Finland, using a study of 4,713

cases, which found age to be positively related to ASD. Maternal and paternal ages of 35 years or more were linked to increased risk of ASD in children, while maternal ages of 35 years or more and paternal ages of 40 to 49 were associated with having a child with Asperger's syndrome (Lampi et al., 2013).

3.4.2.2 Psychological Factors

The psychological models suggest two methods: explanatory, which focuses on finding an explanation of the disorder, and cognitive, which illustrates the explanatory approach by trying to recognize a link between behaviour in ASD and brain function. Cognitive theories comprise three psychological models that offer hypotheses on how cognitive function is linked with ASD. These are theory-of-mind as hypotheses, executive function as model and weak central as coherence.

3.4.2.3 Cognitive Approaches

Scientific methodology has focused on developing intervention methods through putting different psychological theories and thoughts into practice. For instance, intervention methods include:

- The Developmental, Individual-differences Relationship-Based model (DIR) (Wieder and Greenspan, 2003).
- Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) (Smith and Eikeseth, 2011).

The next section looks at the cognitive theories in order to explain the causes of ASD, including theory of the mind, executive function theory and weak central coherence theory.

3.4.2.3.1 Theory of Mind

The theory-of-mind states that “autism is a result of individuals with autism” related to the brain’s failure to understand the mental and the emotional situation of the individual themselves, and of other people (Baron-Cohen, 2004, p. 292). For example, ASD affects knowledge, beliefs, language, interest, desires, behaviour and belonging (Baron-Cohen and Belmonte, 2005). Despite the fact that this proposition can offer an explanation for some sort of cognitive delay that is demonstrated by a number of individuals with ASD, the theory has been challenged, because not all individuals with ASD fail to establish empathy and understanding of themselves and others (Adibsereshki et al., 2015; Pruett et al., 2015). The theory of mind sees human behaviours as linked with brain development. Hence, it offers an explanation for ASD symptoms such as lack of eye contact and social interaction and language problems, and then uses suitable interventions to improve the cognitive abilities of the individual to improve their understanding of themselves and others (Baron-Cohen and Belmonte, 2005). The theory has been used widely to help understand ASD and to improve social, language, emotional, physical, thinking and feeling.

3.4.2.3.2 Executive Function Theory

Executive function theory is also important for understanding the causes of ASD. It posits that ASD is related to a disability in executive functioning skills, which are the ability to recognize and solve problems, flexibly shift attention, plan, and control one’s own behaviour (Hill, 2004; Rajendran and Mitchell, 2007). However, criticisms of this theory have been stated in the literature. In addition, executive deficiencies are not the only features of ASD, and can be found in other disorders (Volkmar, 1998; Rajendran and Mitchell, 2007).

3.4.2.3.3 Weak Central Coherence Theory

Weak central coherence theory aims to explain some of the underlying causes of ASD in terms of cognitive deficit. It proposes that a child develops ASD due to a deficit in their ability to merge information globally. Such, a deficit might lead to a disability in attention and a lack of understanding of social content (Mottron et al., 2006; Happe and Frith, 2006).

Most of these approaches were established based on psychology and cognitive theories related to ASD (Volkmar, 1998; Baron-Cohen et al., 2006; Rajendran and Mitchell, 2007; Ben-Arieh and Miller, 2009; Adibsereshki et al., 2015; Pruett et al., 2015). They are helpful in developing an understanding of ASD but none are entirely convincing. Such theories are important to educators in building up their knowledge and understanding of the disorder, and will help them to improve the quality of their teaching.

3.5 Summary Remarks

This chapter has looked at the ways in which SEN/ASD is defined and understood through a range of different models, including medical, social, bio-psychosocial and human rights models. It also described the ways in which ASD is defined as a medical condition, looking at some explanations for its causes. An important theme for the thesis is that the way in which ASD is understood has an important bearing on the practice of teachers in the classroom. As will be seen from the research findings sometimes where the teachers have little knowledge about ASD can have a detrimental effect for the learning experience of SEN/ASD students. The next chapter looks at the way in which SEN/ASD has been considered in terms of the practice of inclusive education in Saudi Arabia and around the world through a review of the academic research literature.

Chapter Four: Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is a literature review of writings that deal with the concept of inclusive education in relation to SEN/ASD in general, as well as more specifically in the context of Saudi Arabia. The review looks at barriers and drivers to inclusive education in Saudi Arabia, including curricula, lack of time, school support, the size of the classroom, and a key issue for this research teachers' attitudes. The final section of the chapter will refer to authors: John Dewey, Paulo Freire and bell hooks, who have developed participatory pedagogies as a way of thinking through how the practice of inclusive education can be substantiated and developed. This literature on these participatory pedagogies adds substance to the field of peer tutoring which was an emerging aspect of this study.

4.2 Definitions of Inclusive Education

It is necessary for this study to define the meaning of inclusive education. Bennett et al. (1998) described inclusion simply as: "a journey or movement away from any kind of segregation" (Bennett et al., 1998, p. 155).

UNESCO defined inclusive education as:

a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range

and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children. (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13).

This definition argues that students with disabilities have the right to live and be educated equally with other students of the same age, giving the right to equal educational opportunities to all children with SEN and offering suggestions towards more flexible education in an inclusive education setting designed for students with SEN to learn and practise their developmental skills (UNESCO, 2005).

Consequently, inclusive education is an important element to obtain a better understanding of the learning environment. In addition, inclusive education is a process that involves schools and other centres of learning so that they become more inclusive and provide services for all students, regardless of their cultural background, ethnic group or disease (UNESCO, 2005).

Inclusive education has come under considerable criticism by researchers who argue that inclusive education cannot use a precise “one size fits all” approach. In addition, it is described as a “troubled concept” because many people define it differently, and there is little agreement about what the term covers and excludes. There is considerable argument about how to define students’ individuality and ability in inclusive classrooms and how a school culture is supposed to be shaped to overlap with the idea of inclusive education.

Hornby (2010) includes a strong criticism of inclusive education, especially emphasising the lack of clarity as far as the definition of inclusion is concerned; there is no agreement for using a particular definition for the term, and it remains questionable as to whether the meaning refers to an inclusive society or an inclusive school. Lipsky and Gartner (1999)

raised criticism about inclusive education for students with disabilities; inclusive education for these students has few positive outcomes for children with special needs who require professional services that can only be available outside the classroom. Hegarty (2001), in his critical assessment of inclusive education, stated that there are important points in applying inclusivity. Firstly, he stated that inclusion has to involve something more than high-quality education or excellent schools, which a number of definitions appear to emphasise. Next, he stated that for a number of SEN students, being integrated in an ordinary school environment is difficult. He claimed that while the goal of inclusive education is important, placing more emphasis on the inclusive education process involves the risk of distorting the main values and essential aims of education, which are developing children wherever possible and preparing them for adult life.

Hornby (2010) pointed out that the aims of inclusion remain unclear. This confusion is linked to the meaning of inclusive education, its categories, ideology and curriculum. He argued that “this confusion applies to all children but is particularly important for children with special educational needs” (Hornby, 2012, p. 55). In addition, Buckton (2000) raised a strong point of criticism of inclusive education for students with ASD and Asperger's syndrome – that inclusive education is not always helpful for them. In contrast, Ainsbury argued (2000, p. 26), with regard to Asperger’s syndrome “the problems arises not so much from people with Asperger's syndrome, but for people who think and perceive the world in very different ways.”

In the definition given by Sebba and Ainscow (1996), inclusive education is:

The process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organization and provision, allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity. Through this process the school builds its capacity to accept all pupils from the local community who wish to attend and in so doing reduces the need to exclude pupils.

(Sebba and Ainscow, 1996, p. 9).

The meaning of inclusion has been recognised as giving each person the right to access education and equal opportunities. Additionally, it highlights the importance of acceptance of all students into their local neighbourhood schools and into society, which in practice gives the opportunity for many students to be included in the same classrooms and schools (Sebba and Ainscow, 1996). Charema (2010) describes inclusive education as an umbrella, which includes different colours, categories of ability and social classes on the side of equality, rights and freedom. Charema (2010) argues that minorities face a 'storm' represented in exclusionary policy, society and culture. The researcher feels that the purpose of this powerful description is not to take it at face value, but to understand the underlying meaning, which emphasises equality and the right to be different.

Inclusion has generally been viewed as a means to pursue equal rights for every student and understand their shortcomings (Donnelly, 2010). Moreover, inclusive practice does not concentrate only on integrating SEN students into mainstream schools; it broadly entails equality in ethnicity, social conditions, gender, health and human rights. Further, it represents collective involvement, access, contribution and achievement.

Inclusive education is a process that aims to develop schools that respect the differences of all students. Inclusive schools support all students by providing suitable policies and practices, especially for those who are excluded, isolated or segregated for reasons such as gender, disability, race, religion, language, poverty or disease. This holistic approach benefits not only students with disabilities, but all students, who gain opportunities to practise social interaction and communication skills with a variety of people (Emam and Farrell, 2009), see Table 4-1 for a summary of different definitions of inclusive education. The benefit of inclusive education is that it offers opportunities for students to develop friendships and learn about appropriate socialisation and communication styles in an inclusive education system (Simpson, 2005).

Language development, intellectual ability, the degree of symptoms and learning requirements are powerful influences on the success of an education experience (DeMyer et al., 1973; Freeman et al., 1991 cited in Jones, 2002: p. 14). Furthermore, children's access to general education requires an ability to socialize, communicate, and exercise their imagination and behavioural skills. However, students with ASD find these skills difficult to develop (Ernsperger, 2002; Boer, 2009). Consequently, inclusive schools must ensure that students with ASD receive specialised support to help them succeed. The process of including learners with ASD is complex and different to that of any other categories of SEN because of the nature of ASD (Jones, 2002). Autism characteristics affect inclusion (Kluth, 2003; Humphrey and Lewis, 2008). Learners with ASD may face more obstacles to inclusion related to their individual differences (Kluth, 2003).

However, Cumine et al. (2000) argued that children with ASD may show mild difficulties is

socializing, communicating and forming relationship with others. This can impact on their inclusion. According to Rogoff (1990) social constructivism refers to participation and apprenticeship through learning processes. However, PT can be applied to the strategies used in schools for student learning and students with ASD. In addition, DiSalvo and Oswald (2002) stated that peer support for students with ASD helps to improve the ability of ASD students and leads to a progression in their educational performance. As will become apparent from this research it is very important to include students with ASD in general classrooms supported by their peers, so as to achieve a successful inclusion model.

Table: 4-1 Definitions of Inclusive Education

Definition	Source
Being with one another, how we deal with adversity, how we deal with difference.	Forest and Pearpoint (1992)
A set of principles that ensure the student with the disability is viewed as a valued and needed member of the school community in every respect.	Uditsky (1993)
A move towards extending the scope of “ordinary” schools so they can include a greater diversity of children.	Clark et al. (1995)
Schools that deliver a curriculum to students through organisational arrangements that are different from those used in schools that exclude some students from their regular classrooms.	Ballard (1995)
Schools that are diverse problem-solving organisations with a common mission that emphasises learning for all students.	Rouse and Florian (1996)
Full membership of an age-appropriate class in your local school doing the same lessons as the other pupils, and it mattering if you are not there. Plus you have friends who spend time with you outside of school.	Hall (1996)
The process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering its curricula organisation and provision.	Sebba (1996)
Schools that are accepting of all children.	Thomas (1997)

Source: Florian (2005, p. 31)

There is no single definition of inclusion and inclusive education, such that many define it according to their own views and experience. All seem to agree on one thing: that school is for all and that difference is normal. Thus, consolidating inclusion into a single definition is a challenging task, as it means a range of things to different people in different contexts and countries. However, there are some similarities and basic overlapping principles in these definitions. "... inclusion embodies a number of factors: (1) education needs to be non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture and gender; (2) it involves all students in a community with no exception; (3) students should have equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum as full-time members of age appropriate regular classrooms; and (4) there should be an emphasis on diversity rather than assimilation" (Carrington, 1999, p. 259). Hence, inclusive education is about responding to the call to accept diversity, and being open to new ideas, thereby empowering all members of a learning community and celebrating difference in dignified ways (Leeman and Volman, 2001).

Frederickson et al. (2010) stated that characteristics of ASD can negatively affect the success of inclusive education for those children. In general, children have a sense of belonging and develop their imagination during the early years of their life, but this is not the case with children with ASD; accordingly, they struggle in social interactions, communication and creating relationships with others, which are required for the learning process (Cumine et al., 2010). All these missing components pose a problem with respect to including ASD students in general education (Boer, 2009; Banda et al., 2010; Chung et al., 2015). All these challenges lead to excluding children with ASD due to their level of complex characteristics (Kluth, 2003). ASD is not like other disabilities because it is a hidden disability. Thus, children with ASD are difficult to recognise, unlike children with physical disabilities (Barnard et al., 2000; Meadan and Ostrosky, 2006; Evans, 2007; Briggs, 2012); hence,

parents, teachers and students may not be aware of the problems that children with ASD have. This leads to difficulties with diagnosis of this disorder compared to other disabilities (Farrugia, 2009, American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Nowadays, there is at the international level more of a focus on achieving equity in education all. School for All is a movement to build more progressive education systems in many countries such as United Kingdom, USA, Denmark, and Norway. This movement is being carried forward through the concept of inclusion to improve performance of the public school while valuing difference (Ainscow, 2013). This is taking place despite the fact that the field of inclusion is a confused concept, ‘riddled with uncertainties, disputes, and contradictions’ (Ainscow, 2013, p.3) and that inclusive education can be defined in many ways (Ainscow, 2013). For example, Saudi Arabia, defines inclusion as more related to the ability for students with SEN to access public schools without mentioning anything about the quality of education received. While, the international movement aims to ensure a more equally inclusive education for all that includes not just the quality of the education but a connection with the local and national context and in terms of a more equitable society.

Cumming and Wong (2010) describe this approach to inclusion as “the rights of children with disabilities to access, participate and be equally included, alongside their peers in shared education and care settings, as well as having access to broader community membership” (p.4). Also, inclusive education is about equity, fairness and not sameness (Ainscow, 2016). Ainscow argues that: “School improvement processes need to be nested within locally led efforts to make school systems more equitable and to link the work of schools with area strategies for tackling wider inequities and, ultimately, with national policies aimed at creating a fairer society” (Ainscow et al, 2012, p 210-211).

4.3 Research Studies on Inclusive Education of SEN in Saudi Arabia

Research on SEN and inclusive education in the context of Saudi Arabia is limited. The majority of these educational studies carried out in Saudi Arabia were heavily quantitative (Hussein and Taha, 2013; Altamimi et al., 2015). Available studies published from 1970 to 2014 are examined in this study, and all key studies are included, to the best of the researcher's knowledge. SEN studies had been the focus of several doctoral and masters theses in Saudi Arabia (Weber, 2012). These studies applied a quantitative approach, with the survey method as the most popular tool. In addition, these studies were limited in acknowledging the complexity of terms and concepts such as "inclusion" and "classroom practice". These studies generally assumed that there is a shared understanding of inclusion and SEN. These assumptions link the researcher and the participants without recognition of the inclusion ideology as a new term in the Saudi Arabian context.

Al-Abduljabber (1994) carried out a survey study of the attitudes of 221 teachers and administrators working in mainstream schools in Saudi Arabia towards inclusive education for students with disabilities. It found that female teachers and administrators had more positive attitudes than male teachers and administrators about inclusive education of students with SEN. Also, administrators who had more experience had more positive attitudes about inclusive education than those with less experience.

Futher, Al-Khashrami (2003) carried out a study to explore the experience of integrating children with special needs in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected from 136 boys' schools and 28 girls' schools. All the categories of special needs had benefited from the integration programmes, in particular students with mild special needs. Boys' schools were more advanced compared with girls' schools. There was an increasing number of schools

implementing integration. Teachers with more experience had more positive attitudes towards inclusive education, while female teachers were more positive than their male colleagues (Al-Khashrami, 2003). However, there is a slightly negative attitude towards severe intellectual disabilities and this might be attributable to teaching positions, teachers' experience of inclusive settings, and the teacher's gender (Alquraini, 2012). These results were the product of a survey including 161 male and 139 female teachers to investigate the factors related to teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education for students with severe intellectual disabilities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (Alquraini, 2012). Another concern is the lack of preparation and training for teachers to embrace an inclusive educational environment in transitional services, which was the norm according to Al-Nahdi (2013, 2014); hence, it was suggested that pre-service special education teachers (PSET) would ensure highly positive attitudes towards teaching for SEN (Al-Nahdi, 2014).

However, Haimour and Obaida (2013a) believed that special education teachers were knowledgeable and well trained, but had little teaching experience, which emphasises the importance of experience and might be an obstacle to the implementation of inclusiveness. A quantitative study methodology was utilised within this research to investigate the attitudes toward the inclusion of students with an ASD among 391 special and general education teachers. Teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with ASD were slightly positive. Significant differences were noted in the teachers' attitudes related to their position, education level, teaching experience and contact with students with ASD. Special education teachers had more training than general education teachers, but less teaching experience (Haimour and Obaidat, 2013a).

A total of 47 teachers who worked in learning disabilities resource rooms participated in Al-Zoubi and Abdel Rahman's (2016) study. Their study attempted to discover the obstacles facing learning disabilities resource rooms, and identified a lack of collaboration and support for general teachers, schools staff and parents, and a lack of facilities and equipment, such as guides, computers and the Internet. Abu Shaira's (2013) descriptive-comparative study examined the differences between teachers' and parents' assessments of students' language levels according to their educational settings (special schools for deaf students or inclusive schools). It found there was no significant difference between students at inclusive schools and those at deaf schools in terms of expressive or receptive language abilities.

4.4 Barriers to Inclusive Education in Schools

Alhaznawi's (2010) study discussed the barriers to implementing inclusive education for students with ASD in Saudi Arabian schools, and found that many factors can affect the implementation of inclusive education for this type of student, such as lack of facilities, social barriers and negative attitudes, as well as shortages in health care and early interventions. In the next section the researcher will develop this theme in relation to the relevant literature, before substantiating this review through the research findings.

4.4.1 The Economic Influence on Inclusive Education

There is an increasing belief among stakeholders that inclusive education is outside of their budget capacity, particularly in some developing countries, where the finance and support of inclusive education services for all children is a significant concern (Peters, 2003). Moreover, in many countries costs have risen noticeably, such as in relation to new and expensive medical interventions, combined with expanding social services and welfare benefits, along

with an increasing population; all have increased pressures on spending, resulting in powerful incentives to control education budgets. Some countries have also been subject to increasing pressures from a rapidly growing population, higher poverty, war and disease, which leads to the destabilisation of economies and limited access to economic resources (UN, 2007).

These financial difficulties influence society and families and can impact on movements towards a more inclusive community. Furthermore, many parents cannot afford this type of education in the private sector (Escobar et al., 1994). The high cost of medical treatment and support from specialists also means that some families prefer to send their children to work at an early age, so as to bring in additional income to feed the family for the sake of the survival of the family unit, thus leaving them uneducated.

A more cost-efficient system could bring about good practice that can be widely replicable across schools. The public sector requires a more efficient and effective use of its resources. This includes the optimisation of input and output processes to achieve a higher cost benefit. For instance, countries listed in the OECD were found to have from 5% to 40% of students drop out at an early age, ending up with poor skills and impacting on national unemployment rates. However, students who drop out of school are mainly children with negative feelings and experiences of the learning process, alongside frustration of having to repeat years due to their poor performance and with low self-esteem. (UNESCO, 2009). It could be possible to reduce these drop-out rates by improving the quality of education and its processes, through training courses for teachers, high-quality materials, enhanced technology and the provision of additional support for students who experience difficulties in the learning process (UNESCO, 2009).

Due to recurring global financial crisis, some countries, such as India, have started to develop cost-saving procedures to sustain inclusive education (Jha, 2002). Funding formulas have been created, and major reforms have been undertaken to support inclusive education to achieve the aims of EFA. Cost-effective and efficient contributions are significantly represented by human resources and community support programmes. However, these economic activities rely on clear policy declarations and legal frameworks (Peters, 2003). It is more cost effective to establish and maintain mainstream schools to educate all children, rather than establishing a number different schools that “specialise” in teaching different groups of children (Salisbury and Chambers, 1994; Odom, 2001). A widespread issue in the EFA Assessment Reports (2000) is that the available resources are inadequate to meet all students’ basic needs in education. For this reason, some developed countries have argued that this highlights unbalanced conditions and provision. It has been anticipated that educating all children will necessitate additional funds from countries and donors of up to 8 billion USD per year (Senegal, 2000). Consequently, a review of resource allocation and expenditure is urgently required. An example of this is manifest in the high costs of maintaining policies leading to a repetition of school year grades by large numbers of learners. Money spent on resources to admit children into school could also be used to enhance the quality of education for already registered learners, thereby reducing the number of students repeating grades at school (Salisbury and Chambers, 1994; Odom, 2001).

By contrast, mainstream schools in some countries are keen on having SEN pupils for the sake of their budgets. Thus, countries with the most attractive funding options to support inclusive education follow a strongly decentralised system in which budgets supporting SEN students are allocated to local institutions (Mittle, 2012). It is not easy to estimate the cost of education for SEN children. Moreover, modifying and building new schools for all children

will require a great deal of funding, which some countries can not commit to because they have underdeveloped economies or limited planning capacities. Another issue, as shown in this research data is teacher salaries; SEN teachers receive 30% more than general teachers, is a significant issue in Saudi primary schools.

4.4.2 Teachers' Attitudes

Many researchers who are interested in inclusion and inclusive education have relied on the role of attitudes to explain teachers' and students' behaviour. Moreover, measuring and understanding particular attitudes will allow the current research to develop and promote this kind of learning and improve the quality of EFA, making education more effective (Avramidis et al., 2000; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004).

According to Corsini (1999), attitudes can be defined as “learned and stable predispositions to react to a given situation, person or other set of cues in a consistent way” ([Corsini, 1999] cited in Ainscow, 2007, p. 14). Moreover, attitudes, as defined by Secord and Backman (1969), are certain regularities of an individual's feelings, thoughts and predispositions to act towards some aspect of their environment. Some social psychology research has argued that a person's social actions are directed by their attitudes, whether those actions involve political activity, religious beliefs or ways of living and learning. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education can affect the success or failure of an inclusion programme (Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004).

Slee (2011) suggested that EFA is a set of consistent beliefs, evaluations and intentions that are related to attitudes. In addition, there is a relationship between culture and social lives that can be considered as an interchangeable effect on any educational system in the world. Social aspects and cultures influence teachers' and students' views of inclusive education.

According to Van Reusen et al. (2000), many studies have tried to understand what makes teachers different in their willingness to work with SEN students. Some of these studies have found that teachers with positive feelings towards inclusion are more likely to adopt it and succeed compared to teachers with negative predispositions (Van Reusen et al., 2000; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004). Vaughn et al. (1996) evaluated both mainstream and special teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and found that most of the teachers who were not contributing to inclusive programmes had negative feelings about inclusion. These teachers also realised that decision makers were not aware of classroom realities. Furthermore, these teachers reported that many aspects might impact the success of inclusive education (Rodríguez et al., 2012; Vaughn et al., 1996; Avramidis et al., 2000), such as a lack of experience, training, and resources. Many teachers highlighted that the lack of training preparation programmes and the need for more consideration on curriculum content and pedagogy for typically developing students. Therefore, the teachers will not be fully aware of working with students with SEN until they experienced it in their present classrooms (Florian and Rouse, 2010).

A number of studies have demonstrated that teachers' attitudes are affected by the type of expertise to which they might be exposed through training courses or teaching. Currently, changing these trends and attitudes requires many teachers to accept the process of inclusive education with a more positive attitude. In addition, most of the positive attitudes come from special education teachers, more so than mainstream teachers, because of the pre-service training that helps the former to build such attitudes. Providing sufficient training will increase teachers' awareness of inclusive education. The benefits of pre-service training courses are supported by the findings of Beh-Pajoooh (1992), who revealed that teachers who had been on such courses developed and expressed more favourable attitudes and emotional reactions towards inclusive classes than teachers who had not. Another strategy is to provide

a collaboration-based classroom to help change the attitude of teachers to improve their acceptance of SEN children in the same class as others. This cooperation means working with SEN teachers and acknowledges what would improve the learning process, as well as how to use other useful strategies to meet diverse needs (Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004).

However, Booth and Ainscow (1998) argued that different types of difficulties for children in the learning process cause different attitudes in teachers. For instance, a negative attitude towards inclusive education was revealed clearly in Mushoriwa's study (2001). This was carried out in a primary school that adopted inclusive education and engaged children with visual impairments in regular classes. The attitudes of 400 teachers towards the inclusion of children with visual impairments in regular classes were mostly negative. The study found that although children with visual impairments may have been included physically, they were excluded socially and academically because of the negativity of the teachers' attitudes. Mushoriwa's (2001) study found that both female and male teachers were equal in rejecting such inclusion. These results have implications for the impact of the inclusion debate in developing countries. It is difficult to promote inclusive practices in situations where mainstream classes are large and resources, including aids, equipment and support staff, are rare (Mushoriwa, 2001). Hastings and Oakford (2003) conducted another study with 93 teachers during their training placement in schools with children aged 4–19. The findings indicate that trainee teachers formulate more negative attitudes towards children with emotional and behavioural difficulties than toward those with intellectual disabilities (Hastings and Oakford, 2003).

Teachers' needs and attitudes towards SEN students should be closely monitored, since inclusion has gained such momentum. With this in mind, the training programmes offered to

pre-service and in-service teachers should be re-examined to effectively prepare teachers to tackle the needs of diverse students, whose numbers are increasing rapidly. For example, training programmes are needed to continuously update their methods and develop them consistently. Furthermore, research studies should focus on the significance of variables such as knowledge, expertise and self-efficacy, and how to successfully develop approaches in inclusive classrooms (Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004).

Much of the literature has highlighted that attitudes play a vital role in shaping the success or failure of inclusive policies. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that teachers' attitudes are addressed once teachers complete their initial training, in order to develop them personally and professionally. A number of factors have been reported to contribute to creating teachers' positive attitudes and feelings of self-efficacy, such as accessing high-quality training opportunities, direct contact with SEN students, and support and encouragement. A nurturing environment, opportunities for planning and a school leadership that is committed to inclusive values are three other factors highlighted by the research (Hastings and Oakford, 2003; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004). This is confirmed the research data presented in this study.

However, some teachers might not be able to express concerns that inclusive education is unsuitable because it is viewed by central government as the best possible option available. These differentiated attitudes could be used rather positively to exchange views in school debates about what is appropriate and what is not. Owing to the complex interconnectivity of variables such as personal experience, professional identity, political directives and public responses to SEN and inclusion, the impact on teachers' attitudes will be challenging. Thus, it is suggested that SEN teachers are developed professionally to enhance their confidence and the different competencies necessary for dealing with SEN children (NASUWT, 2008).

Consequently, it is important to note the need to provide teachers with transfer strategies to help them cope with inclusive education and change their negative attitudes. This will help teachers to educate SEN students whose levels of difficulty are diverse. Teachers are regarded as the cornerstone in any educational process; therefore, all stakeholders, from the head teacher, to teachers and also parents, should be supportive of SEN teachers' work. In order to do their job well, teachers should have the required skills and competencies that enable them to implement their teaching duties in the best possible form in an inclusive classroom. Thus, teachers should believe that all pupils in an inclusive classroom are educable and should be assisted to increase their potential, self-confidence and motivation. This could be fulfilled through modifying curriculum content, using the technology available and using teaching strategies that suit each individual student (Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004). The reasons for negative attitudes, as will be confirmed by the data findings for this research, related to ASD are usually related to a lack of knowledge and understanding, influence of policy, lower IQ, behavioural problems, lack of experience, and social and communication issues. Teachers have more negative attitudes toward ASD than toward other disabilities (Haimour and Obaida, 2013a, Pennsylvania Bar Institute., 2007). The next section will discuss those factors in detail.

4.4.2.1 Factors Related to Teachers' Attitudes About Inclusion of ASD

There are several perspectives and attitudes relating to the inclusion of students with SEN and ASD. For instance, some teachers and parents have a positive attitude towards accepting inclusion (i.e., Duquette and O'Reilly, 1988; Villa et al., 1996). On the other hand, other teachers and parents have a negative attitude towards inclusive education for students with disabilities (Larrivee and Cook, 1979; Garvar-Pinhas and Pedhazur-Schmelkin, 1989; Minke et al., 1996; Mushoriwa, 2001).

In addition, this view can vary depending on the type of disability; for example, some teachers may accept students with physical disabilities rather than students with other types of disability (Forlin, 1995; Branka and Majda, 2011). Moreover, Branka and Majda (2011) found that Slovene teachers have a more negative attitude towards included students with behavioural and emotional disorders in inclusive classrooms than towards students with physical impairments. They argued that teachers who are trained to deal with different SEN children are as an important factor toward inclusion. In addition, they found that teachers who have engaged in a range of training have a more positive attitude towards all learner (Branka and Majda, 2011).

Forlin's (1995) study found out that the degree of acceptance among teachers to include students with disabilities in general education classes depends on the degree and severity of the disability. Thus, mild and moderate disabilities are more rapidly accepted than children with severe disabilities. Hence, teachers' positive attitudes towards students with SEN are significant in implementing successful inclusive education.

In addition, adequate skills and knowledge are needed by teachers to meet each student's needs in inclusive classrooms (Jobling and Moni 2004). Teachers' receptivity is related to their behaviour in real life (Jobling and Moni 2004). However, teachers in both SEN and general education exhibit negative attitudes, which change following completion of training courses (Shade and Stewart, 2001; Jobling and Moni 2004; Shippen et al., 2005). Teachers who have positive attitudes are more welcoming and calm towards children with SEN. As a result, teachers who have less training exhibit a negative attitude toward students with SEN (Shippen et al., 2005).

Experiences is a significant factor influencing teachers' attitudes and impacting successful inclusive education for students with SEN according to Kalyva et al. (2007). In addition, they found that negative attitudes are not related to teachers' years of teaching experience (Kalyva et al., 2007). According to Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) several studies have found that primary teachers are more supportive of inclusion than secondary teachers (i.e., Larrivee and Cook, 1979). In contrast, Leyser, Kapperman, and Keller (1994) reported that secondary teachers have more positive attitudes. However, Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) conducted a study to examine attitudes and practices regarding mainstream education. A total of 91 teachers from the general education and special education responded to two questionnaires. The SET were found to often implement different strategies that fit their students' needs. The results also highlighted many demographic influences, such as grade level, gender and training, on teachers' attitudes towards implementing practices for students with disabilities (Leyser and Tappendorf, 2001; Ahmmed et al., 2012).

Some researchers have found that general educators hold positive attitudes towards inclusion while special education educators are even more positive (Garvar-Pinhas and Pedhazur-Schmelkin, 1989; Fuchs and Fuchs, 1994). In regard to gender, Berryman (1989) argued that there are no differences, but Curtis (1985) found that male teachers are less supportive toward inclusion than female teachers. Most researchers agree that more training on and knowledge of inclusion is linked to more positive attitudes (Leyser et al., 1994; Bender et al., 1995; Bennett et al., 1997). Variables influencing teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms at primary education level in Bangladesh were examined by Ahmmed et al. (2012). A total of 738 teachers responded to a survey, from which it was shown that a failure to implement successful inclusive teaching practices in primary schools is dependent on teachers' negative attitudes towards inclusive education

(Ahmmed et al., 2012). The educators who succeeded in implementing and adopting inclusive teaching approaches and practices were more likely to have a positive attitude toward catering for SEN in their classes (Romi and Leyser, 2006; Avramidis and Kalyva, 2007; Rakap and Kaczmarek, 2010).

All the researchers cited above have highlighted that a positive attitudes toward including students with SEN in regular classes is important for successfully implementing inclusive education in schools. Educators who have more confidence in their own capabilities and a commitment to accommodating students' needs in inclusive settings create a welcoming classroom environment and utilize suitable materials to meet different needs. This is confirmed by the research data in this study following classroom observations. Campbell and Gilmore (2003) argued that increased awareness and knowledge of different types of disability might lead to positive changes in educators' attitudes towards SEN in general.

Teachers' experience is a significant element in successful inclusive education for students with ASD (McGregor and Campbell, 2001; Emam and Farrell, 2009). McGregor and Campbell (2001) examined teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with ASD via questionnaires collected from 27 teachers without experience of ASD and 22 with experience. In addition, 49 mainstream teachers and 23 specialists were analysed. The authors found that in many teachers' view, integration is possible for students with ASD. In addition, the general teachers without experience of ASD showed less confidence in dealing with students with autism than those with experience. Specialist teachers were more positive, but acknowledged potential difficulties for both students with ASD and without, highlighting that the success of inclusion depends on the individual students (Gregor and Campbell, 2001). Thus, many teachers expressed worries about the effect of inclusion on students without SEN, while most

were prepared to undertake more training.

Teachers with positive attitudes are more likely to have a positive relationship with ASD children, which help to improve their academic and social aspects. In contrast, students' negative attitudes are more likely to be related to the teacher's lack of knowledge, which leads to difficulties (Robertson et al., 2003). Another quantitative study carried out by Park and Chitiyo (2011) investigated the attitudes of 127 teachers from a small Midwest town in the US, using the Autism Attitude Scale for Teachers (AAST). The results showed a general positive attitude toward students with ASD. In addition, no significant difference in attitude was found between SET and GT. With regard to age and gender, significant differences were noted, with young female teachers more likely to have positive attitudes towards students with ASD.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found that general education teachers had less negative attitudes toward more inclusive education practice than special education teachers did. In relation to the Saudi Arabian context, the findings indicated teacher' attitudes toward inclusive education of students with ASD in Saudi Arabia. The general education teachers hold more positive attitudes toward inclusive education for students with SEN and more specifically ASD students than special education teachers, as they did not have experience of severe cases. This result of the current research supported previous study regarding teachers' attitudes on inclusive education of students with several severe intellectual disabilities. A quantitative study conducted by Alquraini (2012) indicated that teachers' attitudes were in general slightly negatives towards inclusion of students with several severe intellectual disabilities, although general education teacher attitudes more positive compared with special education needs teachers. He argued that negative attitudes from special education teachers

was related to their experience with more complex cases, compared to general education. Some special education teachers who taught students with severe disabilities were more likely to have unsuccessful experiences compared with general education teachers.

Researchers have usually reported that teachers have better relationships and fewer conflicts with students who have fewer behavioural problems (Birch and Ladd, 1998; Stuhlman and Pianta, 2002). Children with ASD vary in terms of their behavioural problems, and these probably also vary in the classroom. Where teachers have less training and knowledge to work with children with ASD, it is expected that children with ASD and greater behavioural problems in class will also have poorer-quality relationships with their teachers, and as a result, these teachers reject such children (Branka and Majda, 2011). Another factor for teachers who work with children with disabilities is having support from the school and society (Stuhlman and Pianta, 2002).

Moreover, two studies have investigated the effect on the teacher–student relationship when the student has a disability or difficulty. The first study, by Giangreco et al. (1997), found that compared to service givers, classroom teachers and special educators, the 17 teachers in their study worked closely with students who were deaf-blind on a constant basis, and that this level of closeness resulted in limited interaction between the student and the GT. The second study, by Marks et al. (1999), found through interviews with 20 teachers that if paraprofessionals assume primary responsibility for an included student, it is likely to reduce the role of and interaction with the GT. In addition, the GTs reported that the presence and closeness of paraprofessionals offered a chance for them to avoid assuming responsibility for educating the children with SEN placed in their classroom. Both these studies provide

evidence that the involvement of paraprofessionals will get in the way of the growth of a positive relationship between teachers, and students with ASD. A key purpose of education in both integration and inclusion is to facilitate positive interactions between students with ASD and teachers, and these students and their peers. The teacher–student relationship could influence the child’s social status within the classroom. Therefore, there is a high significance in the teacher–student relationship in general, and for children with ASD in particular (Emam and Farrell, 2009). In fact, students who have communicative, warm and close relationships with their teachers are measured as better adjusted and have better subsequent relationships with teachers and other students (Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999).

The quality of training helps to develop better relationships between the teacher and a child with ASD (Robertson et al., 2003). Although previous research that has linked attitude to actions has contributed a great deal to our understanding of teachers’ attitudes and relationships and their effect in practice, we have limited information about how those attitudes inform teachers’ actions in the classroom in relation to children with ASD. It is important to understand teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about educating students with ASD as an element of a general examination of teaching and learning, given that teachers’ positive perspectives towards including students with ASD in their classrooms are necessary for successful inclusive education (Birch and Ladd, 1998; Stuhlman and Pianta, 2002; Hess et al., 2008; Branka and Majda, 2011).

Many factors affect teachers’ beliefs about and attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs in general. It is becoming more difficult and complex to accept children with ASD. Many teachers reject students from public schools because these teachers have limited knowledge and do not understand the nature of ASD, or do not have the necessary

training to deal with students' needs and lack support from the school (Robertson et al., 2003).

On the other hand, Emam and Farrell (2009) identified, in their study about the tensions experienced by teachers and their views on support for pupils with ASD in mainstream schools, factors that could affect a teacher's relationship with students with ASD in the classroom. An important theme is the pressures within relationships connecting teachers and students with ASD, and the relationship among those with negative attitudes (Emam and Farrell, 2009). The findings highlighted two important themes underlying the teachers' discourse: frustration and the effect of difficulties in social and emotional understanding (Emam and Farrell, 2009). The authors discussed some of the individual characteristics of ASD that impact on the relationship with teachers. The first important factor that might affect teachers' attitudes or views are the nature and severity of the disability, the contact experience of the teacher with students with disabilities, and their experience from teacher education programmes. On the other hand, Van Acker (1996) argued that children with SEN are less likely to be popular and more likely to have been rejected in school. Chamberlain et al. (2007) found that:

the average level of social network centrality was lower for children with autism than for their peers; they were less well accepted and they had fewer reciprocal friendships. (Chamberlain et al., 2007, p. 239).

The concept of exclusion for students with disabilities by their teachers and peers often arises because of their limited social skills; as a result, some teachers and peers do not know how to deal with these students, and hence rejected (Lee et al., 2008). In addition, some of the stereotyped behaviours most common in ASD are not seen as acceptable behaviours in social interaction (Lee et al., 2008).

In another study, Chung et al. (2015) surveyed 234 teachers, finding that attitude is a moderating variable that can influence the successful implementation of effective interventions within the inclusive classroom for children with ASD. The results showed that being male, teaching at secondary level, and lacking special education qualifications enhance negative teacher attitudes toward students with ASD, but female teachers are more likely to hold positive attitudes (Chung et al., 2015).

Sanahuja Gavalda and Qinyi (2012) highlighted that attitudes, training and teacher support are key for increasing inclusive education for children with disadvantages. Hodkinson (2012) claimed that educators should decide whether to exclude children or not based on their attitude. Thus, a specific link has been stressed between knowledge and the inclusion of children with ASD (Frederickson et al., 2010). Teachers that work in inclusive classrooms have to find fitting learning approaches to meet diverse learning needs, and remove obstacles associated with learning (Hodkinson and Vickerman, 2009). Learner with ASD struggle with social interaction, communication and behaviour. Thus, the progression for teaching them can be hard, and teachers might build up a negative attitude. As a result, these teaches are more likely to exclude children with ASD from the learning process and hinder effective inclusion for SEN students (Gibb et al., 2007; Beacham and Rouse, 2012). In contrast, teachers with positive attitudes to including children with disabilities are more likely to have a better relationship with them during the teaching process (Monsen and Frederickson, 2004). Monsen and Frederickson (2004) stated that attitudes towards children with SEN are linked with their outcomes and improvement. Thus, teachers' attitudes significantly impact student outcomes (Monsen and Frederickson, 2004[Ellins and Porter, 2005] cited in Rose and Howley, 2007, p. 13).

Teachers that hold negative attitudes have lower expectations and exhibit anxiety as soon as students are labelled as having behavioural problems in their class (Rose and Howley, 2007; Riddick, 2012) Teachers have more negative views of children with severe disabilities than those with mild disabilities (Sharma et al., 2008). Sharma et al., (2008) argued that teachers view children with more severe disabilities less favourably than those with mild disabilities. Thus, students with ASD are excluded more often than students with other categories of SEN (Humphrey, 2008). Statistics show that 21% of students with ASD are expelled from school more than once more than other categories of SEN (Humphrey and Lewis, 2008).

However, the number of students with ASD in schools is increasing; according to The Department for Education and Skills (DfES), “autism is no longer thought of as a rare disorder” (DfES, 2006. p. 2). Additional, Humphrey (2008) claimed that students with ASD are 20 times more likely to be expelled or excluded from school than their peers without disabilities. Hence, there is now increasing attention on the educational needs and inclusion of students with ASD. In the researcher’s view, learners with autism are still excluded from schools simply because of the ASD label stigma attached to them.

This higher rate of exclusion of children with ASD has been confirmed by the DfES (2013). Thus, it is more likely that students with ASD will face difficulties in accessing mainstream education, compared to those with other types of SEN ([Heman, 2001] cited in Monsen and Federickson, 2004, p.139). Huebert (1994) argued that children with impairments are better educated outside the general education classroom setting. Also, he suggests that inclusive education for children with ASD is not enough to ensure successful inclusion. Inclusion of students with SEN unsuccessful for several reasons, as summarised below:

- GT have lower expectations for their students than SET.
- General education curricula are not appropriate for their included students but special education curricula fit their needs.
- Individualization is less likely seen to happen in general classrooms than in smaller classes with SET supervisors.
- Regular teachers are more likely to want students with SEN in their classrooms.
- Poor service is provided to students with SEN in regular classes.
- There is no evidence that GT are better able to deal with SEN now than they were before ([Huebert, 1994] cited in Thompkins and Deloney 1995, p.3).

Thus, inclusive education does not seem to be working for children with ASD (Loreman et al., 2011), which suggests that inclusive education for children with ASD is not enough to ensure successful inclusion, which contradict the findings of this research study.

4.4.3 Students' Attitudes

Children's attitudes towards their SEN classmates play an important role in creating a harmonised environment where there is mutual understanding and acceptance. This issue has been addressed in a number of studies. For example, Capper and Pickett (1994) conducted a study in which they used focus group interviews with 46 middle school students studying at a mainstream school, and a similar number of students in an inclusive school. The purpose of their study was to compare the effect of the type of school with their views about inclusive education. The findings of the study revealed that pupils at inclusive schools were more accepting, understanding and tolerant of individual differences. On the other hand, mainstream pupils held more negative attitudes towards the notion of inclusive education

(Capper and Pickett 1994; Dyson et al., 2004).

Scruggs et al. (1998) carried out a study to find out the school factors related to inclusive science instruction, and to assess the classroom achievement of students with SEN and their classmates in the same class. They found that students with SEN in the inclusion classroom had higher achievement on academic abilities, memory, critical thinking, verbal discussion and more activities carried out in classroom than non-inclusion classrooms. As a result, all students in inclusive classrooms had more positive attitudes than in non inclusive classroom.

However, one must be careful when interpreting research results of this nature. Pupils with severe levels of SEN are probably unwanted partners in an inclusive classroom. This might result in isolating pupils in an inclusive classroom. One reason for this is that pupils might have characteristics such as problems with communicative or behavioural competences. Another reason is that some students might have spent long periods of time outside their inclusive classroom (Dyson et al., 2004). The issue of the attitudes of students is significant in terms of this research study, which argues for the promotion of students as 'small teachers'.

4.4.4 Educational Curriculum

For inclusive education to be successfully implemented, a flexible curriculum that meets the needs of all students' is required. This flexible curriculum should be able to accommodate the different needs such as emotional, social, cognitive, and academic, as well as to enhance creative educational development (UNESCO, 2009). The inclusive curriculum should support human rights, and equal opportunity. As UNESCO (2009) highlighted, an inclusive flexible curriculum plays an important role that “involves breaking negative stereotypes not only in textbooks but also and more importantly, in teachers’ attitudes and expectations” ... “learning

to know, to do, to be and to live together” (p. 19-20).

Inclusive practices reflect how the flexibility of curriculum can be attuned to different diverse needs so that all students benefit from a generally established common value of quality education. This flexibility enables students to decide their teaching approach, and to allow more time for observing the classroom according to students' needs (UNESCO, 2009). Teachers need be allowed freedom to access and use different resources to make the curriculum more flexible to meet students' needs.

Bennett and Cass (1989) carried out a study of five students with SEN following a transfer from an SEN primary to a mainstream secondary school to understand the process of integration. Through interviews with parents, teachers and school staff, as well as observation of students' classroom practice only two students were more engaged in their public school than they had been in SEN school. The findings showed that successful integration of students from special schools into mainstream schools is possible but this success depends on teachers' training, cooperative learning styles, attitudes, planning, curriculum and assessment. However, the SEN curriculum was poor in two cases but satisfactory in the other three cases.

Non-inclusive curricula expect that all students should learn the same things to the same time and through the same resources and approaches. Furthermore, they do not consider students' differences in capability and diverse needs and capability. It is important that the national curriculum be more flexible to offer potential for modification to each need and to motivate teachers to look for solutions that match their individual students' abilities and the needs, learning methods, weaknesses and strengths of each and every pupil (UNESCO, 2009). This highlights the need for a general curriculum that is appropriate for the student's needs. More

supportive, accessible and flexible curricula, learning resources, teaching approach and textbooks can be provided as the input to build and development schools for all. Finally, once the lack of inclusive curriculum can be a huge barrier on move toward include students with SEN in general education settings (Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2006b; Booth et al., 2000).

4.4.4.1 Hidden Curriculum

In schools there is a place for social norms that is acknowledged as the hidden curriculum. Teachers send messages to their students throughout the lesson, which are often not related to the lesson content, but to values, practices and roles, which entail standard attitudes and behaviours from the social culture (Breakey, 2006). These social norms are likely to be known by everyone in the school even though no teachers have directly taught them, but have developed approved attitudes, usually through modelling (Heerey et al., 2003). For those with ASD who have difficulty learning the hidden curriculum, segregation and exclusion are natural consequences. Others who can perceive peers' behaviour in dealing with social norms, and are more able to engage in socially acceptable behaviour might be rejected less (Robertson et al., 2003). The benefits of this hidden curriculum for all students and those with ASD are that it corrects students' unsuitable behaviours, encourages and supports students' suitable behaviours, gives an explanation of why a number of behaviours are unsuitable and develops new social skills. Thus, this helps those students to be more included in their schools and community (Ernsperger, 2002). The lack of understanding of the hidden curriculum by students with ASD is one of the causal factors of negative attitudes of teachers in inclusive classrooms (Breakey, 2006). The issue of the hidden curriculum as an important factor of the learning environment for students with ASD is recognised in the research data of this study.

The curriculum for educating children with ASD should be based on children's individual

needs, ages and capabilities in order to provide them with adequate life skills (Ernsperger, 2002). The curriculum for children with ASD should support a process of developing functional daily life skills, such as social interaction, communication and behaviour skills within academic constructs (Scheuermann and Webber, 2002). Such a curriculum enables pupils to develop important skills, and is key in helping and supporting them to succeed in their education and future life (National Research Council, 2001), involving the use of different instruction methods, positive SEN attitudes, good processes of evaluation, a suitable environment, and coordinated team support (Wilder et al., 2004). Moreover, the target for giving suitable support in education settings for children with ASD is to promote a developmentally suitable learning environment and to advise on the preparation of suitable activities for children's abilities and developmental levels (Kasari et al., 1999; Ernsperger, 2002).

The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) suggested that one approach to move towards a relevant, equal set of goals is to modify the curriculum according to inclusion description. An inclusive description to curriculum recognizes each student has different needs. Some students have more weakness and difficulty than others and all students should benefit from a generally adopted approach to achieve the appropriate level of inclusive education. For example, students with ASD have a range of difficulties that should be taken into account by modifying the learning content to support their development and achievement. This area usually is not available on non-inclusive curriculum. For example there is a need for an additional focus on the use of language, as well as imagination and social skills, which are important for included students with SEN and ASD as well (Fein and Dunn, 2007; Ben-Arieh and Miller, 2009). In contrast, non-inclusive curricula focus more on the required level of academic achievement which most students with SEN usually fail to meet (Avrimidis et al.,

2000; Westwood and Graham 2003; UNESCO, 2009).

Education services should be provided for all, including students with ASD, in both public and special schools (Abdullah, 2001). Students with ASD have special developmental and learning needs (Avramidis et al., 2000). The curricula for teaching children with ASD should be individualised and offer guidelines for teaching purposes (Ernsperger, 2002). Many schools have adopted textbooks and curricula with a focus on academic subjects; for example, languages, maths and sciences (Scheuermann and Webber, 2002). A suitable curriculum for teaching children with ASD not only deals with academic content but also takes into account other content, such as life skills, providing structure for a developmental curriculum that includes cognitive and academic aspects, speech and language, play and freedom, social and emotional and group motor and occupational skills.

However, the curriculum for educating children with ASD should be based on children's individual needs, ages and capabilities in order to provide them with adequate life skills (Ernsperger, 2002). The curriculum for children with ASD should support a process of developing functional daily life skills, such as social interaction, communication and behaviour skills within academic constructs (Scheuermann and Webber, 2002). Such a curriculum enables pupils to develop important skills, and is key in helping and supporting them to succeed in their education and future life. There are many ways to implement appropriate curricula and improvements for children with ASD; the most efficient curricula for educating and teaching such students take into account important factors to succeed in education (National Research Council, 2001). These factors include curricular modification, use of different instruction methods, positive attitudes toward SEN, good processes of evaluation, a suitable environment, and social and coordinated team support (Wilder et al.,

2004). Moreover, the target for giving suitable support in education settings for children with ASD is to promote a suitable learning environment and to advise on the preparation of suitable activities for children's abilities and developmental levels (Kasari et al., 1999; Ernsperger, 2002).

4.4.4.2 Early Intervention

Early intervention services are significant in assisting and supporting children to achieve a successful life and meaningful education (Hecimovic et al., 1999). When children with ASD receive educational interventions at an early age, they learn important skills to help them to be effective in school (National Research Council, 2001). Early intervention is important for all children, including children with SEN, and especially children with ASD. Ben-Itzhak and Zachor (2007) found a link between pre-intervention socialisation and communication skills and post-intervention effects on children with ASD in accessing education, confirming that pre-intervention developmental and improvement characteristics make a difference to the results of intervention.

Students with ASD need intervention in terms of communication, social, behaviour and academic skills (National Research Council, 2001). There are several specific instructional approaches and strategies for students with ASD in classrooms, which are prepared in line with the children's developmental levels and abilities (Jordan, 2001). There are many teaching strategies that support and help both students and teachers as Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS). It is a strategy that uses pictures to communication alternative to language with communications problems as ASD (Shamey, 2001; 2003). Other interventions for individuals with ASD are speech therapy, music therapy, modelling, sensory integration, social stories and incidental teaching, visual strategies, and art therapy. Another

approved therapy, Treatment and Education of Autistic as well as the related Communication-handicapped Children (TEACHH) are programmes designed to help learners with autism to get over symptoms of the disorder through using structured, environmental adaptations, different suitable communication training and continuous intervention (Schopler, 1994; Mesibov, 1997). Also, interventions such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) can be used (Shamey, 2001, 2003).

In Saudi Arabia early intervention programmes have adopted these approaches and used in teaching students with ASD in special education schools, but the most commonly used approaches are PECS, ABA, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, modelling and TEACCH. The main reasons for maintaining routine in the learning environment are that it results in better control of behaviour and less disorder, making the work of the teacher easier and taking less time, because it is believed that this is a better way to teach children, particularly those with severe disabilities. In addition, the system of education for pre-service teachers and SEN teachers trains them to use this approach to teaching students with special needs, while general teachers do not apply this approach in teaching students in public schools. In summary, teaching students with developmental disorders is not as complex as some teachers think, but, by contrast, a lot of preparation and the use of different intervention approaches are required to teach them. These intervention approaches are not solely for teaching children with autism but are also very useful in teaching all students.

4.4.5 Classroom Barriers

4.4.5.1 Lack of Time

The concern about teacher's time constraints emerge in the literature on inclusive education

as a barrier to inclusion (Smith and Leonard, 2005; Talmor et al., 2005; Drudy and Kinsella, 2009; Horne and Timmons, 2009). Educators highlight insufficient time to take care of all the responsibilities of lesson planning, teaching strategy, marking and meeting with other teachers (Smith and Leonard, 2005; Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). Hence, teachers find it difficult to have sufficient time to provide for individual learning needs of their all students, including those with SEN (Hart, 1998; Tod and Blamires, 1999; Gibb et al., 2007). According to Talmor et al. (2005) the lack of time makes teachers feel their efforts are not enough, and they experience stress and guilty about all students, not only students with additional needs. Anderson et al. (2007) illustrated that teachers' time issues are reiterated much of the research in the literature. Their study involved a survey of 162 primary teachers in Australian about their beliefs and perceived needs in relation to inclusion. Open ended and forced choice questions provided qualitative and quantitative data about teachers' attitudes and practices. While 85% of the participants listed advantages of inclusion 95% reported obstacles to teaching all inclusive classrooms. Also, the disadvantages listed were the most significant. Two disadvantages related to the time concern. These were "time constraints imposed on teachers and time constraints imposed on non- disabled children" (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 138). Also, it was found that teachers did not have enough time for meetings and preparation in class for all students with SEN and well as students without disabilities.

Drudy and Kinsella (2009) argue that the time issue for teachers is of specific relevance to the Irish context, which it is mentioned as a barrier to inclusive education of students with additional needs through teachers in the literature on inclusion (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). Time is an important aspect in teaching especially in an inclusive class with different needs on one class (Grenier et al., 2005). This supports with Smith and Smith's (2000) argument that time is an important factor for success in effective inclusion practices. Teachers in this study who

were unsuccessful in inclusion practices idea lack of time (Smith and Smith, 2000).

Another qualitative case study by Mukhopadhyay (2013) investigated teachers' perceptions of the impact of inclusion of students with SEN on their classes and the practice of inclusive education in Botswana. Data were collected from 36 teachers from six schools, who participated in six focus groups. The focus group findings were triangulated with classroom observations and access-audit and document analysis to get clearer picture of classroom and school practices. The study found that teachers were less likely to be in favour of including students with severe compared to students with mild disabilities; one of the reasons given was lack of time. Similarly Hay et al. (2001) found that lack of time was one of the main barriers to inclusive application in South Africa.

4.4.5.2 Classroom Size and Environment

Classroom size and support for the diverse students' needs in one classroom are additional issues of concern for teachers and professionals while implementing successful inclusive education in the classroom. Crowded classes with diverse learners with additional needs are causes for concern for class teachers (Smith and Smith, 2000; Hay et al., 2001; Finn et al., 2003; Mukhopadhyay, 2013). Moreover, Smith and Smith (2000) argue that a higher number of pupils with diverse and SEN in the classroom make teachers feel ineffective in their application of Inclusive practices in classroom. Hence, teachers experience that preparation and planning for a large number of students with a different individual needs can be unfavourable to their capability to put into practice successful inclusion (Smith and Smith, 2000).

The classroom environment should also be taken into account, as it is very important in

achieving good progress for children with ASD so that they are provided with classrooms that minimise exit routes and have toilet facilities next to the classroom or close by. Also, the classroom environment should be safe, and reduce distractions and noise, as a kind of intervention. Moreover, it is important to choose an appropriate learning situation to provide planned learning and appropriate materials to help students with ASD. A quiet area should be designated for individual learning if the student with ASD needs space when other students are doing group activities (Abdullah, 2001). Many students with ASD find the normal classroom environment common in mainstream schooling extremely distracting (National Research Council, 2001).

The significance of classroom settings as well as school architecture is revealed as a significant aspect of the research data and will be discussed later in terms of future recommendations for supporting and developing inclusive education with SEN/ASD students.

4.4.5.3 School Support

The literature on inclusion indicates that the lack of collaboration and support from the school is another crucial barrier that can cause obstacles for educators while applying inclusive education practices (UNESCO, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Armstrong et al., 2011). The school society is an important factor in whether or not teacher will be able to effectively adopt inclusive practises for all students in their classrooms (Hornby, 2010). Educators reportedly believe they are ineffective at applying inclusive education practices caused by shortage of support. Also, collaborative work among teachers, school staff, parents and students is more likely to increase the ability successfully implement inclusion practices (Smith and Smith, 2000). According to Grenier et al. (2005), teachers who

received support and help in and out the classroom from special education teacher assistants were more successful in adopting inclusion practices. They found that successful implementation of inclusion is required enough resources, planning, time and collaborative work without these. It would be difficult to teach in an inclusive education class. Inclusion Schools provide trained teachers, support and resources that help to move towards more successful practices for all (Grenier et al., 2005; Smith and Leonard, 2005).

In order to have inclusive schools that encourage equal chances and sharing, concerted efforts by teachers, school staff, peers, parents, families and the community are required (Wertheimer, 1997). This can depend on the style of leadership and teaching, as well as the role of school leaders in terms of their support for inclusive education. Some school leaders have policies that do not support EFA and reject any student with SEN from state schools or do not support and help teachers or families in schools that do permit SEN students (Allan, 1999). They manage schools in traditional ways, without taking new, inclusive ideas on board. On the other hand, leaders who support and implement inclusive education in their schools work hard to change exclusionary and traditional policies (Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004)

Educators must be prepared to understand the special needs of learners with SEN, including the nature of SEN, the inherent problems and the SEN child's way of learning and what works for them as an individual (Allan, 1999; 2007). Further, educators must be prepared to convey a message of unconditional acceptance and understanding, otherwise learners are likely to feel stigmatised and consequently underachieve in an inclusive class environment.

Educating all children in local or community schools is beneficial as it helps to overcome obstacles and negative attitudes on one hand, and facilitates community cohesion and social

interaction on the other. In addition, involving teachers and communities in the schools further reinforces the inclusion process.

The research literature indicates that the lack of collaboration and support from schools as a barrier that can cause obstacles for educators applying inclusive education practices (Armstrong et al., 2000; Downing, 2002; UNESCO, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Armstrong et al., 2011). The school environment and culture is important for implementing effective inclusive practices for all students (Hornby, 2010). Collaborative work between teachers, school staff, parents and students is more likely to increase the ability of teachers and schools to successfully implement inclusion practices (Smith and Smith, 2000; Grenier et al., 2005; Smith and Leonard, 2005).

Therefore, it is essential for teachers who work with children with disabilities, to have support from the school and society (Stuhlman and Pianta, 2002). With regard to including students with autism, it has been argued that encouraging achievements cannot be accomplished by the teacher alone. Rather:

Schools need to buy in wholesale to inclusion if it is to work. Inclusion can not rely on the interest, commitment and enthusiasm of one or two individuals. Without a shift in the whole organisation's attitude and approach it will fail children with ASD and Asperger (Barnard et al., 2000, p. 12).

Inclusive schools require all staff to have positive attitudes and a clear understanding of the goals and expectations of applying inclusion within the school (Eldara et al., 2010; Huang and Wheeler, 2007), which must entail cooperative working and support from school management (Horrocks et al., 2008).

There were many barriers highlighted by the inclusion literature in this study such as non-inclusion policy, culture and society, facilities, lack of funding, lack of knowledge, curricula, lack of resources, lack of time, lack of collaboration, lack of awareness of individual learner needs, teachers' lack of enthusiasm and negative attitudes toward all students needs and practical with SEN/ASD. However, barriers to successful inclusion practices are highlighted in inclusion research. These barriers can include lack of financial support as a reason for not recognizing and appropriately promoting a student's needs. Other include a separation among general and special education teachers and systems, a lack of responsibility and a failure to bring together all information more objectively. Teachers may have low even no expectations for students with SEN. Teachers and parents may fear that general education classrooms will be disrupted if students with SEN are included. Also they may be concerned that the progress and outcomes of students without disabilities maybe affected if students with SEN are included along with them. In contrast, some supporting practices toward inclusion to students with SEN are; providing suitable support and resources in general education classes., planning individualized education programmes according to students' needs, teacher training that satisfactorily addresses inclusive education of students with SEN and collaboration when teaching mixed abilities in classrooms.

4.4.6 Types of Classrooms for Students with ASD in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi MoE provides a description of the educational environment for students with SEN in general, and with ASD in particular, recommending two types – SEN classrooms and inclusive classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2010). The Ministry highlights the right to educational opportunities for all children with SEN and has offered suggestions on structuring learning environments. They identified two categories of specials needs schools for teaching students with disabilities: (1) full special education schools for students with

SEN, where these students have a long period in school. These children are offered certain activities depending on their physical, emotional, social and behavioural skills and health. They follow a different curriculum from general education because there is no one agreed curriculum to teach children with ASD (Abdullah, 2001); and (2) daily or part-time special classes offering a placement that includes only students with SEN. Students attend the special education class for half a day (Abdullah, 2001).

There are five types of inclusive classrooms in public schools for teaching students with SEN in general, including students with ASD. According to Al-Mousa (2014), there are several types of education for students with ASD/ SEN in Saudi schools, as discussed below:

- **Location Integration**

Location integration refers to special education classes in the regular school, sharing the building but not resources.

- **Educational Integration**

This is intended to integrate students with SEN with peers within the same classroom, taught the same curriculum with the support of special education services. The special education services include a resources room, individual planning programmes, speech therapy and a psychologist;

1. The resources room supports students with SEN in regular classrooms. The students who need the services go to the resources room as individuals or in small groups for support and help.

2. The individual planning programmers provide individual support to each student with SEN in terms of developing the necessary skills and working on annual improvements.
3. Speech therapy provides language and communication support.
4. Psychologists help students to modify their behaviour.

- **Social Integration**

Social integration is non-academic integration, such as through art, school trips, playground events and the lunch break – social activities only.

- **Community Integration**

Community integration gives opportunities for students with disabilities to become integrated, active members of their community through various activities and events. It guarantees them the right to work independently and to enjoy freedom of movement.

- **Partial Integration**

This is intended to integrate students with SEN with their peers in one or more subjects in a regular classroom.

- **Full Inclusion**

In this case, students with different disabilities are in the same regular classes as their peers. These classrooms allow students with SEN to join other students without SEN in the same classroom and follow the same activities and learn in the same way.

However, there are conditions for admission to this kind of classroom, according to Abdullah (2001), these students have a very high level of educational performance and should not interfere with the other students' learning. Inclusive classrooms have consultant services for students with SEN who have entered public schools – these services provide advice for students with SEN, such as those with ASD, and for teachers and parents. The role of the consultant is to identify areas of need and activities and provide suggestions for teaching and for the management of this kind of classroom. Moreover, the consultant provides an IEP for each student with difficulties in the classroom (Abdullah, 2001). Each inclusive classroom has a consultant service to help students with SEN understand academic skills and improve their social and communication skills. This service is usually located in the resource room. One teacher is in charge of teaching students with disabilities, catering for between four and six students with common disabilities. An inclusive classroom can sometimes have a visiting teacher from outside the school. This service is for students with SEN, including those with ASD (Shamey, 2001). Students with ASD whether fully or partially included are offered speech therapy and communication skills in resource room services. Also, special education teachers are granted a 30% increment on the basic salary as an incentive to accelerate the implementation of these policies (MoE, 1995). This was confirmed by the observation findings.

In addition, the curriculum for students with ASD in integrated classrooms should be suitable for all abilities and ages of students with ASD, and should be adopted from the practicalities of public education that are developmentally suitable for them. However, the curriculum for teaching students with ASD should highlight the classroom environment and suitable activities that may help them (Abdullah, 2001). The general goal for the education of children with ASD is to prepare them to lead normal, independent lives. However, recently students

with ASD have been included in mainstream classrooms in Saudi Arabia at an increased rate, and these students often lack the social skills needed to interact effectively with their typical peers. This has led to the adoption of PT as an effective strategy to include more learners with ASD in mainstream classrooms, which will be discussed in next section in further, as confirmed by the findings of this research.

4.4.7 PT and ASD Learning

Peer Tutoring (PT) according to DiSalvo and Oswald, is a “Focus on dyads with one typically developing peer and one child with autism, rather than a group of children. Tutor-learner pairs that promote the incidental learning of social behaviours through natural interactions” (2002, p. 200). It can be described as any means of assistance provided by students to their classmates, such as educating or teaching others in class under the mentorship of their teacher, or sharing information between them (Greenwood et al., 1991; Gearheart et al., 1992; Utley et al., 1998; Olson and Platt, 2000). In other words, if one student plays the role of teacher to help a peer who is struggling to learn new skills, that is considered to be PT. This strategy consists of tutor–learner pairs and encourages the learning of social behaviours through natural interaction, where students learn from each other sharing their social, communication and academic expertise.

According to Marchand-Martella et al. (1992), PT has been commonly used as a teaching approach in educational sectors in general, and special education classrooms, for same-age students or older students, with “normally” developing students and students with disabilities. The PT strategy has been found by many researchers to be effective with students of different ages, capabilities and genders, according to Kamps et al. (1997); even PT with high-functioning school-aged children with ASD is effective. Roeyers (1996) studied the potential

impact of integrated play groups, and found a positive increase in the social interaction and development of more appropriate social behaviour. In the study children diagnosed with ASD were randomly selected to work with typically developing peers. Each peer was informed about the student with ASD, and assigned a target student who had less involvement; the adult role was to mentor the interaction process between the students, without intervention

Fisher (2001) carried out a research on 22 elementary school students and 45 students from middle school, who faced difficulties with reading and received tutoring from second-grade students. The study results were positive when using the tutoring programme to assist students. It showed increased reading ability and reading speed. Another study was carried out by Salend and Nowack (1988) to examine whether students with learning disabilities could use peer tutors as a helpful approach to improve their ability in reading. It found there was a progress in students' oral comprehension when using the PT approach. Another study was conducted by Kamps et al. (1994) on a class-wide PT: integration strategy to improve reading skills and promote peer interactions among students with ASD and general education peers. It found that there was a noticeable improvement on reading fluency.

Mastropieri et al. (2001) made an investigation on whether 24 middle school students with learning difficulties could help each other with reading. The study found students became more skilled as a result of the tutoring process. They were able to summarise a passage using important ideas and answer questions related to the reading. In addition, the lowest-performing students improved after five weeks from using the tutoring procedure, compared with students in the control group. The researchers adopted the interview method following these experiments to gather data about student and teacher attitudes towards PT. The results

showed positive attitudes from both teachers and students (Mastropieri et al., 2001).

Lee et al. (2008) argued that students with high abilities are able to act as assistants to teachers for students with difficulties. However, this is not the only benefit for peer tutoring, it also allows the child with ASD to have a “give and take” relationship with others, and could give them a chance to move from weak communication and social skills to more appropriate social skills.

However, Ochs et al. (2001) argued that the reliance on employing PTs to support and help other students with ASD is not the only intervention that can successfully teach the latter social skills (Ochs et al., 2001). The chance to see their peers model suitable social skills does not automatically lead to their ability to react with their friends in the same way (Mesibov and Shea, 1996; Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1998). ASD students have difficulty learning functional sequences and understanding social skills as it is difficult and complex. Further, it is often difficult for them to carry out the sequences for any act without receiving direct instruction from an adult, such as a visual prompt from teachers, aides or other students (Mesibov and Shea, 1996; Mesibov, 1999). Moreover, there might be other complications from such interventions, because peers may refuse to work with ASD students due to the characteristics of ASD. The lack of social skills of sufferers actually creates a barrier that prevents them from understanding the meaning of social norms (Heery et al., 2005).

PT strategy allows students to learn and practise their skills with other students in a natural setting that is more comfortable for them (Greenwood et al., 1988). There is clear evidence about the effectiveness of using PT on students' learning as a strategy, not only in terms of academic skills, but also other areas, such as social and communication skills (Fuchs et al.,

2000; Rivera, 1996). However, the teacher's role is important in creating and implementing appropriate ways to address a diverse range of learning needs (Fuchs et al., 2000). Further, some research has shown that many students in different grades benefit from using a peer programme to improve their reading competence when they work together on learning activities, and they become more involved in social activities (i.e. Greenwood et al., 1988; Salisbury et al., 1995; Kamps et al., 1997; Fuchs et al., 2000; Mastropieri et al., 2001). The great benefit for students who have learning disabilities is that they make more progress in reading from using the PT programme (Fuchs et al., 2000; Mastropieri et al., 2001). Another benefit is collaboration, which occurs through PT between the students and encourages typical interactions through learning activities with children from diverse backgrounds (Fuchs et al., 2002).

Studies have pointed out potential improvement of learners' with ASD skills once a PT strategy is employed in inclusive education (i.e. Kamps et al., 1994; DiSalvo and Oswald, 2002; Carter and Kennedy, 2006). PT helps to improve social, communication, behavioural and academic skills. This improvement helps to change negative attitudes towards learners with ASD, so they are more accepted within regular classrooms, as PT can have successful outcomes in inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, students who work in pairs build up stronger academic and social skills than students who learn in a standard classroom by themselves (Fantuzzo et al., 1992). In addition, other research has confirmed that students with or without disabilities benefit from PT in learning academic skills such as maths and reading (Fuchs et al., 2000; Banda et al., 2010). PT is a helpful and practicable approach for promoting progress and improving education for students with ASD (Carter and Kennedy, 2006).

However, PT as with other interventions strategies cannot work in isolation, it has to be employed within other educational programmes that are carefully planned, and adopted by a collaborative team with relevant curriculum. As Cushing et al. (2005) stated, peer support interventions could be joined with other supportive means to ensure students with severe disabilities have meaningfully participated within the general curriculum. Thus, peer support arrangements should be considered alongside other individualised support strategies – such as curricular modifications, related medical services and other classroom-level practices that are likely to enhance students’ academic and social success (Wehmeyer, 2002). Furthermore, teachers supporting individual students must have a clear plan for execution and should work as one team with the class teacher and administrative staff as well (Thomas et al., 1998).

Cooperative learning on intergroup relations, self-esteem, acceptance of mainstreamed classmates and social norms could be seen as effects of adopted PT strategy, as some studies suggested (i.e. Greenwood et al., 1991; Derry,1999). The initial findings have suggested that peer support interventions can improve academic engagement and peer interaction in youth people with severe disabilities (Slavin, 1991; Slavin, 1995). However, a replication of these interventions in a systemic way is essential for improvement according to Carter and Kennedy (2006). Hence, studies based on data carried out to set up a tailored approach are vital to enhance students’ engagement in mainstream schools (Farlow and Snell, 1989), especially with ASD students. Further, adoption of peer support should incorporate students and teachers’ experiences and benefit from them in a positive way (Carter and Kennedy, 2006).

PT strategy arguably could make students with ASD less stressed and more comfortable to interact with a small number of classmates. Further, it makes the lesson more motivating; helps students learn from their peers to copy social skills and to exchange information and knowledge from each other. Learning through assistance and cooperation is more likely to support ASD inclusion than the traditional educational method which is not easy for student with SEN to follow.

The relationship between learning and teaching is complex. Further, the relationship between instruction and development is a rich experience and also complex (Newman et al., 1989). This calls attention to the important characteristics of a social environment that help to increase the cognitive development in children with ASD learning and improve their weakness. This suggests possible linkages between cognitive development in the child as a mediator (Haywood et al., 1992), and PT strategies used in class to support student learning and inclusion of students with ASD. PT activities can be influenced by aspects of social, cultural life, history and knowledge of each student in the classroom to learn from each one experiences. That suggests both peer in the PT process have some of knowledge to teach and share with their peer. PT gives students equal chance to learn and enjoy the learning process and it helps students with/out ASD to improve on their weaknesses by learning from each other.

PT helps in language development, intellectual ability improvement, reducing the degree of symptoms and learning experience, which are factors for success in education (DeMyer et al., 1973). Students with ASD find these skills difficult to develop but through PT strategy they

are more likely to be improved and developed (Ernsperger, 2002; Boer, 2009). This will reflect on the learning of skills, and give all students equal chance to participate in the classroom. Also, it builds a good relationship between students and teachers. Further, increase the self-esteem of student with disabilities and encourages students to respect each other's differences.

The researcher argues that through PT ASD students will learn much of the hidden curriculum such as language, social and behavioural skills, as well as the academic curriculum. Also, they can understand their weaknesses and learn from their classmates. Further, students without SEN will learn something about their friends with SEN and accept their differences. Hence, in the long term this will be reflected in on their views and attitudes toward more inclusion. Having reviewed the literature on inclusive education in relation to peer tutoring, the next section will extend the literature review to areas that deal with PT from the perspective of critical pedagogy.

4.5 Education Pedagogy

Pritchard and Woollard (2010) stated that "Pedagogy is the heart of teaching." Macedo (2000) argued that the meaning of pedagogy is to lead a child, stemming from Greek philosophy. Thus, he maintained that pedagogy illustrates that "education is inherently directive and must always be transformative" (p.25). This section will discuss the contributions of major contributors to pedagogic theory that focus on the key issues of interest to this thesis, in particular peer learning and the learning environment and social context in which learning takes place. This will include an account of how the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire and

bell hooks contribute to the progressive transformation of curricula and pedagogy in Saudi Arabia so that education for all is more inclusive. The link will be made between these progressive approaches inclusive education and peer tutoring.

4.5.1 John Dewey - Progressive Pedagogy

Dewey, as a progressive educator, stated that education must be based on experiences that involve input from the child and that promote a reorganisation of classroom practices and curricula (Eirich, 2006). Dewey summarised his views on how education can improve society throughout his life's work as one of the founders of the progressive education movement. He argued that it is the job of educators to encourage students to realise their full potential in life. Moreover, he was particularly critical of the method of learning facts in schools and felt that students should learn by experience. Thereby, children would not only have knowledge but would also develop the skills, behaviour and attitudes required for them to solve a wide diversity of problems in life. Dewey tried to show the significance of links between society and education, and also with politics, because he strongly believed that active learning encourages students to think more critically about the world around them (Dewey, 1916; Dewey, 1938; Rodgers, 2002).

John Dewey played a central role in the philosophy and practice of progressive liberal education. His most significant works include *The Child and the Curriculum* 1902 *Democracy and Education* 1916 and *Experience and Education* 1938, *The School and Society* 1976 and *Democracy for Education* 1980. For Dewey education was social and interactive which mean that school was a process through which social reform could occur by making education itself became a democratic process. He meant by this that students should interact and be fully engaged with their own learning. This means, that schools are not just

places where students are filled with knowledge but that students learn how to live their lives, and that this can be done by making a connection between what is being learned and the students own prior experiences; and in that process to bring about social transformation for the benefit of all. None of this was to underestimate what was being learned or the role of the teacher.

In this way the school was to be regarded as “embryonic democracy” where teachers as well as students enjoyed intellectual freedom and the privilege of initiative and participation in decision-making and curriculum-planning' (Knoll, 2014). Dewey argued that education has the ability to lead to huge progressive social change. This experience comes from social transformation. Students take on the roles of more active participants in lessons, and not solely as listeners.

For Dewey, at the centre of his progressive pedagogy were the principles that the training of students can be directed based on the social needs of the community; interest and motivation can be a strong driver for teaching and learning; the teacher's role is to motivate and encourage an aspiration for knowledge, and also to provide direction in the explorations carried out; learning involves development of an individual student’s cognitive, social, language, emotional and physical skills (Knoll, 2014). In addition, awareness should be paid to the student’s physical needs, with more use of the areas outside of classrooms and schools, for example, the playground and non-curricular activities. (Dewey, 1938). This interest in what lay outside of the classroom extended to building build cooperation between the home and school, in order to fulfil all needs of the student to develop and improve. All those

principles that are consistent with adopting a PT strategy enable a more progressive education pedagogy that may help develop of cognitive, social, language, emotional and physical abilities for individual children with ASD in the classroom and create an enjoyable learning experience.

In describing the relationship between school and society, Dewey (1915) stated that “democracy has to be born a new every generation, and education is its midwife” (p.139). Here, he drew on his view that schools should not only be places where lessons are taught, but also take an active role in shaping children’s lives. Thus, schools have to be inclusive in their activities that are fundamental and very important to the student now and in the future. Schools should “be a miniature community” (Dewey, 1915, p. 15). Dewey argued that through inclusion children would not only be gaining necessary knowledge and skills but having a direct impact on the improvement and the development of society. In addition, they considered that critical thinking is a much more useful skill to learn than traditional learning by heart or rote. Encouraging that connection begins with the belief that all children can meet academic values, and that schools have the capability and the responsibility to support and help each student to achieve their goals (Ainscow et al., 2006).

These responsibilities can be reached by adopting strategies and embracing change. This involves a long-term, developmental, improvement process of examining suitable strategies, teaching methods, school practices, training, policies, social awareness and attitudes. Hence, whole staff participation and professional development is required to set up this process. In addition, realising the role of parents can help to build a successful inclusive education

system (Ainscow et al., 2006; Faras et al., 2010). These experiments in education can be regarded as another form of PT for inclusive education, where students will be able to share their experiences in ways that support the academic progress of ASD students. Dewey's approach to progressive pedagogy like PT suggests that the learner's experience is the centre of learning, with teachers supporting the learning process. In this approach to learning, knowledge is fixable and the students criticise each other and the teacher. Both approaches suggest that when students interact in class with each other they are more likely to find solutions to their learning problems.

4.5.2 Paulo Freire – Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Paulo Freire started his career as a progressive educator in Brazil, working with peasants on the topic of adult literacy.

In 1968 he wrote his famous book on education *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was published in English and Spanish in 1970. In this book he formulated an approach to pedagogy based on Christian theology and Marxist theory. Most famously he set out his notion of conscientization, or 'liberatory education' against the practice of 'banking education'. Banking education is where teachers regard their students as empty vessels that must be filled with knowledge and content. This leads to a passive form of learning. On the hand, teaching based on the principle of conscientization is where students learn to think critically for themselves. At the centre of this pedagogy was a changed relationship between the student and the teacher. While the teachers did not lose their authority, they had to recognise that they had much to learn from their students.

In terms of liberatory education, Freire stated that “education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students” (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Thus, Freire (1972) believed that as long as the teacher is the subject in learning process and the student is object, a contradiction persists. Hence, a transformed society would dictate reflection of that transformation process. He insisted that learners do not engage in the process of learning by memorising facts, but by constructing their reality in engaged dialogue and problem solving with others in what he referred to as a process of conscientization, or consciousness raising. Therefore, in order to facilitate this sort of participatory pedagogy, schools need to move away from banking education by adopting liberatory education. The problem-posing education model enables teachers and students in that time to become subjects of the educational process (Freire, 1970; Freire et al., 1997; McLaren, 2000). Furthermore, students develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world, and they realise that the world is not static reality but a reality in process and undergoing endless transformation. In other words, Freire believed the power of liberatory education helps to overcome authoritarianism and alienating intellectualism (Freire and Macedo, 2000).

The PT learning process, following Freire's emphasis on participatory education, can become a dialogic act where students experience freedom by listening to each other's opinions and thoughts, as well as leading to a more positive relationship between students and teachers (Freire, 1997):

“The fundamental task of the mentor is a liberatory task. It is not to encourage the mentor's goals and aspirations and dreams to be reproduced in the mentees, the students, but to give rise to the possibility that the students become the owners of their own history. This is how I understand the need

that teachers have to transcend their merely instructive task and to assume the ethical posture of a mentor who truly believes in the total autonomy, freedom, and development of those he or she mentors.” (p. 324).

Furthermore, PT will affect the communications, language, and behaviour skills for students with ASD. As a result, that will help to make the classroom and school more productive and comfortable for all students. That will help to transform class, school, culture and society to liberatory education set toward learning for all. The PT approach as a type of collaborative learning provides students with equal chances to greater independence. PT extends the concept of student teacher education through a dialogical process, to student-student education. Each pair works together with less controlling from the teacher and they can learn through the activities without the pressure of all students listening to what they are doing. This is especial important for students with SEN /ASD who are more sensitive toward other students. Hence, schools could act as the engine of change toward more inclusive practices

4.5.3 bell hooks’ Teaching to Transgress pedagogy

hooks is a Professor of Literature who has written extensively on matters to do with education in relation to race, gender and class. Her work was based on her own personal experiences as a black woman educated in the American school and college system. As a young woman she recognised the power of learning but she also realised that her learning was based on an agenda that was based on the interests of the dominant white control society. She stated that “we were always and only responding and reacting to white folks” ([hooks, 1994, p. 3-4] cited in Emirbayer, 2003, p. 254). Like Freire, she opposes banking education system as it is not accepting of individual differences and structural inequalities (Davidson and Yancy, 2009).

In this environment, any possibility of finding excitement or pleasure in the classroom disappeared. hooks directed her frustration towards imagining more effective pedagogical tools. She offers an alternative vision of education, in which pleasure plays a central role. She made the provocative statement that “teaching is a performative act” (Davidson and Yancy, 2009).

In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994a) she stated that classroom can be as a site of liberation, which can be achieved by developing an engaged pedagogy:

‘To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin’
(1994a, p. 13).

Following Freire, she criticised “banking” while challenging educators to think about the political effects of education (hooks, 1994a). She discovered that education means participating in a democratic society, in which diverse opinions and voices struggle collectively to create equality and justice. *Teaching to Transgress* engages with a wide range of problems and approaches to education as the practice of freedom:

“Learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility, we have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom” (hooks, 1994 b, p. 207).

She exposed the traditional system of education as that one represents inequality. In order to overcome inequality, it is important to recognise cultural diversity. In *Teaching to Transgress* she calls 'for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing, a deconstruction of old epistemologies, and the concomitant demand that there be a transformation in our classrooms, in how we teach and what we teach, has been a necessary revolution – one that seeks to restore life from a corrupt and dying academy” (1994b, p. 30).

hooks (1994a) pointed to this educational environment as the most important part of the reality that teaching and learning were political in exclude community. This influence students understanding of knowledge with connects to the real life through position themselves on directed to engage with others. She exposed that education as power comes from participating in a free culture, in which diverse races, genders, opinions and voices struggle together to create social justice and equality (Specia and Osman, 2015).

Teaching to Transgress pedagogy offered another dimension of inclusion education practices in which freedom plays a central role and can be related to adoption of PT strategy as inclusion practices as way of accepting all students. Students with ASD can exercise their freedom through speaking, discussion of a problem, involvement in development of cognitive

skills, learning social skills and modelling behaviour through activities. Also, students will learn to respect each other's opinions and abilities. Hence, using a PT strategy means that the teacher can trust their student abilities by letting them be responsible for learning and teaching each other. It makes inclusive education a more enjoyable experience, in contrast to banking education.

The Teaching to Transgress pedagogy offered another demonstration of inclusive education practices in which freedom plays a central role. This can be applied as a form of PT strategy, as another type of inclusive education. Students with ASD can practice their freedom through speaking, discussing problems, so that they have a real involvement in the development of their own cognitive skills, as well as other social skills and to model their behaviour through active learning processes. In this way students can learn to respect each other's opinions and abilities. Hence, using PT strategy means that teachers can trust their student abilities by letting them be partly responsible for learning and teaching each other.

4.6 Summary Remarks

This chapter reviewed the academic literature on the topic of inclusive education in relation to SEN/ASD in general, as well as more specifically in the context of Saudi Arabia. The review looked at barriers and drivers to inclusive education in Saudi Arabia, including curricula, lack of time, school support, the size of the classroom, and a key issue for this research, teachers' attitudes. The review sought to extend the limits of the academic literature to include the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire and bell hooks, all of who have developed participatory pedagogies as a way of thinking through how the practice of peer-tutoring can be substantiated and developed. The next chapter looks at the methodology that was used for collecting the research data.

Chapter Five: Research Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The research methodology chapter involves a full description of the research approach used, including the philosophical position as well as the researcher's position in relation to the ontological and epistemological issues relating to knowledge construction. This methodological framing includes a justification for the research paradigm that has been selected, together with an account of the data collection, analysis and sampling method, limitations of the qualitative approach and the ethical issues.

5.2 Philosophical Underpinnings

This study adopted a phenomenological approach to research, which means studying phenomenon in the social world in terms of the way things are presented through lived experience and awareness; the phenomenological researcher's objectives are met when they reach a rich, reliable description of their participants' life experiences (Berg, 1998; Cohen et al., 2007; Bryman, 2008). In addition, phenomenological research leans towards an interpretive dimension, enabling studies into the nature of a phenomenon (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Wertz (2005) presented a summary of the meaning of phenomenological study as:

“a low-hovering, in-dwelling, meditative philosophy that glories in the concreteness of person-world relations and accords lived experience, with all its indeterminacy and ambiguity, primacy over the known” (p.175).

This approach enables new ways of understanding subjective experience while gaining insights into people's behaviours and helps researchers to cut through the predominance of taken-for-granted assumptions (Lester, 1999).

Phenomenology relates to reality and logic, whereby the world can be constructed by the observation of social life through individuals' views, attitudes or beliefs about the social world, which can be influenced in many ways, such as by context, time, culture, individual experiences and consciousness. Consequently, a phenomenological approach involves the study of what is rationally required for any type of experience to be different or the same, while not being a study of facts, the empirical is always subject to transformation (Wertz, 2005). Underpinning the approach to methodology is the paradigm within which the research is framed.

5.3 Research Design

5.3.1 Research Philosophy

There are philosophical paradigms in social research which reflect assumptions about ontology, epistemology and axiology (Punch, 2009; Robson, 2011). The assumptions are fundamental beliefs that researchers depend upon for their research approach (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002; Creswell et al., 2007).

Axiology is concerned with the study of values, and the researcher's ~~is~~ values, and the play in all stages of the research process, which might affect the credibility of the result. Ontology comes from the Greek word "being", and is concerned with the study of existence; in other words, the science or study of being and the nature of reality. In addition, ontology is used to express the view of the natural world and a realist perspective built by people. There is a debate between philosophers in the natural and social sciences about the existence and description of reality, which could be objective or subjective.

Objectivism holds that ‘social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence ‘ while subjectivism ‘ holds that social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of those social actors concerned with their existence’’ (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 10). The debate is about realism and relativism (House, 1991; Grix, 2004); however, ontology is a key element in the philosophy of science. Epistemology refers to assumptions concerned with the study of the nature of knowledge, its extent and validity, and how information is perceived and formatted in the research field (Robson, 2011). Today, empiricism is the most common philosophical school in the education field, but not the only approach (Punch, 2009). A well-defined philosophy is a key in the successful completion of research in the context of attaining defined goals and objectives of the research. The next sections discuss the main research paradigms in detail: positivist, interpretivist and critical.

5.4 Research Paradigms

5.4.1 Positivist Research Paradigm

The positivist or scientific paradigm maintains that “foundational scientific propositions are founded on data and facts” (House, 1991, p. 2), aiming for predictions and generalisations (Scotland, 2012). This approach can be used for research regarding disabilities. For example, research on special needs education and inclusion where the child is regarded as the problem, as found in the medical model, would fit with this paradigm. Positivism began in the 18th century with the French philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798-1857) (Bryant, 1985). He believed in using scientific methods to elaborate the understanding of social reconstruction. This paradigm is reflected in attention to laws that can be scientifically established to characterise different types of beings and ideally patterns of relationships that exist among different phenomena (Crotty, 2006). Positivism can be seen as an approach to research that

came out of the natural sciences, where various practices took place on the assumption of objectivity. It assumes that the social world exists externally and can be measured through objective methods (Bryant, 1985; Cohen et al., 2007).

5.4.2 Interpretive Paradigm

The interpretive paradigm focuses on a holistic perspective of the person and the environment. This paradigm is suited to methodological approaches that offer a chance to hear the voice, concerns and practices of study participants (Bryman, 1992; Walsham, 1993). Interpretivism according to Crotty (2006) is linked to the work of Max Weber (1864-1920). This is an epistemology that emphasises the importance of understanding (*Verstehen*) and a concern with the different roles of humans in a social context where they can not be understood as if they were objects (Saunders et al., 2007). Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) describe the interpretive paradigm in research as a researcher construction approach in which researchers relate to their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Hence, they aim to understand phenomena through interpreting the meanings that participants provide (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Walsham (1993) defines interpretive approaches as beginning from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction built by human actors and that this applies equally to researchers. Accordingly, there is no objective reality which can be discovered by researchers and by others, in contrast to the hypotheses of positivist science (Walsham, 1993).

The interpretive research method maintains that the researcher can not suppose a value-neutral position, and is always implicated in the phenomena being studied (Orlikowski and

Baroudi, 1991). Interpretive views of data are based on individual constructions of other peoples' constructions of what they and their societies perceive and experience (Flick, 2009). The only direct access to reality is by preconception and language (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). This study favours the interpretivist approach as the aim is to achieve knowledge subjectively and this is the main reason behind the choices of methods and tools in this study. The research methods used in this research flow out of this paradigmatic approach: interviews and observing participants both of which provide the opportunity to talk through interactions and reflect on the observed participants' actions and feelings (Flick, 2009).

5.4.3 Critical Paradigm

The critical paradigm is “anti-foundational”; it attacks this reality. “People are not only in the world but also with it” (Crotty, 1998, p. 149). Reality changes by human action, for example, perceptions of critical inquiry such as Marxism, feminism and queer theory. Also, the critical paradigm aims to deal with issues of social justice and rights. Hence, it is often not supported with existing rules and policy (Giroux, 2011). Here the research takes social justice, rights and equality and critiques real life as in the cases of John Dewey (1938), Paulo Freire (1970) and Bell hooks (1994). All their work sought to encourage change in education, policy, culture and society for a better life for more people, particularly those who are marginalised.

5.5 Method

5.5.1 Quantitative and Qualitative

Most research studies utilise some components of both quantitative and qualitative data: a mixed methods approach, with many research studies successfully combining both methodologies (Bryman, 1992). Qualitative research involves the analysis of data collected

from interviews and participatory observation, while quantitative research involves the analysis of numerical data (Bryman, 1992; Holloway, 1997). Qualitative research is inductive in nature and does not require the formation of an initial hypothesis, whereas deductive theory often aims to test a hypothesis (Bryman 1992), see Table 5.1.

Table: 5-1 Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Conceptual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned with understanding human behaviour from the informant’s perspective • Assumes a dynamic and negotiated reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerned with discovering facts about social phenomena • Assumes a fixed and measurable reality
Methodological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data are collected through participant observation and interviews • Data are analysed by themes from descriptions by informants • Data are reported in language of the informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data are collected through measuring things • Data are analysed through numerical comparisons and statistical inferences • Data are reported through statistical analyses

Source: Minichiello, et al. (1990, p.5).

A qualitative approach is to analyse in-depth descriptive data, which helps to give a better understanding of the phenomena that is being researched. The method of qualitative research supports interaction between researchers and their subjects, in a way that understands that researchers do not approach their subject neutrally (Bogden and Biklen, 2003). Thus, this study adopts a qualitative approach with a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of specific phenomena. It involves unstructured data and a small sample, which are investigated in depth

(Cohen and Manion, 1989). This approach is appropriate for understanding the effect of adopting inclusive practices for students with autism in mainstream schools in Saudi Arabia, as a way of moving towards a more inclusive education pedagogy, and assessing the potential of education reforms to strengthen a school's ability to embrace the positive impact towards inclusive education and mitigate any potential negative effects. Hence, a qualitative approach is adopted in this study.

The main reason for adopting the qualitative approach is to obtain descriptive data (Bryman, 2008). A qualitative approach supports an interpretive view of this phenomenon; for instance, understanding the effect of using practices to include more children with SEN to establish a more inclusive pedagogy in mainstream schools in Saudi Arabia. The method of qualitative research supports interaction between researchers and their subjects, given that researchers do not approach their subjects neutrally (Bogden and Biklen, 2003).

Also, the researcher might be faced with problems in conducting inclusive education research such as the emotions, policies and social issues within this particular field (Ainscow, 2007). Allan and Slee (2008) argue that the qualitative method is appropriate for research into inclusive education:

“...The researchers’ and scholars’ accounts of the trajectories of inclusive education as they emerged, the oppositions or fences established and some of the consequent obfuscation are impressively reflexive for all that they are implicated in these processes” (Allan and Slee, 2008, p. 41).

5.5.2 Research Strategy

There are three types of research purpose: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The exploratory approach seeks to understand what is happening and is considered to be practically useful to clarify understanding. The descriptive approach examines situations in order to establish what is considered the norm by humans. This can be subjective according to human skills and understanding of the particular phenomenon (Walliman, 2005). The explanatory approach seeks to discover the relationship between different variables through either quantitative or qualitative data, which can help with the understanding of the relationship in terms of depth and breadth of the study as a whole (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). The purpose of this study is exploratory, in order to achieve its stated objectives.

5.5.3 Research Approach

In this research semi-structure interviews, as well as participatory observation were adopted to obtain the results sought.

5.5.3.1 Interview Method

There are three types of interview: unstructured, structured and semi-structured (Robson, 1993, 2011; Punch, 2009). In a structured interview, all participants are asked questions prepared in advance with no changes to the content or order. The second type is an unstructured interview including different questions that different interviewees may be asked and has open questions without any restriction on content or manner of the answer other than on the focus area (Robson, 1993; Cohen et al., 2007). Finally, semi-structured or ‘scale items’ interviews have open-ended questions (Denby et al., 2008). The semi-structured format is the most popular and tends to be more flexible with an option of ‘probing’ the

interviewee to reveal more detailed information as well as gain depth of understanding (Punch, 2009).

In this research the semi-structured interview method is adopted to explore teachers' teaching practice as a way of promoting inclusive pedagogy. Allan and Slee (2008) suggest the semi-structured interview when conducting inclusive educational research as the more appropriate approach to extract data that is relevant for such a study. It has been argued by Hitchcock and Hughes that

“The semi structured interview is a much more flexible version of the structured interview (and) it allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the respondent's responses” (1995, p. 157).

Robson (1993) advised that the timing of interviews should be no less than half an hour, and more than one hour is not recommended. Over an hour is too much; respondents may become uncomfortable and it is difficult to deal with the demands of busy interviewees (Robson, 2011), interviewers should listen more than they talk. This is something the researcher took into account before starting the interviews, as an important factor in order to take in more in-depth data that might be helpful and useful for the study.

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) note a number of difficulties in conducting semi-structured interviews; for example, experience and skills. Interviewing is a skill that must be learned and practised prior to conducting the final research interviews. This is one reason for conducting the pilot study method. Also, interviews should be held in a quiet and comfortable

space that would not be interrupted. The following sections discuss the interviews questions and how they were developed through a pilot study.

5.5.3.1.1 Interview Questions

The themes in the interviews were related to the research questions and objectives of the study. This was achieved by using a sequential study design in with face to face interviews in stage one and focus group interviews in stage two, as pilot interviews (Yin, 2009). The researcher ensured that interview questions were not too specific, to allow participants to give further information and details related to answering the research questions. The researcher used language that was understandable by the interviewees (Bryman, 2008). Interview questions were without prejudice, where questions with ‘how’ were used instead of ‘why’, to avoid interviewees’ being defensive about their actions (Yin, 2009). The next section explains in detail the process of generating interview questions from pilot interviews.

All questions used in this study were translated into Arabic, as the targeted population spoke Arabic, using the translation and back-translation procedures recommended by Brislin (1986). The translation from English to Arabic was made by two native Arabic speakers who are doing PhD research in management and the back translation from Arabic to English was made by a native Arabic speaker who holds a Master degree in Education. For the interview questions see appendix I.

5.5.3.1.2 Pilot Interviews

A pilot interview was carried out, not for data collection but as a technique in designing the interview questions (Abrahamson, 1983). The purpose was to test the interview questions,

correcting any errors and unclear questions. In addition, it was to give the researcher more confidence about the research topic and methodology in general (Berg, 1989; Adams and Schvaneveldt, 1991; Cohen et al., 2007).

The early pre-pilot phase of the pilot interviews was exploratory and was an early attempt to see if the research subject being investigated was satisfactory given the proposed interview process and schedule of questions. Hence, the pre-pilot interview in 2013 discussed the topic and methodology with a colleague from the School of Education. This included the style of interview, the general nature of the questions to be asked, ways of note taking and the issue of gender in research in Saudi Arabia.

The second stage of the pilot interview was to complete individual semi-structured interviews with five doctoral students in the UK at the end of 2014. This stage sought to identify any problems with the wording of questions and interview techniques. The interviews lasted for nearly one hour, as there were many questions. Some of the questions had similar answers that needed to be asked in different ways. Also, it was suggested to the researcher to divide the questions under major themes and sub-themes.

The final stage of the pilot was the focus group interview with the same participants from the individual pilot interviews, to discuss the final version of the interview and their opinions of it. All of them agreed on the interview questions that were to be asked see appendix II. There are two main ways in which to conduct an observation, and these are explained in the next section.

5.5.3.2 Observation Method

Marshall and Rossman (1995) define observation as incorporating watching with listening very carefully for discovering particular information (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Education researchers use observation extensively and it has a long been used by researchers in the social sciences (Cohen, et al., 2007).

There are two main categories of observation which can be used in research. The first one is open or ‘unstructured’ observation (Hopkins, 2008). Robson (2011) explains that ‘open’ or ‘informal’ observations, have less structure, giving the observer more self-determination and freedom in what data is collected and how it is recorded (Robson, 2011). On the other hand, structured or ‘formal’ observation usually requires a list, form, or observation schedule that is prepared in advance. Structured observation has a robust structure as the situation is more controlled in comparison to open observation (Hopkins, 2008).

The open observation approach was adopted in this research to explore teachers’ practices and behaviour in the classroom as a way of promoting inclusive pedagogy. This is because open observation gives rich data and is more flexible (Punch, 2009). This means that the researcher carried out an open observation as a participant (Plowright, 2011). The approach gives rich information and depth to answers, but there are some problems with this type of observation. For example, where there are a large number of students in the class it is difficult to observe all the behaviour and listen to what is taking place. The second problem is that it is time consuming (Plowright, 2011; Robson, 2011). On the other hand, Punch (2009) has stated that observation is one of the most common approaches in applied fields such as education, although it requires more time and a good level of experience (Punch, 2009). The

observations were conducted from February 2015 to end of April 2015. The research observed classes in five schools, each class lasted for about 45 to 90 minutes. The whole lesson was observed in order to explore the daily life and peer interaction with students with ASD in a classroom. This gave the researcher enough time to observe acutely and in depth in the school's practices and the learning environment accurately without unsettling the students or interfering with the school's routine. See Appendix III for observation note form.

5.6 Framework of the Study

The following framework shows the relationship between the study questions, how it was carried out the collection of data, methods and data analysis (see Table 5.2). The framework includes the sampling process, definition of target population, data collection and analysis by coding for emergent themes, limitations of the survey, the issue of the researcher's subjectivity and ethical issues.

Table: 5-2 Research Framework

Questions of research	Sample	Method	Data analysis
<p>How have inclusion policies and practices evolved in Saudi Arabia?</p> <p>What are the barriers to developing inclusive practices in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?</p> <p>What are the drivers for the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?</p> <p>How do teachers understand the</p>	<p>Teachers</p> <p>Schools</p>	<p>Interviews</p> <p>Observation</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis</p>

<p>concept of inclusion for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?</p> <p>What are the main factors that support/limit inclusive education in Saud Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?</p> <p>What are the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?</p> <p>What do teachers consider to be the best ways to facilitate inclusivity, with specific reference to peer-assisted learning?</p>	<p>Teachers schools</p>	<p>Interviews Observation</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis</p>
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5.6.1 Sampling Process

This section addresses issues related to the process carried out the gather information in this study. The definition of the target population, respondents, sampling frame, sampling technique followed by the sample size are discussed in the next sections.

5.6.2 Definition of the Target Population

The target population in this study was schools in Riyadh, the administrative area in Saudi Arabia, from February to April 2015, which covers the second semester of the academic year. An inclusive school refers to a regular primary school which includes students with and without special needs.

Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, was chosen for several reasons. First, it is the largest region in Saudi Arabia, with a population of 6 million and the development of inclusive

education has been implemented increasingly over recent years, in comparison with other regions. Second, it is a major multicultural city in Saudi Arabia, which makes it beneficial to explore inclusion practices. Third, the target sampling area was accessible to the researcher and it represents the Saudi population, in that all of the teachers have similar social and demographic characteristics. Finally, the primary school stage was selected because the characteristics of SEN, such as autism, have increased and become more apparent in the initial grades of a student's education; indeed, most students with autism are diagnosed during the early primary school years (Ferraioli and Harris, 2011). According to the latest figures, more than 400,000 people in Saudi Arabia are diagnosed with autism (Alramlawi, 2014).

The sources of primary data are first, a boys' mainstream school in which students with autism are integrated, to interview male teachers, second, a girls' mainstream school in which students with autism are integrated, to interview female teachers. Also, the research explored the daily life of the classroom and its participants in the girls' school as it challenges the understanding of the localised constructed meanings of the interactions in the inclusive classroom meetings through observation.

5.6.3 Choice of Respondents and Sampling Frame

A list of all schools' details, names and their addresses was obtained from the Ministry of Education. This list, which constitutes the sample frame for this study, includes the number of students with disabilities and teachers at each school. Hence, the sample was drawn from the provided list

5.6.4 Selection of Sampling Technique

The purpose of sampling is to obtain participants that are representative of the target population. More precisely, it selects a section of a population to represent the whole population (Alreck and Settle, 1995). There are two types of sampling techniques: probability and non-probability. Non-probability sampling is based on the researcher's subjective judgement, but is not strong enough for generalisation purposes. Probability sampling is the most commonly used type in research and can be used for generalisation (Walliman, 2005). In this research, the non-probability technique was adopted. The sample in the research was selected with the purpose of finding teachers who were working in Ministry and special schools, as their experience and training in teaching students with ASD is different from that of other teachers who do not teach students with ASD. This non-probability purposive sampling was used to select teachers for the purpose of the study, because they fit the target of the study. The aim of choosing this sample was to ensure confidence in the results by covering a broad range of ages, both genders and varied backgrounds of teachers, which will enrich the study.

5.6.5 Sample Size

According to Crouch and McKenzie (2006) the sample size for many qualitative research studies should be 15 to 20 participants for individual interviews. The small number helps a researcher to build and maintain a close relationship and enhance exchange of information with open and frank atmosphere (Bertaux, 1981; Morse, 1994; Creswell, 1998). Furthermore, saturation often occurs between 5 and 25 participants (Guest et al., 2006). Once there is sufficient information generated about the phenomenon and enough data gathered to be able to replicate the study then the study has reached the saturation point of data (Guest et al., 2006; O'Reilly and Parker, 2013).

In February 2015 the researcher received permission to carry out the research from the MoE. The Ministry sent a letter out to all of the schools that matched the sample asking, them to be participants for the research. The researcher visited the schools and received a list of names of the teachers who could be included as part of the sample. The author contacted them and invited each of them to participate as a volunteer in this study with information about the aims and objectives of the research. Through this process, 24 teachers were contacted and 20 agreed to participate individually: 12 females and 8 male teachers. Semi structured interviews of female teachers were carried out in girls' public schools in a suitable quiet room where the interviewees felt comfortable and were willing to speak freely, while male teachers' interviews were done over the phone.

5.7 Data Collection

Given the interpretivist foundation of this study, a qualitative approach was used to collect data. Hence, semi-structured interview and open observation were adopted to explore teachers' teaching practice as a way of promoting inclusive pedagogy.

5.7.1 The Duration of the Data Collection Process

Interviews and open observations were used to collect data from 20 teachers and 5 primary schools in one educational district of Saudi Arabia. An interview schedule was used to make sure that all 20 participants were asked the semi- structured interview questions and were free to express their own opinions and voices. After the interviews, the second phase began with classroom observations and the whole school environment. After the end of the data collection process, the interviews were transcribed and ready for the next step in the analysis. A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the rich data, which were read many times to get a clear and whole picture of the issues involved. The data was divided into categories

from which themes were created. Meaning was assigned to the themes that helped to answer the research questions.

5.7.2 Timeframe for Data Collection

The timeframe for data collection is set out below. Every day the researcher visited the school from 7 am to 1 pm to collect in-depth data, for a period of twelve weeks. The twelve-week period was divided as follows: interviews were conducted during the first three weeks of February 2015 with female teachers; interviews were conducted in the last week of February until the mid of March 2015 with male teachers. During the rest of March and early April the researcher focused on observations of the schools and classrooms. For more details, see Table, 5.3.

Table: 5-3 Data Collection Timetable

Time Frame	Activities
Late 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got MoE permission for data collection. • Applied for university of Lincoln ethical approval.
March to November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed interviews questions. • Pilot interview. • Final interviews questions.
February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female interviews (3 weeks). • Male interviews (one week).
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male interviews (3 weeks). • Schools' observations (1 weeks).

April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools' observations (4weeks).
May to July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation most of the interviews transcribes from Arabic to English (one month). • Start coding the data and development the themes (one month).
August to October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear picture about the result. • Write the findings chapter.

5.8 Data Analysis

The analysis of data gathered during this study depended solely on the description of the data collected. However, as data collected over three months, the data coded for themes. The data were analysed using common qualitative directive procedures (Creswell, 2012). Coding allows the researcher to make the data more logical. The data is then divided into text sections and code words or phrases used to describe the figures (Creswell, 2012). This external review process allows an outside individual to reconsider the different characteristics of the research while the study is conducted (Creswell, 2012). Interview questions were posed based on discussions see Appendix V for interview questions.

In order to improve the accuracy of the study, the data was generated by means of interviews and observations. Hence, this process uses multiple sources of data to help and support the evidence in order to validate a theme (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, the researcher supports the themes and analyses of the data with more than one type of data collected; for example, field notes, quotations, artefacts and descriptions, with a view that all data collected highlight a similar concept. The researcher employed the process of member checking, whereby participants check the accuracy of the data collected; for instance, from an interview

(Creswell, 1998). They can do this by commenting on interview notes and copies of the researcher's observational notes. Therefore, this can reassure participants that the descriptions and interpretations are valid and accurate.

5.9 Coding and Emerging Themes

Firstly, the data was written and completed using a paper and pen. Then the keywords related to the research questions were highlighted by using different colours. This was useful when attempting to identify linkages among a total of 20 interviews and open observations. Through the use of different colours, emerging trends and outlines were more easily identified then further analysed and interpreted by the researcher. Also, it was helpful to draw links between the main themes and sub-themes emerging from the data. The data from school observations were handwritten in transcription by using forms see Appendix III. The next section presents the emergent themes in further detail, using the thematic approach.

5.10 Emergent Themes

An emerging theme denotes the development or 'emergence' of themes from the collected data and the process of identifying such themes by the general approach of 'thematic analyses. According to Kvale (1996), thematic analysis is conducted on all interviews from the recorded and written notes. The researcher is looking to hear the participants' experiences and what these experiences meant to them. Identifying the emerging themes explores the descriptive ideas from each individual in the study. Marshall and Rossman (1995) claims that researchers should never think of coding as a one-step process, as it involves multiple steps that may include revising, moving or deleting codes throughout the process. Interview transcripts were organised thematically and analysed in relation to relevant literature. This

enabled the author to pull out personal experiences in relation to inclusion, equality, diversity and autism; these personal experiences will be highlighted in more detail in this chapter. In addition, the author included the interviewees' voices by integrating direct quotations where appropriate throughout the data analysis, thus allowing them to share their views by using their own words and phrasings, as suggested by Patton (2002). Moreover, there is some research that considers that demographic data, which are factors such as educational background, gender and status, may have an effect on educator attitude (Park and Chitiyo, 2009). The figures show that the number of male teachers and students was higher than that of females (see Table 6.1, p.184).

Following Marshall and Rossman's (1995) suggested process, the transcripts were coded and re-coded in the quest for more in depth understanding about the phenomenon. Each interview was coded with a random alphabetical designation, so they could be easily identified. Themes were identified from the data and notes transcribed in the first stages of analysis and codes assigned for each associated transcription and note. After that, the author read all the interview transcripts several times in more depth. Themes are often found under the surface and emerge from the data, that may not be apparent until the researcher becomes familiar with it (Cohen et al., 2007). Then, the words, phrases, sentences or even paragraphs that portrayed phenomena related to my research questions were highlighted with different colours. After reading and highlighting all 20 transcriptions, the highlighted sections of the transcripts were coded. These codes, which were directly linked in meaning, could be formed into sub-codes that had similar meanings and could be brought together into a theme. Building themes made the data less confusing and helped to make the stories (Atherton and Klemmack, 1982; Bryman, 2008). All colour notes were organised by similarity into initial coding categories. These codes were structured into broader themes and sub-themes linked to

the research questions (see Table 5.4). Following this, the themes and sub-themes were used to create a bigger picture of each individual’s experiences with disabilities and autism, to help the researcher to understand the situation of inclusion students with ASD.

Table: 5-4 Research Questions and Themes

Research Questions	Theme	Sub-theme
How do teachers understand the concept of inclusion for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?	Inclusion concept	Understanding of inclusive education
What are the main factors that support/limit inclusive education in Saud Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?	Factors	Policy Culture Social
What are the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?	Autism concept	Understanding of autism Autism practices
How have inclusion policies and practices evolved in Saudi Arabia?	Inclusion pedagogy concept	Understanding of inclusion pedagogy Meaning of PT as inclusive pedagogy
What are the drivers for the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?	Drives	Religion Salary Social justice
What are the barriers to developing inclusive practices in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?	Classroom Barriers	Time Curricula Attitude Lack of Training Overcrowding

A key part of the process of data collection is member checking, whereby participants check the accuracy of the data collected; for instance, from an interview (Creswell, 1998). They can do this by commenting on interview notes and copies of the researcher's observational notes. Therefore, this can reassure participants that the descriptions and interpretations are valid and accurate.

The research strategy adopted provides robust data verification from two different sources. This research study involves the use of more than one method to collect data: interview and observation (Flick, 2009). Interviewing and observing teachers allows the researcher to conduct research in more detail, as the interview method provides detailed information in the context of the research topic. The views expressed by teachers during the interviews were cross-checked with the observation data.

The researcher gathered data from two different methods used: interview and observation. This added more value and made for stronger reliability by looking at the subject from two different angles arriving at more rich data. Interviewing and observing teachers allows the researcher to conduct research in more detail, as the interview method provides detailed information in the context of the research topic. The views expressed by teachers in literacy were cross-checked with interview and observation data, enabling the researcher to follow up the discussions from the observation and the interview. Often, inclusive research can prove more in-depth by observing learners in action in class and linking with other research.

5.11 Limitations of the Qualitative Approach

5.11.1 Generalisability

The most important thing in any research is generalisability (Cohen and Manion, 1989) This study accounts for only a small sample and cannot be generalised to the large sample population in Saudi Arabia. A larger school context that includes a more varied sample of participants might have had greater generalisability. For example, policymakers, more teachers, parents and students could have a broader perspective with regard to the outcome of the research.

5.11.2 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are important parts of all research so that fellow scientists accept results as trustworthy and credible (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Golafshan, 2003). Furthermore, ‘reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in the qualitative paradigm’ (Golafshan, 2003, p. 604). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worthiness. Trustworthiness involves four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (see Table 5.5). Lincoln and Guba also described a series of techniques that can be used to conduct qualitative research to achieve the trustworthiness criteria for qualitative data-collection. One of them is triangulation, which involves using multiple sources of data and embarks on a deep investigation to produce a comprehensive understating to phenomena (Guba, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

It is important to ensure that the bias of the researcher is not reflected in the outcomes of the research. Bias is ‘an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in

a way considered to be unfair” (Oxford Dictionary, 2008, p. 116). Bias can occur in all research at any stage of the research process, research designs data collection, participant bias, analysis bias, findings and misunderstanding of data (Norris, 1997; Maxwell, 2013). Bias can lead to distorted results and impact negatively on the validity of research, as well as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sorts of account” (p. 122). Norris (1997) points out what needs to be done by the researcher to avoid personal bias so as to ensure more validity and reliability of research. He identified a number of potential causes of bias research:

1. The reactivity of researchers with the providers and consumers of information.
2. Selection biases including the sampling of times, places, events, people, issues, questions, and the balance between the dramatic and the mundane.
3. The availability and reliability of various sources or kinds of data, either in general or their availability to different researchers.
4. The affinity of researchers with certain kinds of people, designs, data, theories, concepts, explanations.
5. The ability of researchers, including their knowledge, skills, methodological strengths, capacity for imagination.
6. The value preferences and commitments of researchers and their knowledge or otherwise of these.
7. The personal qualities of researchers, including, for example, their capacity for concentration and patience; tolerance of boredom and ambiguity. (Norris, 1997: p. 174).

The researcher used the trustworthiness criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to reduce the possibility of bias in the research. The pilot study stage helped to ensure no error or bias with regard to the interviews questions. Other procedures adopted to reduce the possibility of bias included the nature of the interview sample, the back to back method of translating the interviews. Hence, this research adopted more than one approach so the findings could be assessed in relation to each other, to validate its findings and draw an holistic rich picture of the data, to meet the research objectives.

Table: 5-5 Addressing of Trustworthiness of this Research

Trustworthiness	Criteria	Techniques	This study
Internal validity	Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged engagement • Persistent observation • Triangulation (sources, methods, investigators) • Peer debriefing • Negative case analysis • Referential adequacy (archiving of data) • Member checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher adopted appropriate research methods to pursue the research objectives and questions for more detail (see chapter one). • Researcher's familiarity with study context and culture of participations involved in study (for more details see chapter two). • Researcher role, position and experience as in chapter one. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross checking of the different sources of information: literature review, interviews and observations. • Researcher provided a thick description of phenomenon in depth and more details in the interviews and observations (for more details see chapter five).

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher reviewed previous research related to the study context to outline findings in Saudi Arabia research in chapter four.
External validity	Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher provided background data to establish context of this study and detailed description of inclusion in Saudi Arabia, inclusive education, ASD and SEN (for more details see chapter three and four). • Researcher adopted non probability purposive sampling.
Reliability	Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlap methods (Triangulation of methods) • Dependability audit- examining the process of the inquiry (how data was collected; how data was kept accuracy of data) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher made in-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated (for more details see chapter five). • Cross checking of the different sources of information interviews, observations and litterateur reviews.

Objectivity	Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmability audit- examines the product to attest that the findings, interpretations and recommendations are supported by data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher explained the study limitations and parameters in details (for more details see chapter eight).
	All four criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflexive journal (about self and method) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher provided her role, position and experience in related to the study. • The researcher kept notes during her classroom observations.

Source: adopted from Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach was adopted to assure the validity and reliability and to allow other researchers to repeat this study.

5.11.3 Subjectivity and Positionality

The qualitative approach identifies that the subjectivity of the investigator is intimately involved in scientific research. Moreover, subjectivity has an impact on all aspects of the research beginning with the selection of topic that is studied, formulating out hypotheses, to choosing methodologies, and analysing data. Also, through a qualitative approach, the researcher is encouraged to reflect on the values and objectives she/he carries to the research and how these may affect the research project (Gergen, 2001). Although the subjectivity in this case is high, the dual methods used offer a good way of counterbalancing subjectivity without losing the richness, deep conceptuality and uniqueness of the data in this study.

The independent position of the researcher as external and outsider observer in quantitative investigations suggests a high level of objectivity by the researcher, while qualitative research is commonly associated with a subjective approach to interpretation of data (Cohen et al., 2007; Robson, 2011; Plowright, 2011). Positionality and subjectivity of the researcher can affect the level of validity of data and imbalance leading to distorted data. Furthermore, the researcher's subjectivity and positionality includes the “ethics, personal integrity and social values as well as their competency to influence the research process” (Greenbank, 2003, p.798). The positionality “may influence what researchers bring to research encounters, their choice of processes, and their interpretation of outcomes” (Foote and Bartell, 2011, p.46). Hence, “what an insider ‘sees’ and understands’ will be different from but as valid as what an outsider sees” (Merriam et al., 2001, p.415). However, the insider's data can claim to have a

high level validity due to their experience of the environment in which they are researching (Cohen et al., 2007; Robson, 2011; Plowright, 2011).

Most of the researcher experiences about SEN/ASD in SEN schools were not applying inclusive education, as discussed in chapter one (see p.26). Hence, the researcher role is more of a participant observer in schools on students and teachers as an outsider.

5.12 Ethical Issues

Ethics relates to the methods a researcher employs, how they prepare questions, how they explain the research subject, the analysis of the results and the conclusions drawn from the outcomes or findings of the study (Robson, 2011). The researcher should complete an ethical analysis before collecting any kind of data. The responses to the research should be anonymous and nothing should be kept on record without prior permission from the respondents (Robson, 2011). Care about the privacy of respondents is one of the most important aspects that a researcher needs to maintain and recognise (Homan, 1991). The primary ethical issues in this research using interviews and observations centre on informed consent, the right to withdraw, anonymity and confidentiality. The other key issues relate to management and to participants' potential concerns (e.g. talking in an interview about a distressing experience) (Homan, 1991; Robson, 2011).

5.12.1 Approval

An approval request was submitted to the Saudi Ministry of Education, to allow the researcher to carry out observations and interview teachers who teach in inclusive settings in participating schools. The Ministry sent a letter to the target schools requesting them to

collaborate with the researcher upon request. The next step was inviting teachers to participate in this study. All cooperating teachers were assured that involvement was not compulsory, and they also signed informed consent. Thus, the researcher gained all needed approvals from the Saudi MoE, which allowed her to pursue this observation and interview research see Appendix IV. Also, the research was approved by Ethics Committee of the Centre for Educational Research and Development, now School of Education, at the University of Lincoln see Appendix V.

5.12.1.1 Informed Consent

This research consists of interviews with approximately 20 teachers who work with students with autism. All participants involved in this research were asked to sign a consent form, which explained the research process, aims, questions, important information and contact details. Also, it stated their right to withdraw at any time during the process of the research, data protection, anonymity and confidentiality of participants. For informed consent in English and Arabic see Appendix VI.

5.12.2 Potential Issues

The main issue in this research was the sensitivity of gender in Saudi Arabia, which raised a number of issues for this study. The first one was the difficulty in accessing male teachers face-to-face in a school setting, but this can be overcome through contacting them by phone. The female teachers were interviewed face-to-face in schools.

Also, girls' schools in Saudi Arabia have strict rules and policies in place about confidentiality of information and the use of media recording such as videotapes. Before conducting the classroom observations, the researcher had to check carefully with school

principals for any further requirements and fulfil them accordingly, especially as the research involved children. No video recording was taken during the classroom observations and written notes were the main tool in the observation exercises. The researcher used codes to refer to classrooms, schools and teachers to maintain anonymity. Furthermore, the researcher did not include any names of participants, so that they remain unidentifiable. The participants were informed that would remain anonymous and that confidentiality would not be compromised.

5.12.3 Right to Withdraw

Before starting the interview, the participants were informed of their right to decline to answer any questions and withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse consequences. Also, they had the right to have a copy of the results summary and interview transcripts prior to publication.

5.12.4 Risk Management

One of the data gathering tools was a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions, with 20 teachers who work with students with autism. The interviews were held in the participants' schools in the classroom at a convenient time for the teachers during the school day; comfortable and quiet for both parties. The interview started with a brief introduction about the interview process, then, moving on, asked the questions that were more likely to be answered by the interviewees trying not to disturb or affect their responses in any way. Furthermore, all participants who were involved in this research received thanks and appreciation for their time and effort at the end of the interview. In terms of the observation tool utilised, the researcher observed a classroom in progress to get a sense of the teaching

and learning processes and learn about innovations that teachers are using. However, being observed by someone often makes teachers behave differently. It can make them feel more self-conscious. Hence, clear communication of the research purpose to the teachers involved was the best way to obtain their willingness to take part. As an observer, the researcher had to be clear about why the research was being carried out, how long she was to stay in the school and the classroom, and how the research would be used.

5.12.5 Security and Data Protection

The participants were informed that data would be securely stored and later destroyed. The data gathered through interviews from both audio and written form was stored safely in the researcher's possession and confidentiality was maintained. Information gained during the research process was used only for the purpose of the thesis and the participants will remain anonymous. Also, the data was stored electronically on a password-protected computer and any hard copies of information were kept secure using lockable cabinets. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to data relating to the research.

5.12.6 Anonymity and Confidentiality

The participants were informed that they would be anonymous and confidentiality would be maintained. Moreover, participants' names were replaced by codes using letters for anonymity, which prevents them being easily identifiable. Also, recorded interviews were transcribed as soon as possible, and any identifying information was removed.

5.13 Summary Remarks

This chapter provided a description of the research methodology and methods used, including the philosophical perspective in relation to the ontological and epistemological issues that are

a central part of knowledge construction. This methodological framing included a justification for the research paradigm that had been selected together with an account of the data collection, sampling method, as well as the data analysis that was carried out by coding the material into relevant themes. The chapter also included discussion of the ethical issues involved in this type of research. The next chapter will go on to present the findings from the research.

Chapter Six: Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from interviews with teachers and observations of classroom practices. This research focuses on teaching learners with ASD from an inclusion perspective. According to data analysis these are three important drivers that support the education inclusion movement in Saudi Arabia: religion, teachers' salaries and social justice. In contrast, barriers to inclusive education in Saudi schools can be seen in the lack of time and training given to teachers, crowded classrooms, inflexible curricula, teaching methods, attitudes and school environments.

Furthermore, the biggest issue in teaching students with autism is that teachers feel that they are not able to deal with them because they do not have experience of the appropriate teaching style or strategies. As well as the drivers and barriers, a number of key themes and sub-themes emerged from the data: (a) the inclusion concept, (b) key factors, (c) the autism concept, (d) the inclusive pedagogy concept. As the data will reveal, a key pedagogical strategy is peer teaching: where 'pupils are small teachers'. The chapter will be divided into a presentation of the findings of the interviews and the open observations in the classrooms. The chapter will include a critical reflection on the relationship between the interviews and the observations: in what way they supported each in other terms of how the material from the interviews matched the activities in the classroom, and what else, if anything, was revealed by the observations that was not discussed in the interviews.

6.2 Demographic Data of the Participants

One of the first female teachers who took part in the interviews was MN. She was a special education need (SEN) teacher and had 14 years experience in teaching in an inclusive school. She taught the Arabic Language and religion to special education students in a general education classroom. She has received a 30 per cent increment on her salary as a special education teacher, distinguishing her from a non-specialist teacher who teaches ASD. She supported students with various disabilities who were integrated in mainstream classes. Although she graduated as an SEN teacher, no training was given to her on inclusive education, nor on teaching children with autism. MN had only received general training in special educational needs.

Another interviewed female teacher was JK. She held a special education needs degree that qualified her to teach in mainstream primary schools. She also received a 30 per cent increment on her salary as a special education teacher. She worked with students at levels 2 and 3 (age 8 to 9) where she helped to support students receiving special education services in the general education classroom. She had 13 years' experience as a special educational needs tutor and one year's experience as a general teacher. JK had not received any additional training in inclusive education other than one workshop that she attended about integration practices. JK graduated from the King Saud University

N and A were female special education need teachers and both held BA degrees in special education needs from the King Saud University. N had taught 14 years experience teaching in an inclusion school, while A had 1 year experience. Both teach special education needs students in public schools and received 30 per cent increment on their basic salary. N supported students with disabilities in the integration classes but had had no training in

inclusive education and autism. She learned about autism through her own experience of working with students with ASD in the second grade. A had just started working in a primary school in Riyadh after 1 year experience teaching in the Alqasim region. She had the least experience amongst the interviewees, but it appeared to the researcher that she had more motivation and knowledge about inclusive education and special education compared to the other interviewees.

Another female interviewee, H had worked in inclusive education and SEN for 25 years. She worked with students with special needs in grades 1 to 6 (age 7 to 12). She supported students by working with general education teachers and special education teachers to fulfil students' needs. She had recently attended a workshop and training course about inclusion and had learned how to create a suitable school environment in order to accept all students with different needs in the same school.

NA had 10 years experience as a SEN teacher, working with grads 1 to 3 (age 7 to 9). She supported students with special needs by working in the general classroom. She had attended a workshop and training course on special education needs but not on inclusive education. NA heard about inclusive education from her colleagues in the school.

MK was teaching as a general education teacher in a primary school and had been working with students with special needs and general education students in the general classroom for over 3 years. She had had 4 years experience in teaching in a general education classroom. She worked with grades 4 to 6 (age 10 to 12), and taught history and geography as her specialism. She did not know anything about autism until the year of the research, when she had one student with autism in her class. She worked with the special education teacher to

support her, if needed. She does not have a 30 increment on her basic salary like other special education teachers, although she had students with SEN in her classes.

AM had worked as an English teacher for 11 years in a general education classroom. She worked with students in grades 5 to 6 (age 11 to 12), and had experienced teaching in an inclusive class for 3 years. She did not have any training about special education needs, inclusion or autism. All training and workshops she had attended were on her specialism which is English language and teaching methods.

MNA was a general education teacher and hold a BA in education from the King Saud University. MNA had 18 years' experience in teaching religion in a general education class and had started to work in inclusive and integration class 4 years previously ago. She was very optimistic about applying inclusive practices for special education needs in general education classes. MNA developed her own understanding of inclusion by attending workshops and training related to her students' needs. At the time that the research was undertaken she was completing a Master's degree in special education teaching strategies. She had training in general and special education needs.

WF was a female special education needs teacher in a mainstream school. She held a BA in special education needs and had 3 years' experience in teaching children with autism in an inclusive school. She taught learners with autism in integration classes in public schools. She received a 30 per cent addition to her basic salary as a special education teacher. She supported students with disabilities in the integration classes. WF had training in inclusive education and autism. She had worked for one year with students with autism.

The last two interviewed female teachers were NAE and AA. NAE and AA both worked as general education teachers in a primary school. NAE had been working with special needs students and general education students in the general classroom for over 2 years. Also, she had 18 years' experience of teaching in general classrooms. She worked with grade 2 and taught writing, reading and religion. NAE held a diploma in general education and had not had any training in special education needs or inclusive education. AA worked with autism in special education institutes and in general education schools. AA had 12 years' experience in teaching students with special education needs. At the beginning of her career AA worked with students with autism. In order to continue her development AA undertook training in autism, even though she had already graduated from the King Saud University. AA worked as Principal for special education needs for two years, after which she moved to being a special education teacher in a general school. She preferred to work in inclusive schooling in the eastern region in Saudi Arabia. She had recently moved to the capital city, Riyadh, as a special education teacher in a general school.

RM was a male special education teacher in a mainstream primary school setting. He held a BA in special education needs from the King Saud University. RM had 12 years experience in teaching in an inclusion primary school. RM taught special education needs students in public schools and received 30 per cent increase on his basic salary as an SEN teacher. He supported students with disabilities in integration classes but had had no training in inclusive education and autism.

Another interviewed teacher was RMA, who had worked as a special education teacher in a mainstream primary school for 9 years. RMA had been in the same school since the beginning of his career. He taught maths for special education needs classes and had

experience of teaching students with disabilities in other subjects such as reading, writing and religion. RMA worked with students with special needs in grades 1 to 6 and had training on special education needs and management.

FM had 17 years' experience of teaching in an integration school as an SEN teacher. He taught reading and writing to special education students in a general education classroom and has received 30 per cent increment on his basic salary as a special education teacher. FM helped students with disabilities in the integration classes. He had no training in inclusive education or autism but had been trained in special education needs. AF, another male teacher, had a Master's degree in special education and had worked as special education needs teacher in a primary schools for 9 years. AF had experience working with learners with autism in both special education institute and mainstream schools. He also, had training in teaching students with special education needs.

AAA was a special education needs teacher in a mainstream school who had recently achieved a Master's degree in special education. He also held a BA in special education from King Saud University. AAA had experience of teaching for more than 10 years in a primary integration school and received a 30 per cent increase on his basic salary as an SEN teacher, He had received training in inclusive education and autism. NN also had a master degree in special education needs, and had worked as special education needs teacher in primary school for over 8 years and worked with students with special needs in grades 3 to 6 (age 9 to 12). NN had attended workshops in inclusive education, teaching and special education and had knowledge from his working experiences with learners who had autism. NN taught maths to special education needs students.

AAB had a BA in special education needs and had worked as a special education needs teacher in primary school for 9 years. At the time of the project AAB was working with students with special needs in grades 1 to 6 (age 7 to 12). AAB was supporting students by working with general education teachers to fulfil students' needs. He had attended workshops in education, teaching and special education but had limited experience in supporting the needs of learners with autism. However, he had previously worked with one learner who was diagnosed on the autism spectrum. AAB's main role in school was to help to transfer students with SEN who had high abilities into general education classes and support them during the transfer process.

The last interviewed teacher was IAA. He worked as special education needs teacher in primary schools. He had over 11 years of teaching experience. The first 4 years was in a special education institute and for the last 7 years he had worked in a public school. He had not had any training in inclusive education and autism.

One important finding of the study was that male teachers appeared to hold less positive views about autism and inclusion practices compared to female teachers. The data generated regarding the participants' demographic information is summarised in table 6.1, followed by in-depth information on their responses in table 6.2.

Table: 6-1 Summary Statistics on Special Education in KSA (SEN) 2008–09

Stage	Gender	Type of education	Number	GRAND TOTAL			New Entrance Students		Teachers		Administrative Staff		Workers	
			Schools	Classes	Students	Saudi	TOTAL	Saudi	TOTAL	Saudi	TOTAL	Saudi	Served	Workers
Special Education	Male	Day	999	3,688	17,356	16,105	6,100	5,686	4,729	4,292	134	132	53	122
	Female	Day	414	1,472	8,729	8,047	1,243	1,165	2,206	2,106	222	220	149	85
	TOTAL		1,413	5,160	26,085	24,152	7,343	6,851	6,935	6,398	356	352	202	207

Table: 6-2 Participants' Demographic Information

Teacher	Gender	Educational background	Experience (years)	Incentives	Training in SEN	SEN number/class	ASD number/class	Comments
1-MN	F	BA in Special Education Needs	14	30% plus on salary	Yes	5	0	
2-J k	F	BA in Special Education Needs	14	30% plus on salary	Yes	6	0	
3-N	F	BA in Special Education Needs	14	30% plus on salary	Yes	4	1	

4-A	F	BA in Special Education Needs	1	30% plus on salary	Yes	6	0	
5-H	F	BA in Special Education Needs	25	30% plus on salary	Yes	6	2	Training in inclusion
6- NA	F	BA in Special Education Needs	10	30% plus on salary	Yes	5	0	
7- NAE	F	Diploma in General Education	18			7	1	2 yrs expr. with SEN
8-	F	BA in	12	30% plus	Yes	5	2	

AA		Special Education Needs		on salary				
9- RM	M	BA in Special Education Needs	13	30% plus on salary	Yes	2	0	
10- RM A	M	BA in Special Education Needs	9	30% plus on salary	Yes	6	0	
11- FM	M	BA in Special Education Needs	17	30% plus on salary	Yes	6	0	Training in inclusion

12- AF	M	Master in Special Education	9	30% plus on salary	Yes	4	0	
13- AA A	M	Master in Special Education	10	30% plus on salary	Yes	5	0	Training in inclusion
14- AAB	M	BA in Special Education Needs	9	30% plus on salary	Yes	4	0	
15- MK	F	BA in Education – Geography	4			6	1	
16- NN	M	Master in Special Education	8	30% plus on salary	Yes	6	0	Training in inclusion

17-AM	F	BA in Education – English	11			3	1	
18-MN A	F	BA in Education	18			7	1	Training in SEN
19-IAA	M	BA in Special Education	11	30% plus on salary	Yes			
20-WF	F	BA in Special Education	3	30% plus on salary	Yes	4	4	

6.3 The Inclusion Concept

In order to explore the first research question, the analysis of the data firstly focused on the concept of inclusion. The study's aim was to develop an understanding of inclusion policies and practices in Saudi primary education. The sub-themes under discussion provided an understanding of inclusive education and wider views on inclusion. The sub-themes in this section was derived from data collected from the participants through face-to-face and telephone interviews. Teachers' views were represented as they relate to each interview question and sub-theme. The first arising sub-theme was the understanding of inclusive education.

6.3.1 Understanding of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is accepting all students, regardless of their differences (UNESCO, 2009).

One SEN teacher found the term very confusing. He stated that:

“Ermmmm... Is inclusive education a teaching strategy? ... I can not help you, but one of my colleagues, I think he may be able to help you on that, since he took some training on it. I just learned from him about it” AAB (SET, M).

Importantly, four of the interviewed teachers had attended a workshop on inclusive education for SEN students at the same school. One of them commented as follows:

“Now, we have regular classrooms that include different categories of SEN students. Our school is the first in Saudi Arabia that has SEN integration and inclusive education. We started by applying location integration for students with a hearing disability and then moved from location integration to half integration from separated

floor to a class beside general education, including students who have SEN in the main school to develop their abilities and skills like many of their peers without SEN and working to include SEN pupils socially by being in a general school too” H (SET, F).

All 20 teachers’ defined inclusion as educating students with disabilities in the general school setting beside their normal peers, showing a shared level of understanding. However, most of the teachers showed confusion in understanding the meaning of inclusive education, as some defined this as integration. For example, WF (SET, F) explained inclusive education as: “students with special education needs are taught in a general education classroom”.

The participants did not see any difference between the terms inclusion and integration as both related to students with SEN. The difference was that inclusion for some involved students with SEN being fully included in the general classroom, while in integration they were not necessarily in the same classroom with students without disabilities. This show that teachers misunderstood the meaning of both terms and as a consequence the practices differed from one teacher to another.

6.4 Key Factors

Saudi Arabia’s strong socio-cultural identity and MoE policy make it a unique educational environment. Three key factors related to inclusion of students with ASD were identified by the interviewed teachers: policy, culture and social.

6.4.1 Policy

A school policy stresses the significance of factors regarding key personnel's involvement in inclusive education for students with ASD in the general education system. Regarding of policy, all the teachers talked about accepting students with SEN in terms of the MoE IQ rating. For example:

“The MoE has a policy that supports the education of students with disabilities in schools or institutes depending on the disability's degree” WF (SET, F).

AAA(SET, M). said,

“All students whose IQ is between average and more than average are accepted in general schools, and those who have low IQs are on special needs programmes”.

Children with SEN get evaluated and examined before enrolment, and based on the level of their IQ they are admitted to the appropriate school or institute. With regard to the goal of the education policy, N (SET, F) said,

“The main goal of the education policy is to ensure a correct, integrated understanding of Islam. Also, to provide students with Islamic values. Our role as teachers is to teach students these values and to create individuals who are constructive members of our growing society”.

The MoE has had three ministers in the recent period, who held that role for a short time. The majority of the interviewed teachers were a little confused about the ministerial situation; one of them MNA (GT, F) described the current situation as follows:

“Every minister does not continue what has been previously done and starts from the beginning. Once we have settled down, we have a new minister; he discards everything, and that absolutely has an effect on us.”

The teachers were not sure about the policy for inclusion. In contrast, they were aware of the general education policy. They focused on the IQ policy with regard to having students with SEN in their classrooms. That may explain their greater interest more in academic progress rather than other skills. The next section will elaborate on cultural factors.

6.4.2 Culture

Culture plays an important part in understanding the elements of inclusion in a given society. The importance of the culture is based on the environment, where inclusive or exclusive ideals can grow or decrease (Capper and Pickett, 1994). As one of the teachers stated, “Our community is closed and does not accept new ideas easily, but, after some time, it would be accepted” MNA (GT, F). Another said,

“We used to reject students with SEN and ASD but now we accept them via an integration approach; however, we have not yet accepted a full inclusion practice” NN (SET, M).

One participant summarised the problem with school culture as follows:

“The main problem in the Eastern culture is that one person takes charge of everything, and if they do not agree with on any decisions, they will take it personally and as a result they try to exclude you.”

She also pointed out that “You can take this kind of behaviour as a hidden obstacle to applying inclusion, not only inside schools” H (SET, F). Another teacher, AAB (SET, M), described his school’s head teacher as 'a control freak' who knew everything and did not accept others’ opinions.

This cultural aspect was reflected in a lack of collaboration among teachers. There was agreement among the interviewee that general education teachers and special education teachers do not work well together: “We do not work together, each teacher has their approach and way of teaching, which I do not agree with” NAE (SET, M).

6.4.3 Social

There is a clear link between the way in which disability is regarded in the wider Saudi society and the way in which disability is regarded in the school environment. For example, the local municipality in which the schools are situated does not put enough effort into having handicap- and pedestrian-friendly environments. Public roads, local markets and even parking spaces for blue badge holders are limited in many service sectors. In fact, a moral obligation is felt by some of the general public, who show sympathy towards blue badge holders and launched a campaign against people who do not have the right to park in the designated parking areas. Translated into English, the campaign is titled “Take my disability and I’ll give you my parking permit”. This sense of moral obligation is evident among the teachers the researcher interviewed:

“Now there is more social acceptance for students with SEN and autism because children see them in the school and even in the same classroom; before that, it used to be very strange to see a child with a mobility disability” AA (SET, F).

RMA (SET, M) stated, “Including students who have disabilities in public schools builds up their skills and capabilities similar to their peers without disabilities and works to include disabled students socially by them being at the same school together.” Another teacher, who had experience in both a special education institute as an excluding environment and a general school as an inclusive environment, stated, “The importance of culture and society is reflected in inclusion within the Saudi context” FM (SET, M). He added,

“I think the ideal model of inclusion from one place to another is definitely different... I can say that we have known one kind of inclusion due to the way we are raised in Saudi society and controlled by our culture” NAE (SET, M).

RM (SET, M) stated,

“Schools are formed in the society and culture and can not be separated.”

6.5 The ASD Concept

This emerging theme focuses on two sub-themes: autism understanding and autism practices in Saudi Arabia. Each sub-theme will be discussed in the next sections.

6.5.1 Understanding of ASD

The number of students with ASD who have access to general education has increased in the last two years (Ministry of Education, 2010). A lack of understanding of the nature of ASD can be a reason to expel students from schools and can cause students to face negative attitudes (Wagner, 2002; Hundert, 2009). Moreover, one general education teacher said, “People with autism act oddly” NAE (GT, F). The researcher asked what was ‘odd’ about

them. She responded, “For example, when I speak to her, instead of looking into my eyes, she keeps looking at the floor.” Moreover, “I remember the first time I saw a person with autism. He was a good-looking lad but he did not like anyone to sit beside him and kept moving his hands in a strange way” FM (SET, M). AM (GT, F) stated that

“This disorder is different from child to child, as I understand it.” She added, “I have taught two girls with autism, and they are totally different. The first girl, she is very quiet and easy to deal with, but the other is crying all the time and aggressive”.

And another teacher said:

“Children with autism are with us in body but have different worlds in their minds. At the beginning, I did not notice that she had a disability – she looked like any child with weird behaviour – until the head teacher arranged a meeting with the teachers to tell us about the new student with autism.” MK (GT, F).

All the teachers agreed autism is not easily defined like other disabilities. Another teacher described her experiences with a student with autism: “I did not notice any differences between the student with autism and her peers, although she made much better academic progress than many other students did” MK (GT, F)

MNA (GT, F) commented on the differences in students with autism: “Abnormal behaviour – does not smile, is repetitive and is attached to special things.” She added, “They like routines and stereotyped behaviours and refuse to change.”

JK (SET, F) gained her knowledge about autism from experiences and from what she had heard from society. She explained that her lack of knowledge of autism was due to the university curriculum, which did not have any taught content about autism, and because the MoE did not provide sufficient workshops on autism or inclusion. AA (SET, M) said,

“The first time I heard about autism was from the mother of one of my students, who had been diagnosed with autism. After that, I became very interested in autism. I tried to build up my knowledge to help them.”

RM (SET, M) only knew about autism from his working experiences with students with ASD. He said, “I worked with one student with ASD in the pre-school stage 12 years ago.” Although he expressed that he had a lack of knowledge in this field, he held a positive attitude towards students with autism. Another teacher added, “Students with autism have different worlds in their minds. They can be very nice but can also suddenly start shouting without reason” NA (GT, F).

A and WF were female special education teachers and had more experience with children with ASD than the other teachers. They described autism with more confidence and in a more complex way, as they had learned about it at university.

“It is a disorder shown in the first three years of a child’s life. It affects their socialisation, communication and behaviour” A (SET, F). Furthermore, “Autism is an inability to develop social skills, verbal communication, non-verbal communication and imaginative play. It is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the way in which information is collected and

processed by the brain. Thus, it causes problems in social skills and the ability to link and create relationships with individuals, and not being able to play” WF (SET, F).

Ultimately, all the participants clearly described autism as distinct from other disabilities. Typically, participants’ knowledge came from experiences and interactions with children with ASD, although some of the teachers did have training while at university. The next section will discuss autism teaching practices as a sub-theme to the autism concept.

6.5.2 Autism Practices

The interview transcripts suggested that schools are developing and changing to meet the needs of all students. AA (SET, F) said that special education teachers can offer many varieties of practices, techniques, strategies and ideas to work with students with ASD in general classrooms, not only for them but also for general education students and other categories of disabilities as well. MA (GT, F) added that special education teachers can bring a better knowledge of the best ideas and techniques on how to handle and control diverse abilities in a classroom than general education teachers. WF (SET, F) said,

“General education teachers can not figure out varied ways to teach the same information for different abilities like special education teachers can...I use particular practices for them; I use special education practices. This seems to work for students with autism, such as behaviour modification, speech therapy, individual plans and modelling”.

Another teacher said:

“From my experience, people with autism are different, not similar. Each one may have different needs, and some of them have high IQs, which makes them easier to include in the general classroom” MK (GT, F).

And another teacher said:

“Their level is average and could be much better than some of their peers... including students with ASD with students with different abilities in the general classroom, plus SEN students share most classroom activities” JK (SEN, F).

Another teacher said, “I include students who have autism and learning difficulties and get information from their teachers and other students in the general classroom” MNA (GT, F). She added, “Through my experience in teaching one student with autism this year, I do not see any differences in her academic progress. But she did much better than other students” MNA (GT, F).

And another general teacher said:

“I don’t have any problem in having a student with autism in the same classroom, and I don’t use particular practices for them; I use general education practices. This seems to work for all students in my class and is reflected in their final assessments with good grades” MK (GT, F).

IAA (SET, M) dealt with students using his experience inside and outside of the school. He had taught in two schools in Saudi Arabia. He stated that “Special and inclusive education practices are different from region to region and even in the same city. For instance, the north of Riyadh is different from the south.” He went on to say, “I was teaching in a village and the students’ parents were uneducated. I met a few parents who wanted to transfer their children to a special education needs programme just to get the 300 SR benefit from the government to support disabled people, without knowing the consequences in the long term of stereotyping and labelling. The schools in rich regions have a lot of support from parents and local communities compared to schools in poor regions” IAA (SET, M).

While some students with autism may be able to function independently in the general education classroom, others may need additional assistance provided by paraprofessionals (Robertson et al., 2003). All the teachers had good knowledge of ASD. It can be seen from the interview data that the general education teachers showed more-positive attitudes towards teaching students with autism. On the other hand, the special education teachers had positive attitudes towards having children with ASD in the same school but in separate classes.

6.6 The Inclusive Pedagogy Concept

This theme resulted from the aim of the study: to identify drivers/barriers to the development of inclusive classroom practice in primary schools in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to peer-assisted learning as an inclusive pedagogy for students with autism. This theme was divided into two sub-themes: understanding inclusive pedagogy and peer tutoring as an inclusive pedagogy. In the next section, the understanding of inclusive pedagogy will be discussed.

6.6.1 Understating of Inclusive Pedagogy

‘Inclusive pedagogy’ is a term that describes a way to accommodate all learners through the use of various teaching strategies (Corbett, 2001). Moreover, inclusive pedagogy was described by one teacher as follows: “Inclusive pedagogy depends more on the learning environment, so I ensure that I reduce any possible interruptions, such as lights, noises or sudden changes. Especially if the student has autism, I need to be more careful when I plan for the lesson”

Another teacher said:

“I think there is no difference between inclusive pedagogy and other pedagogy” NA (SET, F).

And another:

“My teaching strategies vary... I use different strategies depending on my students’ needs and difficulties. I can not use one strategy for all students with SEN in the classroom, so I use the resource room for the special needs students to teach them individually” JK (SET, F).

And a teacher said:

“My teaching strategies are the same for all my girls... I choose a suitable strategy for the lesson and the needs of my students” N (SET, F).

Another teacher said:

“I prefer using new technology as a teaching strategy because this is the language of this generation” A (SET, F).

All the teachers agreed that pedagogy is a crucial element in any learning process and outcome. One teacher said, “Pedagogy is a way to achieve educational aims and goals” AF (SET, M). Another described it as “Curriculum, learning style, teaching approach, environment, outcome, assessment and policy” AAB (SET, M). In addition, pedagogy is at the heart of the relationships among teachers, students and the curriculum. “Inclusive pedagogy is the best way to teach students with hugely different abilities in one classroom” MK (GT, F).

As one teacher put it:

“I think about a teaching approach that works and promotes different students and learning styles through creating a problem and trying to find a solution that involves a rich learning experience, a good learning environment, equal opportunities and a contribution to real life” WF (SET, F).

This teacher added, “The best way to teach my students is through understanding their needs as individuals. Also, hearing their voices, giving them freedom and involving them in the learning process helps me to avoid an excluding pedagogy” WF (SET, F). She stressed that teachers should know different learning styles. For example, students can be visual learners, listeners, modellers or creative learners. Teachers should focus on what students can or can not do.

Another teacher said:

“There’s no one teaching approach that is better than the others. There are varied teaching methods. The teacher chooses one that is consistent with the subject being studied. There are teaching styles based on activities, such as solving problems. Also, there is the teaching method of dialogue and discussion. There are also individual teaching methods, such as educational programmes or education with computers” AM (GT, F).

All of the special education teachers reported that many general education teachers think that the best pedagogy for teaching students is traditional learning: listening to the teacher without interrupting, copying from the board or a book, and doing homework. They felt that this teaching routine does not fit all students’ needs. By contrast, the modern pedagogy involves students in every aspect of learning. This is achieved through a broad curriculum, appropriate materials, and strategies that take account of different needs and earlier learning and experiences. There is a focus on the strengths rather than the weaknesses of the students and on practising strengths through peer tutoring and cooperative learning. This process allows students to be aware of how they are progressing. Ultimately, teachers can not change the curriculum but they can use different teaching approaches to promote access to the educational content to all students equally. This is a move towards more-inclusive education. To summarise, inclusive education pedagogy affects the approach that teachers use to teach. It is suggested that the teachers were realistic in identifying the best way to teach all students

6.6.2 Peer Tutoring as an Inclusive Pedagogy

Peer tutoring is widely used in teaching and improves the achievement of students, including students with ASD (Allsopp, 1997, DiSalvo and Oswald, 2002). It is a successful strategy for including students with autism in general education (Carter and Kennedy, 2006, Cushing et

al., 2003). Peer tutoring is one of the practices used in Saudi schools. Peer tutoring involves students in teaching by encouraging them to teach each other in pairs. AA (SET, F) PT defined it as follows:

“Peer tutoring is a teaching system that helps learners to help each other to build new skills, guided by educational goals.”

Moreover, it allows for academically superior students to assist in the education of younger or less able students. Additionally,

“Peer tutoring takes into account the need for an effective learning environment that is fully focused on the integration of students in the collaborative learning process. It depends on students teaching each other under the supervision of the teacher” AF (SET, M).

Another teacher said:

“Peer tutoring is a type of collaborative learning that uses the students as a tool to learn from each other” AF (SET, M).

Peer tutoring provides benefits when teaching students with autism in general education, as mentioned by the 20 teachers. These benefits apply to the teacher, the students with autism and the other students. From the interviews, the benefits for students with ASD can be summarised as:

- It is an effective strategy to build social relationships among students.

- It allows students to relate the content of learning activities to real life.
- It develops language communication skills through bilateral interaction.
- It increases students' motivation towards learning and school.
- It strengthens self-assertion and reduces frustration.
- It increases the academic achievement of the student learner and the student's teacher.
- It is suitable for different subjects and in all stages of education.
- "It makes students with SEN feel more human and not powerless" IAA (SET, M).

One teacher answered the question as follows:

"Peer tutoring... do you mean the children as small teachers? ... I used this strategy before I taught students with SEN and I still use it. It relieves pressure on teachers and the load on me in a crowded classroom... Peer tutoring is amazing; it includes many benefits for the teachers and for the students as well" AM (GT, F).

The majority of the teachers talked about the advantages of using peer tutoring as an inclusive pedagogy that includes students with autism in general education. For instance, it "improves the social and communication skills and behaviour of children with autism" WF (SET, F). In addition, one participant talked about the role of the teacher in this practice. "The role of the teacher in this method differs from the role played in traditional education. The teacher here is the organiser, the manager of the pairs and the appointed helper in times of need" AAB (SET, M).

The advantages for pupils include "a positive attitude towards the school" H (SET, F) and "acquiring a higher level of ambition... it provides the experience of helping others, as well as

shows an ability to take responsibility and makes for increased self-confidence” NN (SET, M). The teachers listed some other advantages of using peer tutoring as an inclusive pedagogy in teaching classes with students with autism. These advantages for the teachers included that it “helps different levels of students to achieve the learning objectives” MK (GT, F). MK added that it “reduces the load and pressure on teachers and helps them to direct their activity to interact with the students and their interests.” Additionally, “[It] makes learning activities focused on the learners, rather than on the teachers” AA (SET, F). “[It] makes the learners more positive about their active participation in the learning process” NAE (GT, M).

All of the teachers agreed that peer tutoring is an excellent practice to include students with autism in general education classes and is a comprehensive teaching approach for all students. They agreed that this approach can improve students’ weakness, such as poor communication, poor social interaction and behavioural problems. In addition, the approach helps to reduce the amount of work for the teacher. The next theme will highlight the drivers of more-inclusive education in Saudi schools for students with ASD.

6.7 Drivers

This study aimed to find the drivers for better inclusion in Saudi education for students with SEN, specifically ASD. The drivers theme arose out of the numerous times that the participants mentioned these drivers during the interviews. Participants supported the idea of inclusive education and reinforced these views with what they thought needed to be in place before inclusion could be successful. The main drivers mentioned by the teachers were religion, salary and social justice. In addition, they spoke about support in terms of personnel and general feelings, as identified in the following sub-themes.

6.7.1 Religion

Saudi Arabia teaches Islamic values and uses them as rules of living. One of the important values of Islam encourages fairness towards human beings in general and to those in need specifically. The religious values of Islam and its teaching remain the main factors that shape inclusion education, understanding, practices and attitudes in Saudi Arabia. A specific driver is the religious belief of feeling guilty about not helping students with disabilities. The Saudi culture is very conservative, and religion is a motivation for many people. As one teacher put it:

“In Islam, it is wrong to call people bad names. Developing the internal capabilities of all children is required, and an Islamic community can offer appropriate conditions for the exercise of life”.

Religion is one of the drivers of inclusion and is not seen as a barrier, as mentioned by one interviewee: “To be honest, I really struggled with my students, but I do it for the sake of God” A (SET, F). In addition, “I encourage other teachers to accept students with SEN, to get a blessing from God before anything” N (SET, F).

The interviews confirmed that Islam’s promotion of inclusion and inclusion practices is not new in Saudi society.

“We are a Muslim society in all cases; Islam promotes mercy for the weak and helping the needy... So we are first in these ethics, above the West” MN (SET, F).

In addition:

“There was no need for us to have a negative vision about inclusion. We thank God; in our Arab society, we have come a long way for the good in supporting these categories.”

RMA (SET, M)

Another teacher said:

“Islam is supporting those kinds of people. And it is a strong driver for teachers to accept disabilities for religious reasons alone” NAE (GT, M).

And another:

“We must follow the Prophet Muhammad. He was the first to invite equal opportunities without discrimination for any ability, colour, gender or social class” A (SET, F).

And another:

“I am really afraid of God’s punishment if I do not accept them at the school” MK (GT, F).

Additionally, another teacher said: “Islam hates labelling people by their race, colour and disabilities” H (SET, F).

Ultimately, Islam respects differences and states that being different is the norm. The Islamic religion is a strong factor in improving inclusion not just in schools but also in the wider society.

6.7.2 Salary

The lack of collaboration between special needs teachers and general teachers was thought to be mainly due to the 30% increase given to special needs teachers on their basic salary, compared to general teachers. To some of the participants, this is the big problem (the

elephant in the room); when introduced it was meant to be an incentive, but it acts as an obstacle.

As one teacher put it:

“Special education teachers take 30% more than me, so they should take students with SEN... If I got 30% like special education teachers, I would be more than happy to have them in my class” MK (GT, F).

Other teachers felt this extra salary was justified:

“Teaching students with SEN needs a lot of educational material, and 30% on top of my salary would help me in teaching them” WF (SET, F). And, “As special education teachers work more than general education teachers, 30% is our right” RM (SET, M).

And:

“The Ministry should pay an extra 30% to all teachers who have any children with disabilities in their classes. By that, more teachers would be welcoming of SEN students for their classes and schools” NAE (SET, F).

In contrast, not all of the teachers were motivated by the level of salary, as one said;

“I consider myself among the teachers at the school who support the idea of accepting students with disabilities in regular classes and without the need for a salary surplus.” MNA (GT, F).

One of the male teachers was very honest regarding teachers accepting teaching students with ASD only for the money: “Many teachers will accept SEN students because of the 30%” NN

(SET, M). Salary is an important driver and motivates many teachers towards promoting better inclusion for students with SEN. All of the teachers were willing to have such students in their classes and cooperate with each other if they both could receive the 30% extra salary. Therefore, it could be proposed that with appropriate funding for salaries, inclusion would be achieved in all schools.

6.7.3 Social Justice

Social justice is a globally acknowledged term that has a similar meaning from one culture to another but with different interpretations. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2008), it means “Justness, fairness, fair play, fair-mindedness, equity, even-handedness, impartiality objectivity, neutrality” (p. 370). Generally, teachers exercise a social justice role and dispense justice. The carrying out of this function is not subject to legal sanction but individual values and attitudes.

For example, most of the teachers agreed that education for all is a right. One teacher said, “Each student should have the chance to try; it is not just to exclude them without giving them the opportunity” NAE (SET, F). Similarly, IAA (SET, M) interpreted social justice as, “Having students with disabilities among normal students in the regular class and their being supported, that is social justice.” He stated, “I should ensure that all students in my class are equal and that being different is not an issue. It is a teacher’s responsibility to support weak students.”

Another teacher said:

“The educational and general policies should be equal between all students regardless of their abilities, as rights and social justice should be given to all people. Also, these

policies support the weak and state that differences are the norm in this life” AAB (SET, M).

An example of social justice can be drawn from one teacher’s statement that “Education is the simplest right for them to be among us...Inclusive education provides social justice to students with disabilities” H (SET, F).

Another teacher said “To be excluded from our life – is that justice?” AAA (SET, M). He added, “They have the right to be at the same school as their brothers”. AF (SET, M) said, “People with autism should be treated as humans. They have feelings but many times can not express them”.

MK (GT, F) said,

“I teach all students equally without discrimination or prejudice. Also, we should work together to help them to access education then work; without education they can not have work and a life.”

FM (SET, M) pointed out that “Many disabled children’s families do not know their children’s rights”. RM (SET, M) said, “The school’s role is to transfer the concepts of equality and rights from inside to outside the school.” AF (SET, M) stated, “A good inclusive education begins at home. You can not blame the school alone for not promoting inclusion if you have not instilled those values in your child.”

Thus, social justice underpins and supports the notion of inclusion in schools and the participating teachers reflected this in their responses. The next theme explains the barriers facing the implementation of inclusive education.

6.8 Classroom Barriers

Classroom barriers are problems and issues that make inclusion unsuccessful in Saudi schools. Knowing what these barriers are will aid the inclusion of students with ASD in general education. There was general agreement among the teachers with regard to these barriers. The barriers to teaching students with ASD in general classrooms often arise from a variety of issues: behavioural issues, social issues, communication, a shortage of time, a large number of students, an inflexible curriculum, teachers' attitudes, lack of training, teaching methods and school environments (Ernsperger, 2002; Boer, 2009; Berkell Zager et al., 2012). These barriers will be discussed in the following sections based on the participants interviews.

6.8.1 Time

Many of the teachers interviewed complained about the time-consuming nature of teaching a class with diverse abilities. “I struggle to teach some subjects within the time of the lesson to my normal students, but in the case of inclusive classes, we need more than 45 minutes. With students with autism, I need even more” MNA (GT, F).

Another teacher said:

“For me, including [students with ASD] is not a problem, but there is not enough time to do everything for students with autism, and I have a lot of students without disabilities and others with different disabilities in my classroom, so I have to give all the students a chance in the lesson, which is hard on me. I also have a curriculum that I need to finish before the end of term” MN (SET, F).

Moreover, all 20 teachers mentioned that the time and effort required to teach one student with a disability is equal to those required for three normal students. “I have five students with disabilities, who are equal to 15 normal students” H (SET, F). NAE (GT, F) stated, “I have 25 students in total, but in reality I teach 29 students.” When the researcher asked her to explain, she replied, “I have two students with SEN in the class. They take the time of around six students” NAE (GT, F). The traditional way of teaching is a solution to the lack of time, but it does not work with all students. Time is a significant obstacle to inclusive education for students with autism. In addition, applying peer tutoring as an inclusive pedagogy needs extra time, as stated by WF (SET, F): “Using peer tutoring as an inclusive pedagogy is amazing but needs more time to accomplish and to train the students, and the class time is too short to do both these things.” The time barrier to implementing inclusive education is also supported by similar studies in UK (e.g. Smith and Leonard, 2005; Talmor et al., 2005; Drudy and Kinsella, 2009, Horne and Timmons, 2009).

6.8.2 Curricula

One of the main barriers facing teachers nowadays is how to guarantee the successful inclusive education of students with SEN in existing educational programmes within a general curriculum (Williams, 2002). However, Saudi textbooks are huge and complex, even for students without disabilities. In addition, the special education curricula are often lower than the students’ abilities. There is no flexibility to change the curricula because they are national curricula. The teachers are controlled by the need to finish textbooks, regardless of their students’ needs.

To achieve more successful inclusive education outcomes, it is suggested that there should be more flexible curricula in the education system. The current curricula seem to act as a barrier

to including students with ASD; and for special needs teaching the curricula are too simple in academic terms. Hence, the teachers are struggling to have such students in regular classrooms. As one teacher put it

“Currently, schools follow the prescribed curriculum throughout the whole of the kingdom. This gives the teachers less freedom and puts the entire load on teachers’ shoulders to find the differences and similarities between normal students and those with disabilities in terms of learning needs” NAE (GT, F).

Another teacher said:

“So, the curricula materials need to be developed in collaboration with the students’ educational needs” NN (SET, M).

Another teacher said:

“The teacher is under pressure due to different students’ needs, as all students have to cover the curriculum. Additionally, the teacher has a responsibility to help students with disabilities to learn commensurate with their abilities” AM (GT, F).

For example, AAA (SET, M) added that he supported his students’ learning and education process via pictures, posters, videos and other activities, which allowed them to work together in a more fun way. “ I use different methods and multiple techniques that are freely accessible to all students and decrease the pressure on the teacher” AAA (SET, M).

As JK (SET, F) believed, “The curricula are too difficult and complex, and students with SEN can not understand it very well. They struggle with it a lot”. AAB (SET, M) believed that “The current curricula are too hard on all students, not only students with SEN. I think

the old curricula were much better than this.” H (SET, F) stated, “Our curricula are not welcoming to students with SEN.” NN (SET, M) agreed with H (SET, F): “The special education curricula are too simple for some of my students with autism, but for others they are hard work.” He added, “The curriculum does not prepare the students for real life.” Further, another teacher said, “Linking the curricula with tangible examples with daily life makes it easier for students to understand” NA (SET, F). In contrast, one participant believed that “The problem lies in the pedagogy and teaching methods of general education teachers, not in the curricula” WF (SET, F).

Overall, the general education and special teachers agreed that the current curricula are one of the barriers and need some modification towards ensuring more-inclusive education in schools. The inflexible curriculum is a barrier to teaching inclusive education classes, not just a barrier to teaching students with autism. The teachers believed that focusing on teaching methods would be one way to modify the curriculum. H (SET, F) stated that it should be modified by “using different teaching methods to help to simplify the curriculum”.

Ultimately, the curriculum is an important issue that should be reconsidered and adapted to include more students with SEN, including ASD. In addition, the MoE should give more freedom to teachers to choose and prepare their materials according to their students’ needs.

6.8.3 Attitudes

The attitudes sub-theme relates to the general attitude of acceptance that was felt among the teachers interviewed. Attitude is one of the most important elements in helping to understand inclusion, opinions and acceptance regarding diversity in school and society. This research revealed it to be a critical element that helps to create a sense of inclusion. Moreover, the

general teachers had more positive attitudes towards students with autism than the SEN teachers.

One teacher said, “My job as a teacher is to accept all students’ differences in the classroom” MK (GT, F). Moreover, “So far, my experience with students with autism has been good. For that reason, I do not mind having them in my classes if they are like my old students” MK (GT, F). By contrast, FM (SET, M) stated, “I do not like to teach them; sometimes they are aggressive and not interested in education”. IAA (SET, M) said, “Special education needs institutes are unhealthy environments to work in; it affects the teachers before the students.” He said that he felt isolated from real life when teaching in a special needs institute and that this institute did look like not a school: “Students do not learn real skills, such as verbal communication”. He added, “I do not want to go back to that place.” He described his experience at the SEN institute as “unpleasant”

MNA (GT, F) was very optimistic about applying inclusive practices for SEN and general education needs. In contrast, JK (SET, F) preferred to work with students with hearing impairments, as she mentioned: “I have attended a lot of workshops about disabilities, especially those related to hearing impairments. I have found myself more confident with this type of student.” One teacher saw himself teaching only students with SEN in separate classrooms in general schools. He had experience of teaching in general education for a short time but he was not happy about it. NN stated:

“Not all students with autism can be taught in inclusive schools; only students with a medium level of autism and high IQ levels can be taught there.” NN (SET, M).

To sum up, the general education teachers had more positive attitudes about autism and inclusion than the special education teachers. One special education teacher was very negative as stated by NN (SET, M): ‘in special education class with a small number of students we take weeks to teach one skill... having them in the general classroom would not be successful ‘.

The male teachers with more experience were self-motivated, and were aware of their chances for improvement in their careers, with fewer restrictions in their work environments, and with more freedom to engage with the surrounding communities. That might be attributable to the unique culture in Saudi Arabia, which is more masculine than feminine, as noted by Hofstede (2002). The male teachers held a strong belief that female teachers are more capable of teaching SEN and have more patience to teach disabled students compared to male teachers. The female teachers interviewed by the researcher had more positive attitudes toward SEN/ASD than the male teachers.

All of the schools’ documents and educational policy were positive towards including students with disabilities. Many researchers have found that educators’ attitudes are an important factor in the success of inclusive education (Lindsay, 2007; Frazier- Cross et al., 2004; D’Alonzo, Giordano and Vanleeuwen, 1997). Teachers’ attitudes, values and beliefs inside and outside of the school can have an effect on the possible achievement of inclusive education in the school. Carrington (1999) argues that inclusive education requires a diverse school culture. Wedell (2008) points out that students should be respected as individuals so that the dissimilarities among the students can be acknowledged but without insult. According to this study finding, a transformation towards more-positive attitudes about

inclusive education of ASD will need to take place in a more collaborative school culture to overcome the barriers.

6.8.4 Lack of Training

There are many factors that affect teachers' beliefs about and attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs in general education settings. Many teachers reject the students in public schools because they have limited knowledge of the condition and do not understand the nature of ASD; other teachers do not have the necessary training to deal with students' needs and have less support from the school (Robertson et al., 2003). The demographic data show that the lack of training for teachers is a significant barrier to developing special needs education in Saudi Arabia.

WF (SET, F) had received training on inclusive education and autism. She believed that gaining experience with students with ASD alongside training was beneficial. H (SET, F) had recently attended a workshop and training course on inclusion and had learned how to develop the school environment to accept all students with different needs in the same school. JK (SET, F) had attended a workshop and training course on special education needs but not on inclusive education. In contrast, most teachers had not had any training.

“In regard to inclusion workshops, I have not attended any, apart from one course on integration practices years ago. I am not happy about the quality and the topics of the MoE. All of them are outdated and do not help me as a teacher in a general education setting.” JK (SET, F)

MK (SET, F) had not known anything about autism until the year of inclusive, when she had one student with autism in her class. She worked with a special education teacher to support her in teaching students, if needed.

Another teacher said:

“I did not have any training about SEN, inclusion or autism. All the training and workshops I attended were in my major, which was English language and teaching methods” AM (GT, F).

Another teacher said:

“I forced myself to accept them [children with SEN] in my classrooms. I do not have training and I do not even have the 30% surplus on my salary like the special education teachers and school administrators do” NAE (SET, F).

One teacher reputed having had learned the necessary skills from her students; MNA (GT, F) described students teaching teachers:

“At the beginning, I found myself with deaf students and unable to communicate with them, but I tried to learn the basics from a training programme. Honestly, I learned the sign language from my students and practised it with them.” MNA (GT, F).

AA (SET, F) had received training in autism in Kuwait and Jordan, as they were more advanced in this subject than Saudi Arabia. AA stated that she had been among the first to

receive training on autism abroad to improve her career, as the majority of Saudi universities' curricula did not include training for working with students on the autism spectrum.

Teachers held strong views about the workshops and training run by the MoE. "Nothing new – the same workshop is run each year... and I do not have time for it." RMA (SET, M). Also, "The MoE does not require further qualification, but I took a Master's degree to help to link my experience with new knowledge to help my students'" AAA (SET, M).

The MoE offers some training programmes for teachers according to education policy and schools' documents. However, according to the interview findings, their contents were often not related to inclusive education. It seems that lack of proper training is one of the barriers to effective teaching in an inclusive education class. Adopting a new policy without any training has a negative effect on the quality of education for students with SEN. The older teachers had also faced obstacles due to the poor university curricula at the time of their pre-service preparation. In contrast, the new teachers had more knowledge and had been educated under more relevant university curricula.

6.8.5 School Environments

Each school visited by the researcher for the interviews had a similar environment, where many basic aspects interact to form the day-to-day implementation of the educational experience. This provided an insight into the way that schools were working towards being more inclusive for students with ASD. In general, the teachers agreed that the classrooms and school facilities did not support inclusion; some of the school buildings were too old.

One teacher added,

“Our schools are not welcoming environments for students with SEN. Some are out of order and have been for ten years, classrooms are too crowded, most of the toilets are blocked, paint is wearing off, there is dangerous flooring and sound echoes in class” IAA (SET, M).

For other teachers the school environment extended beyond the school facilities to include families. One teacher commented,

“I think, as a teacher, I do not believe that support should come only from the school management; we need support from general education teachers, families and students. I think if we have this, inclusive education can be successful. But in our school, I do not feel any support from the teachers for each other, as well as some of the families.”

6.8.6 Overcrowding

Having a large number of students in a class is one of the barriers that were revealed in the analysis of the interview transcripts. Overcrowded classes with different abilities and students with ASD presented a problem in moving towards inclusive practices. The teachers talked about the negative consequences due to overcrowded classes. For example: “We face difficulties in overcrowded classes in controlling the bad behaviour of students during the class, and students can not learn in classes of 45–50 students” AF (SET, M).

The overcrowded classes are against MoE policy – it is clearly stated that classes should not exceed 25 students. AAA (SET, M) referred to overcrowding as “our class nightmare”. He added, “I would prefer to teach my students in a special class away from the general class.”

NN (SET, M) said, “In general education schools, the rules and punishments are posted. It appears that the teachers allow the students the freedom to run the school and class.”

Teachers with very crowded classes relied on schoolbooks as the main resources of learning. Moreover, they perceived that overcrowding did not encourage self-learning among students. According to the special education and general education teachers, when there is overcrowding, there is no expectation that students will discuss what is taught by the teacher. The main problems are students’ failure to complete a task and not listening to directions. If a student causes any problems, the teacher can give the student a time out if needed. In difficult cases, the teacher will call the parents. MA (SET, F) added, “This is the only way to control classes with more than 35 students. I do not have time for all the students, and this way I ensure that all the students learn something.”

The school observations revealed that they were generally overcrowded with students in general classrooms, in contrast, with SEN classes which were few (see appendix VII) for further details. However, in the policy it is stated that every class that has SEN students should have one teacher and teacher assistant.

In the next section the researcher sets out the findings from the open observations before engaging in a critical reflection of the experience of doing this research using these two methods.

6.9 Observations

The second tool used to collect data was the observation approach. Observations were carried out in schools as whole environments, where the researcher observed teacher's practices during lessons in each school. The observations were conducted in five girls' primary schools. The observations focused on school facilities, lessons, inclusivity, SEN, teachers, students, practices and playgrounds. Observation transcripts were organised thematically and analysed in relation to relevant study aims. This enabled the researcher to pull out practices in relation to inclusion, equity, diversity and autism; these observations will be highlighted in more detail in the next section. In addition, pictures have been included of some schools and classes, connected with the descriptions. Moreover, consideration was given to factors such as number of students in a classroom, number of teachers, types of students and school building. The schools' background data is summarised in Appendix VII, followed by in-depth information on each school visited.

6.9.1 School A

6.9.1.1 Background Information

School A was a primary school of 416 students from Arab and Muslim backgrounds. It is located in the west of the capital city of Saudi Arabia. The majority of the population in this area were from middle to lower class families. Although this school was located in a more conservative community, it was not as wealthy as the rest of the city. The majority of the students in the school came from big families, and often the father provided the only income for the family. The majority of parents had low educational attainment. It was one of the primary schools in the area that provided services for students with SEN from grade 1 to grade 6 (age 7 to 12), with an average of three SEN students per class for each grade, and an

average of 30 students in each general classroom. In addition, the school had an SEN class (with five to nine students in the classroom), a resources room, individual planning programmes, a speech therapist and a psychologist.

The school building appeared to be typical of a government school, built around 15 years ago, painted in dark and sand colours. There was a small room for the girls' school guard, who had the job of opening and closing the school's door from the outside and not allowing anyone inside the school (see figure, 6.1). The guard would open the door for female visitors but only after 8am; the door was open from 6am for students and staff and was opened again at 12pm. No one was allowed to enter between 7am and 12pm.

Figure: 6-1 School A, outside



The school was a three-storey building with a main door leading into the main yard. The head teacher's office and school administration office were located on this corridor, along with the psychologist's office, two rooms for the 69 general education teachers' classes and a few other classrooms. There were two main corridors, and in the middle was a big hall connecting with two sets of stairs to the upper floors. This design provided a large yard, allowing all

classes to have the same view and a place for school activities, such as a playground for students, a morning assembly area and a lunch break area. On the first floor, there were several classrooms; on the second floor, was the a special education assistant's office, one resource room, three rooms for individual planning programmes and a speech therapy room. On the other side of the corridor were the special education classrooms and many general classrooms. At the end of the corridor was a large office for the 50 special education teachers. On each floor, there were three toilet located at the corners between the classes.

Figure: 6-2 School A, inside



All classrooms in the school were of a similar size and were painted light green and yellow. The desks were arranged in rows and the classrooms were well decorated with students' work (see figures, 6.2 and 6,3).

Figure: 6-3 School A, inside classroom



6.9.1.2 The School's Teachers

The staff at school (A) were diverse and fitted into three major groups: administration, general education teachers and special education teachers. The teachers ranged in age from mid-20s to 50s. The majority of the teachers had a bachelor's degree in education, and a few had a diploma. The school principal was absent during the period that the researcher visited the school.

Observations did not reveal collaboration between the general and special teachers; arguably, it appeared that there were poor relationships. The general education team would not accept any interventions from the special education teachers, and the general education teachers believed that the job of the special teachers was focused on students with SEN only. The special education teachers believed that students with SEN should be in a separate classroom from the general teachers and regular classrooms. The general education teachers had good relationships with disabled students, while the special education teachers did not have any

relationships with general education students, and their responsibilities only lay with SEN students. The researcher felt that the school staff and teachers treated the children as adults rather than as children. For example, one teacher talked to their students aged 10–12 years about it not being necessary to attend the school: “If you got married, this would be best for you and for the school.”

6.9.1.3 Special Education at the School

School A had had SEN classes since it opened 15 years previously. The school currently offered six options for students with SEN according to IQ level and degree of disability. There was a range of classroom types, including location integration, educational integration, social integration, community integration, partial integration and full inclusion.

6.9.1.4 Observation Process

School A was a traditional primary school that followed a set daily routine. The students were seated in rows, and on entering the classroom, the teacher was very friendly and introduced the researcher to the students in the class. The teacher provided the researcher with basic information about the students, such as age, medical condition and ability.

6.9.1.4.1 Classroom

The class under observation had 30 students: 25 general students plus five with SEN. All five SEN students had behaviour and language problems alongside their primary disabilities (one had hearing problems, two had learning difficulties and two had autism). One general teacher was responsible for all students in the class, and it took about ten minutes to control the class, and of the 45-minute class on the Arabic language. The lesson consisted of the teacher writing a word on a board, then asking each student to say the word after her for about 15 minutes. After that, she set up an activity called ‘small teacher’ – another name for peer tutoring. She asked every pair of students to take an A3 piece of paper and two pens. One of

the pair had to choose one word and their peer had to correct it, and then they exchanged roles to help one another. The researcher observed a student with autism and her friend and noted that listening was improved when compared to teacher–student communication. This approach worked very well, as the teacher intervened only as necessary; all students were busy on this activity until the end of the class, while the teacher prepared for the next class. However, when challenged on her work, the student with autism began to shout and cry, and it was a struggle to calm her. Peer support was important here: the student with autism left the room, her friend was asked to follow her and both were back shortly and calm. At the end of the lesson, all stood in line for lunch and the teacher’s parting comment was: “The time is not enough – I do not know how to deal with student 2 [(the student who walked out)], but her friend helps me a lot to control her behaviour.”

6.9.1.4.2 Playground

The researcher was interested in the children’s interaction in the playground, from the small school community to the big community outside the school. Regular students sat together and students with SEN sat together, with splinter groups such as deaf students, who did not integrate together. Student 2 (with ASD) walked through the yard alone but she talked to peers in her class. In addition, she was receiving special education resources and speech therapy to help her to be more active and to use more verbal communication with others. She was categorised as fully included because she stayed in the classroom all day with her peers, with full access to the general curriculum. In addition, the school was providing her with educational integration support for academic skills, because the previous year she had failed half of the subjects, having had no extra support.

Since one of the research interests within education was that of integration, the SEN assistant began by explaining location integration for six SEN students, two of which were deaf. These

students did not have any contact with the rest of the school and did not have access to the general curriculum. Each class would take a minimum of five students and a maximum of nine. The special education teachers were responsible for everything on the SEN floor and had benefited from the academic integration service. The researcher observed a location integration class; the class was smaller than a general education class. The only difference was the number of students: the class consisted of five deaf students. There were a lot of books for the children to read in their spare time to be found on bookcases, in colourful boxes for each student. Boxes included notes, parent letters and homework for each student to take home at the end of the day. At the front of the class, there was a big table with a laptop and projector for the teacher. The teacher began with “Hello” in Arabic and in sign language.

The teacher began by reviewing the last class on Arabic letters by using pictures and artificial models. Using sign language, she asked the students to work as a group to match the pictures with the correct words. At the same time, the teacher walked around the classroom observing the students’ progress and checking if they were on task.

During the observation, the teacher used different strategies to explain the topic to the students. The beginning of the class was more traditional, but after that, she tried to link the topic and real life. SEN teachers have more control over and time for the class than general teachers do.

Social and community integration for all students with SEN aims to make them active socially by involving them in social and community activities in the school. Partial integration is where SEN students attend one or more subjects with their peers in the regular classroom while the rest are studied in the special education needs class. The special

education teacher attends the general classroom with students to help and support them and then escorts them to the next class.

6.9.2 School B

6.9.2.1 Background Information

School B was a primary school located in the southwest of Riyadh city in Saudi Arabia. The majority of the population in this area are from the middle class, and it is a more conservative community. The majority of the students in the school come from medium to large families, and often the father is the only income source for the family. It was one of the primary schools in the area that open the door to students with SEN from grade 1 to grade 6, with an average of three SEN students per class for each grade. It had an average of 35 students in each general class and 20 students in each integrated class. In addition, the school had classes for students with SEN, with four to six students in each class.

The school accommodated 373 students, representing diverse backgrounds but predominantly Arab and Muslim. The school building appeared typical of the government schools built in 2006 and quite aged. The building's outside was painted in dark beige and sandy colours. The main door was located in the middle and was painted light green. A small room was located to the left of it to accommodate the gatekeeper/guard, who opened and closed the school's door from the outside and did not allow outsiders in without permission. The door was opened for female visitors only after 8am. The door opened at 6am for students/staff and opened again at 12pm. Between 7am and 12pm, no one was allowed in or out without permission.

Figure: 6-4 School B, inside



The door led to a small yard separating the school building from the main entrance. It was a three-floor building. The head teacher's office and school administration office are located on the ground floor, and one classroom was a computer lab. In the middle was a big hall, connecting with two stairways to the upper floors. This design gave a large yard, allowing all classes to have the same view and space for school activities, such as a playground for students, a morning assembly area and a lunch break area. On the first floor were several classrooms. On the first and second floors on the sides of the corridor were the teachers' rooms. The teachers' rooms were similar, with about 25 teachers in each room. On the right corner of the second floor is a special education teachers' room. On each floor, there were three toilets at the corners between the classes.

All classrooms in the school were painted light green and yellow. The desks were arranged in rows and the classrooms were well decorated with students' work (see figures, 6.4 and 6,5).

Figure: 6-5 School B, inside classroom



6.9.2.2 The School's Teachers

The teachers and staff at School B appeared to be a diverse group in regard to academic major and age (20s to 50s); there was one special education teacher and 54 general teachers. The majority of the teachers had a bachelor's degree in subjects other than education, such as maths, science, history, Arabic and religion. The school principal appeared to be very collaborative, believed in group work and sustained good relationships with parents, students and teachers.

It appeared that collaboration between the principal and teachers led to good relations, reflected in students' progress. The general education teachers worked with the special education teacher; and accepted any interventions from her. In addition, the general education teachers believe that the job of the special teacher was to support them when teaching students with SEN. The special education teacher believed that she had to teach only the

students with SEN. The teachers had good relationships with students and their responsibility lay with all students. Based on the evidence of the observations it appeared that the school's staff and teachers were welcoming to all students.

6.9.2.3 Special Education at the School

School B had offered SEN classes since 2010. At the time of the research, it offered three types of education for students with SEN according to IQ level and degree of disability: location integration, i.e. special education in the regular school sharing only the school building; partial integration, whereby students were integrated with SEN with their peers in one or more subjects in the regular classrooms; and, finally, full inclusion, where students with SEN were in the same classes as their peers in a regular classroom every day.

The researcher spoke with the school principal in order to understand more fully the school's background in depth, and the ideal environment to support students with disabilities inside and outside of school. She talked about involving those students within the school was the first step towards their inclusion within the whole of society. She added that nothing in the school building had been adapted but that the school's teachers had a very strong motivation to support students. I saw two teachers carry students with mobility disabilities to their classes on the second floor.

6.9.2.4 Observation Process

School B was a traditional school that followed the routine set by the MoE, like any school in the country. Moreover, the school principal, staff and teachers were welcoming and open about everything; the researcher felt very positive about the way they dealt with her and how cooperative they were. The principal took the researcher to a class. The students were seated in rows in traditional seating. The teacher wrote on the board the date lesson, subject and

title. The researcher entered the classroom without any interfering and sat at the end of the classroom. This was perfect for the researcher because she had a clear view of all the students and the teacher. The teacher introduced the researcher to the students as a teacher. Then, she asked the students to say their names one after another. In addition, the class teacher provided the researcher with essential information about the disabled students, such as their type of disability and their progress in the class in general.

6.9.2.4.1 Classroom

This class had 25 students in total as an integrated classroom. It had 20 students plus four with SEN. One student had behaviour and two students with language problems alongside their primary disabilities. A student with autism was not counted among the four students with SEN but was present in the class. The teacher explained the reason for this: the student was doing well in the class and her academic progress was good compared with her peers. She had some behaviour issues, but these were not affecting her learning.

This teacher was a general education teacher and was responsible for all students in the class. After she had written down the date, subject and title for the lesson, she sat at her desk, which was in front of the students. She asked the class to be quiet ready to start the lesson. Then, she asked one of the students to read the title: reinvasion. The class was on history. The teacher asked, “Who did not study today?” The students were very quiet. After that, the teacher started to ask her students questions in order, one after another. This process took around 25 minutes. At the end, she said, “Well done. Now it is your turn to ask each other.” She asked the first student to ask a questions of the student beside her, and so on. This activity lasted for 15 minutes. I observed the student with autism. She always looked at the floor and answered the teacher’s questions without eye contact. On the second activity, she did not answer one of

her friends. When the teacher asked her “Why?”, she responded, “She laughed at me.” The teacher started to explain to her that her friend had not meant to laugh at her. She asked the student to apologise to her. It was noticeable that the student with autism had better eye contact with her friend than she did with her teacher. At the end of the lesson, the teacher reminded the students about the exam the following week. She wished them all the best and said that the exam would be easy.

6.9.2.4.2 Playground

The researcher observed the students’ interaction in the playground: this school was the first step for all students to real life outside the school. The students sat in small groups of from two to seven students. In the playground, there were many examples of how the students interacted together in real life. Non-Saudi students sat together in a small group. There was a mixed group of Saudi and non-Saudi students with and without disabilities. Other students with SEN sat together. In addition, the researcher noticed again certain groups strongly joined together, such as deaf students, who appeared to prefer to be together. Moreover, some students with hearing impairments interacted with them in sign language. The students with physical disabilities easily connected with everyone around them.

The aforementioned student with autism just sat with her classmates. She was categorised as fully integrated because she stayed in the classroom all day with her peers, with full access to the general curriculum. Also, she liked to be involved in the playground activities as her teacher said that “she likes to participate in school plays and chant with her peers”. She liked to perform on the school stage. She would take a story and practise it to perform it in front of the school. At the end, she asked other students to take roles in the play. She spoke only to her peer in the same class. She said of others “Miss I do not like to speak to them, there are

not with me in class”. The teacher replayed ”Okay”. She looked to them and sad ”do not speak to her”. They asked” Why miss? we have not done anything to her”. She sad “That’s enough, she does not like it”.

6.9.3 School C

6.9.3.1 Background Information

School C was a traditional primary school that followed a set daily routine like Schools A and B. School C was located in the southwest of Riyadh city in Saudi Arabia, not far from School B.

The population in this area was from a conservative, middle-class background. School C accommodated 400 students, representing a mixture of backgrounds from Arab and Muslim countries. It was the first primary school in the area to welcome students with SEN from grade 1 to grade 6 (age 7 to 12), opening three class types for each grade. The first type was a general education class that has an average of 30 students in each class. The second type was an integrated class with no more than 20 students in each class. Finally, the SEN classes had four to six students in each class.

The School C building appeared quite old and was typical of the government schools built in 2004. The building’s outside was painted dark beige. The main door on the left was painted light grey. A small room located in front of the building accommodates the gatekeeper/guard. Inside the school, a medium-sized hall separated the school building from the main door. The building was on three floors, with main door leading into a main yard. The head teacher’s office and school administration office were located on the ground floor, alongside a large

room for the teachers. In the middle was a big hall connected to the upper floors by a stairway. There was also a large yard, acting as a playground, morning assembly area and lunch break area. On the first and second floors, there were several classrooms. There were toilets at the corners between the classes. Some classrooms were painted white, while the rest are light green. Students' desks were arranged in rows. Some classrooms were well decorated with students' work, while others had no decoration. At the front of each classroom was a big desk for the teacher, with a blackboard behind it.

6.9.3.2 The School's Teachers

The school principal appeared to be in her late 40s. She held a bachelor's degree in education. She had been the school principal for more than ten years. She was collaborative and had good relationships with parents, students and teachers. The teachers and staff at School C formed a diverse group in regard to academic major and age (30s to 50s); there was 50 general teachers and 20 special education teachers. The majority of teachers had a bachelor's degree in a subject other than education, such as maths, science, history, Arabic literature and religion.

Collaboration between the general teachers and special education teachers was not good, reflected in the students' progress. The general education teachers did not work with the special education teachers; and do not accept any interventions from them. In addition, the general education teachers believe that it was the job and responsibility of the special teachers to teach students with disabilities. In general, the researcher felt that the SEN teachers were more welcoming than the general education teachers.

6.9.3.3 Special Education at the School

School C had offered SEN classes for five years. At the time of the research offered three types of education for students with SEN according to IQ level, medical record and level of disability. Location integration was the norm for special education within the regular school, where students only shared the school building. Partial integration integrated students with SEN into one or more subjects with their peers in the regular classrooms. Finally, full inclusion was where students with SEN were in the same classes as their peers in a regular classroom every day. The school building had not been adapted in any way. For example, the school had been adapted to remove physical barriers to access.

6.9.3.4 Observation Process

School C was like any other school in the country in following the routine set by the MoE. However, the school's head teacher, staff and teachers were less welcoming of the researcher than those from Schools A and B. The researcher felt that the teachers were less open about everything, particularly about the students. In addition, the way they dealt with the researcher and was not very cooperative and they appeared less positive. The principal introduced the researcher to one of the SEN teachers and asked her to take the researcher to a particular class. When the researcher asked for a tour of the school, she appeared unhappy. She said, "I am sorry, the classes are so busy and any disturbance can affect our students, but I have chosen a class for your visit – you can see that." She added, "All classes are the same at our school." After that, the SEN teacher took the researcher to the class that had been arranged by the head teacher. The class was one of the special education classes, with eight students seated in rows in traditional seating and a teacher's desk at the front. The special education teacher and the researcher entered the classroom without any interfering and sat at the front. The class teacher (special education teacher) introduced them to the students and provided the researcher with essential information about the students, such as their type of disability

and their progress in the class in general. However, the special education teacher who came with the researcher kept looking at her notes, which she did not like and made her feel uncomfortable.

6.9.3.4.1 Classroom

This class had eight students in a location integration classroom. Seven students had cognitive disabilities and one student had autism with a cognitive disability. This class was the responsibility of SEN teachers. The teacher started the class by explaining that the students would be getting into four pairs. The teacher put three pictures on the board. The first picture was a lion, the second picture was a sheep and the third picture was a bird. The first pair's task was to find out "What do they eat?" The second pair's task was to investigate, "Where do they live?" The third pair's task was writing the name of each animal. The fourth pair had to read a story. The teacher put the students into pairs accorded to their abilities. After that, she explained what they should do again, as pairs and as individuals. She walked around the pairs and helped them to solve any problems they faced.

After ten minutes, the teacher asked each pair to explain their answers to the other pairs. Pair A started to talk about what each animal eats: student A said, "Lion eats meat"; Student B said, "Sheep eats grass"; and Student A said "Bird eats grain". The teacher said, "Well done, Pair A." Now Pair B: "Where do they live?" One student in Pair B wanted to say all the answers, and the teacher asked her to let her friend in the pair answer because they had worked together. The teacher said, "If you say all the answers, you will not get any gift after the class." The student said, "Okay". The teacher asked, "Where does the lion live?" The student said, "In the zoo". The teacher said, "And another place – not only the zoo. Pairs A and C, what do you think?" The students in each pair talked together to solve this problem.

The students in Pair A said, “Jungle”. The teacher said, “Very good. When we work together, we help each other and learn more.” The bell rang, announcing the end of the lesson and the time for lunch break. At the end, the teacher asked her students to show their parents their homework notebooks. She also mentioned that in the next lesson, they would continue learning about the animal kingdom.

The autistic student, at the beginning of the activities, refused to be involved. She did not speak but the teacher used the picture to communicate with her. Then, the teacher pronounced the word and the student with autism chose the right picture.

The researcher had the chance to observe individual learning taking place within a pair situation. For instance, observations revealed the students sharing and discussing ideas and solutions about writing errors and problems in the activities, which then led to a period of working quietly and independently. Individual work was subsequently shared with the group. The students worked together in discussing their ideas. This sharing process gave the students an extra thinking period. After that, there was time for teamwork as their answers became collective. This was another strong example of the effectiveness of children as small teachers.

6.9.3.4.2 Playground

The researcher was interested to see the children’s interaction in the playground, as an indicator of activity outside the school walls. Regular students sat together and students with SEN sat together, with splinter groups such as students with cognitive impairment, who at the time of the observation appeared to sit together. The student with autism sat alone and did not share company with other students. There did not seem to be enough space for playing and interaction for all students, because the playground was crowded and dark. The researcher

also noted inappropriate behaviour from some students, including shouting at students with Down's syndrome.

6.9.4 School D

6.9.4.1 Background Information

School D was the oldest and most crowded school visited. It accommodated 900 students and nearly 100 staff. It had opened 26 years previously. It offered to the usual daily routine of schools in Saudi Arabia. School D was a primary school in the south of the capital city, Riyadh. The population in this area is from a conservative, middle-class background, and the majority of pupils were lower-class and poor citizens. The school represented a mixture of backgrounds, including Arab, Bedouin and black. It welcomed students with SEN from grade 1 to grade 6.

The school building appeared old and typical of a government school building. The building's outside had been newly painted in dark beige. The main door was located in the middle and was painted brown. A small room located at the front of the building accommodated the gatekeeper/guard.

The school was a large, three-story building with a main door leading to a hall and then the main floor. The head teacher's office and school administration office were located on the ground floor, alongside a large room for the teachers. On the first and second floors were several classrooms. Toilets were located at the corners between the classes. All classrooms at the school were painted white. The desks were arranged in rows and some classrooms were

well decorated with students' work, while some classes did not have any decoration on the walls.

6.9.4.2 The School's Teachers

The school's principal appeared to be in her late 50s. She had a bachelor's degree in education and had been the school principal for more than 15 years. She was strict and had good relationships with parents, students and teachers. The teachers and staff at School D were a diverse group in regard to academic major and age. There were 63 general teachers and 20 special education teachers. The majority of the teachers had a bachelor's degree in a subject other than education, such as maths, science, history, Arabic and religion. The SEN teachers did not work with the general education teachers; they did not accept any interventions from each other. In addition, the general education teachers believed that the job of the special education teachers was to teach students with disabilities.

6.9.4.3 Special Education at the School

School D had offered SEN classes for 20 years, starting with children with learning difficulties and recently with other disabilities. At the time of the research, the school offered three types of education for students with special needs according to IQ level, medical record and degree of disability: location integration, where special education was provided in the regular school sharing only the school building; partial integration, where students with SEN were integrated with their peers in one or more subjects in regular classrooms; and, finally, full inclusion, where students with SEN were in the same classes as their peers in a regular classroom every day.

6.9.4.4 Observation Process

The school's head teacher, staff and teachers were welcoming. The school's teachers appeared open about everything, particularly about the school and the huge numbers of students in classrooms. Each general class had 45 to 50 students. In addition, the researcher felt positive about the way teachers dealt with her as a researcher and their level of cooperation. The principal introduced the researcher to teachers and asked them to help in any way needed. She added, "All the classes are open to you." After that, one of the general teachers took the researcher to a class. The class observed was one of the partial inclusion classes, with 40 regular students and five SEN students seated in rows in a traditional seating pattern, with the teacher's desk at the front. The class teacher introduced the researcher to the students and provided her with information about the SEN students, such as their type of disability and their progress in the class in general.

6.9.4.4.1 Classroom

The researcher observed a fifth-grade literacy lesson in the classroom for 45 minutes. In total, 35 students entered the classroom after a break. Before the teacher started the lesson, she handed out a colour-coded card to every student, directing them to the appropriate table. The cards were in 12 colours (white, yellow, blue, pink, green, orange, etc.). Students sat quietly in their places. The teacher asked the students to move to their pair with the same colour card and to sit at the table of the same colour. She started the lesson by explaining the new topic for the lesson. She asked questions about the topic ("What is the person who writes books called?") and then chose a student at random. She said, "Student A". Student A said, "Ahh, author". The teacher said, "Brilliant". She wrote the word "author" on the whiteboard. Then, she asked other questions, choosing the students at random. She said, "What do you think the job of an author is? Student B." Student B said, "Writing books". She wrote "writing books" under the first word. Then, she wrote two questions on the whiteboard. "Do you know any

authors? Do you have any favourites? Discuss different types of books.” She then explained the students’ roles and gave them instructions on how to work together. She said, “Discuss these questions in your home pair for one minute and remember that both of you should talk and that you should listen to your friend.” The students started to answer these questions in pairs. The teacher moved around each pair to make sure that everything was going smoothly. A student asked the teacher for help. The teacher said, “Discuss the answer with your friend – she is your teacher now.” In another pair, a student said, “Teacher said that everyone should talk, so we’ll start with me and then you.” Another student said, “I will start and you after.” The teacher, who was working with the pink group and said, “Listen to your friend, A.”

After a minute, the teacher said to the class “Snapback”. She asked, “How do you know if this book or story is interesting?” She chose one student from each pair to respond to the question, and she started from back to front of the class. The first student said, “Colour”, and the second student said, “Pictures”. The teacher took the feedback and recorded it on the whiteboard. The teacher asked other questions. She said, “How do you know this book is interesting without reading the whole book?” One student responded, “The content”. She said, “That is important, but not what you want.” She explained to the students the important parts for knowing if a book is interesting or not. She took a book from her table and read the title of it. She turned to the back of the book and started to read the book summaries. After she had finished, she said, “From this summary, do we know if this book is interesting or not?” The students responded to the teacher: “Yes”. The teacher asked the students to move from their home pairs into new pairs. Ten new groups were formed based on the shapes of the students’ coloured cards. Then the teacher distributed pens and A3 paper to every group. The teacher wrote on the board the important elements of a good story – using linking words, adjectives, details and quotations. The teacher divided tasks between the groups.

The pentagon group worked together to discuss the main events of a story. The second group, the square group, used a range of books to come up with a list of powerful adjectives that could be used to describe a book. The teacher encouraged them to think about words that would attract the reader's attention. Thirdly, the rectangle group wrote down some quotations that said how good a book was. The teacher reminded them that this was their opinion, asked would publishers choose quotations that do not say how good a book is? Finally, the octagon group analysed a range of book summaries to come up with a checklist of what they would need to include in their own stories. This work took about 15 minutes. The teacher reminded them of the main reason for changing groups. She said, "Remember, everyone should work on this because when you go back to your pair, you will have to explain what you learned about writing a story." The teacher and her assistants made sure that everything was right. In the square group, they decided that every student would write their point on the paper. A girl in the octagon group said, "One says the idea, the other writes on the paper."

The students used social language, saying things like "Please give me that book." Another student asked her friend in the group, "Do you want this book or another book?" The teacher helped groups with students with SEN because the groups were mixed-ability groups. She helped all the students equally; for instance, she said to one student: "This quotation is incomplete – what is missing?" One student asked the teacher for help in spelling a word. The teacher said, "Ask your friend." Her friend helped her to spell the word and the student was happy because she had written the word correctly. The teacher said, "Snapback... You have another minute to remember your ideas about writing a good story." The students started to read about what should be written about the characters in a story. One of the students said, "We should start with reading those stories." Her friends accepted that opinion and started to read the stories.

After a minute, the teacher asked the students to go back to their home pairs in less than one minute and quietly. The students went back to their home pairs. The teacher gave a new instruction: “Tell your partner what you learned about writing a story.” The students started to talk. The teacher made sure that everything was progressing well and that everyone was listening to and respecting each other’s opinions. She observed the pairs and tried to help them. The teacher said, “Snapback, please.”

The teacher gave new steps to the students after they had learned more ideas and information from each other and after a discussion with different students of high and low ability. She said, “Everyone start to write a short story in their topic book.” In this step, the teacher moved students from working cooperatively in groups to individual and independent work. Two students started giving out the notebooks. The students started writing their stories. The classroom was very quiet, and all the students were busy. The teacher moved around all the students and focused on the students who were facing difficulties. One student did not want to work with her friend and hid what she had written. Another student supported her friend, as she was struggling with reading a word from a card, so she read it for her. Suddenly, one student said, “I have finished.” The teacher looked at the notebook and commented on the student’s writing, saying that it needed a lot of work to be improved. The teacher used some positive phrases as feedback to give more motivation and to improve the student’s self-esteem, such as “right”, “well done”, “good” and “it is a good idea, but do we need it?” Another student helped her friend, reading through what she had written and giving her opinion. The student with autism asked the teacher to read her work. The teacher read her work and gave her a comment: “This is what I wanted; I will read it to your friends.” “Snapback, please. Your friend has written a good piece of work for her short story. Listen carefully.” The teacher read the story to all the students. After she had finished, she asked the

students what the positive things about the piece were. The students responded to the teacher. The teacher said, “Well done”. The teacher applauded all the students for their attempts and said that they would complete the task next lesson, when they would edit what they had written. Then she told the students to put their notebooks on the desk and she started collecting the talk cards from the desks and reorganising the classroom. She asked them to stand in a queue to get ready to go out for break. The students left the classroom. In terms of inclusion practices, the teacher used a range of strategies, including small teacher strategy, collaborative learning, peer tutoring, playing and self-learning.

6.9.4.4.2 Playground

The researcher observed the children’s interaction in the playground. In this school, social inclusion for all students was not applied. Students with intellectual disabilities were not involved in the playground or lunch break. The reason for this was that there had been problems between students with Down’s syndrome and other students. The school decided to separate students with intellectual disabilities from the playground and only include them in the same school through location integration. Thus, these children have their break time one hour or more before the other students. Other students with disabilities were involved in all of the school’s social and academic activities but without any effect on other students’ education.

When the researcher observed the playground at break time, it was very crowded and was controlled by students with strong personalities. The students with disabilities could not survive without an adult with them to avoid bullying and to buy their lunch in the canteen. The whole school was controlled by the strength of the head teacher because she believed that this was the only way to control such a huge school. The Arab, Bedouin and black students were blended together in the school culture, as were poor and middle-class students, without any differences. Although the observations revealed the problem of exclusion for

students with disabilities, this was not the case for differences of background or colour. The researcher observed a student with autism sitting alone in the playground with her hand moving rapidly and speaking very loudly but with no one sitting around her. The teachers told the other students to leave her alone.

6.9.5 School E

6.9.5.1 Background Information

School E was the last primary school that the researcher visited. It accommodated 345 students, 51 general teachers and 17 SEN teachers. It has followed the usual scheduled daily routine and had opened 19 years previously. School E was located in the south of the capital city. The population in this area comprised conservative, middle-class and poor residents. The school represented a mixture of backgrounds, including Arab and Bedouin. It had welcomed students with SEN from grade 1 to grade 6 for five years.

The school building was not different from the other government school buildings visited. The two-storey building's extension was painted dark beige. The main door was located in the middle and was painted black; a small room located at the front of the building accommodated the gatekeeper. Inside, a hall separated the school building from the main door. The head teacher's office and school administration office were located on the ground floor, alongside a large room for the teachers and some classrooms. On the second floor were several classrooms. At the corners of each floor were toilets. The classrooms in the school varied in size from small to large and all were painted white. The desks were arranged in rows, and some classrooms were decorated with educational materials.

6.9.5.2 The School's Teachers

The school's principal had a bachelor's degree in education. She had been the principal for more than eight years. She had moved from a special education school to this inclusive school two years previously was a firm believer in separating SEN students from general students' classes. The principal had a positive attitude towards students with disabilities. The teachers and staff at School E were a diverse group in regard to academic majors and ages. There are 51 general teachers and 17 special education teachers. All the teachers have a bachelor's degree in different subjects than education, such as maths, science, history, Arabic and religion. The SEN teachers do not work with the general education teachers, as the school principal's approach dictates.

6.9.5.3 Special Education at the School

School E had welcomed students with SEN for five years. There are three types of inclusion for students with SEN: full, partial and local. Full inclusion was for students with learning difficulties, who were placed in the same classes as their peers in a regular classroom every day. Partial integration was for students with mild disabilities (e.g. autism with a high IQ) who joined in one or more subjects with their peers in a regular classroom. Location integration is for students with intellectual disabilities and autism, who were placed in separate special education classes in the regular school and only shared the school's facilities.

6.9.5.4 Observation Process

The school's head teacher, staff and teachers were welcoming. The researcher had the impression of being in one building but with two different schools. The first school was a general education school that ran in a traditional way: 30 students were in each class, run by general education teachers. The other was a SEN school on the ground floor, with each class containing four to seven students. There were two types of SEN classes: the first type **was for**

students with autism and the second was for students with intellectual disabilities. Both classes were run by SEN teachers. In the school, the number of students with autism was small compared to the number with other disabilities. Hence, if the school opened a new class for students with autism, it would be required to have no fewer than four students; otherwise the policy dictated that the student should be moved to the intellectual disabilities class or be transferred to a special education institute outside the school. The special education teachers spoke about the school's way of implementing inclusion and the lack of communication with general education teachers. A special education teacher introduced the researcher to her class. The class that the researcher observed comprised four second-grade students with autism.

6.9.5.4.1 Classroom

The researcher observed a daily life skills lesson in the second-grade special education local integration classroom for 45 minutes. The students entered the classroom after the morning assembly. The teacher helped the students to get seated and then played a short video about social interaction ("Salaam alaykom, Ma'asalamah") that trained the students to greet each other by repeating the greeting and then practise it on others. The teacher asked each pair to do the task. Student A said "Salaam alaykom". Student B said, "Wa-□alaykumu salām". The students responded to the teacher. The teacher said, "Well done". Then, the teacher asked, "When we see somebody and we do not know her name, what do we do?" Student C responded, "We ask her name." The teacher said, "Superb – show me how." The student said, "What is your name?" The teacher said, "Well done. Everyone, give a round of applause to your friend." The students applauded their friend. The student seemed unhappy; she asked the teacher for a gift. The teacher said, "Not now, later". The student asked, "When? After the lesson?" The teacher said, "Not now. If you keep asking, you won't get any gift." Then, the teacher asked the students to play the small teacher role with the friend sitting next to them. After ten minutes, the teacher said, "Snapback, please. Swap your roles." One student refused

to let her friend teach her. The teacher said, “You should play with your friend like she did.” She observed this pair and tried to help them. At the end of the lesson, the teacher said, “Next lesson, we will meet new students and will try to get to know them.” She added, “Well done, my girls” and gave candy bars to all the students. Although the students did not have access to the general curriculum, the teacher prepared the lesson to match her students’ needs to cover daily life and social and communication skills more than academic skills.

6.9.5.4.2 Playground

The researcher observed the students’ interaction in the playground. The school’s segregation of students with SEN from general students continued in the playground. Students with disabilities and their teachers were less involved in school life. For example, they had their lunch break one hour before general students. In addition, they left the school at 11am – one hour before the other students. On the other hand, students with learning difficulties were more involved in the school and were included with the general students. It was felt that the school management kept students with ASD and those with intellectual disabilities away from general students, even in the playground, to reduce problems and interaction between them, which they believed would save time and effort and would promote students’ learning progress.

The researcher observed the SEN students’ playground. It was very quiet and was more controlled by the teachers. There was less social interaction and communication among students compared to the general students’ playground, which was less controlled.

6.10 Reflection on Observation

In this section the researcher critically reflects on the interviews with teachers and the open

observations. One of the main issues is the extent to which the open observations confirmed or contradicted what the teachers had said, and what, if anything, the researcher saw in the classroom activities that the teachers had not discussed. The open observations were done in schools for female students, as the researcher was not able for social, cultural and religious reasons to observe male teachers.

The observations were carried out over a two month period, when the researcher spent two weeks in each school. The researcher felt more welcomed in some of the schools than in others. School where there was a strong relationship between the school principal and the teachers and a commitment to the principle of inclusion were the ones where the researcher felt most welcomed, and where she was shown the poor quality of some of the facilities and the buildings. In other schools, her movements were more controlled. The researcher was struck by the lack of facilities for disabled children. In one school she saw teachers carrying a disabled child up some stairs. However, the researcher felt this demonstrated the commitment of the teachers to including disabled children in their classes.

The open observations mostly confirmed what the teachers had told the researcher. They had mentioned overcrowded classrooms, an inflexible curriculum and lack of time to prepare for lessons, as well as the extent to which teachers used participatory pedagogies, including peer tutoring.

The researcher felt that some of the times when the students were working as peer tutors had not been planned in advance but were the result of the natural setting of the classroom, where students were sitting with their friends, so that it was these friendships that were the basis for the students acting as small teachers. The teachers would not insist on the peer tutoring

method and would adapt the teaching strategy to suit the students. The researcher felt that this was a very creative teaching process. The interviewees had said to the researcher that they felt women were more creative teachers than men, but in the researcher's view this is not a gender issue, but it is about the teachers responding to the very practical issues that they are confronted with in the classroom when working with SEN/ASD students. The researcher also feels that the commitment to the students with SEN/ASD is driven by the religious values of the teachers, which they had expressed in the interviews and which the researcher saw in the classroom observations.

The teachers during the interviews had said that participatory pedagogies improved the students' performance and the researcher saw evidence for this in the teachers' classroom records of student progress.

The researcher did not only observe classrooms with SEN/ASD students but they also sat in on general classroom teaching. What is significant about these observations is that the type of teaching conducted in these classrooms was entirely of a banking style as Paulo Freire called it. It was only in the classrooms with students with SEN/ASD that participatory pedagogies were being carried out. As the researcher saw evidence to confirm the effectiveness of participatory pedagogies, it might be concluded that the general classroom teachers might consider adopting more progressive participatory pedagogies, not only for improving performance, but after hours, for creating a more joyous classroom.

One important feature of the open observations was to focus on the playground activities. Dewey said that play and what happens on the playground is an important aspect of student learning. Therefore, each day the researcher spent time in the playground with the teachers

and the students during playtime. The significant finding here is that while inclusive educational practices were going on within the classroom they were not being implemented in the playground.

Ten of the teachers interviewed said how pleased they were to have been able to talk with the researcher about their work. They felt that qualitative interviews and open observations was a very effective way of discovering the reality of teachers' working lives, more than quantitative surveys. The researcher was surprised at how talkative the male teachers were during their phone interviews. The researcher felt that the male teachers did not have the chance to discuss concerns and anxieties about their work as well as more positive aspects of their teaching experiences as a regular part of their working lives. The interviewees spoke to the researcher about non-work related aspects of their lives at home and how this affected their motivation at work. The researcher feels this is an important feature that should be taken more into account when doing educational research.

Table: 6-3 Thematic Summary of School Observations

Theme	Sub-theme	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Inclusion concept	Understanding of inclusive education	Social, location, partial inclusion and full inclusion Full inclusion for students with ASD and average IQ With support from special education programme	Social, location, partial inclusion and full inclusion inclusion Full inclusion for students with autism with average IQ Without support	Social, location, partial inclusion and full inclusion Full inclusion for students with autism with high IQ With support from family and out school Access to general education and special education.	Social Location Partial inclusion inclusion Autism Intellectual Disability who have low IQ	Social Location Partial inclusion Autism Intellectual Disability who have low IQ

		Access to general education	Access to general education		Access to general education and special education	Do not have access to general education
	Views on inclusive education	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Factors	Policy	Need more supported	Supported	Need more supported	Supported	Lack of support
	Culture	Lack of cooperation	Lack of cooperation	Lack of cooperation	Lack of cooperation	Lack of cooperation
	Social	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative
	Teaching/ Teachers' skills	Training for special education teacher	No training for general teachers and they teach	Training for special education teacher	Training for special education	Training for special education teacher

		No training for general teachers and they teach students with SEN and autism based on their experience	students with SEN and autism based on their experience	No training for general teachers and they teach student with SEN and autism from their experience	teacher No training for general teachers and they teach students with SEN and autism based on their experience	No training for general teachers and they teach students with SEN and autism based on their experience
Autism concept	Understanding of autism	General teachers have knowledge about autism from experience Special education teachers who have	General teachers do not have enough knowledge and they deal with students with ASD as normal	General teachers have knowledge about autism from their experience Special education teachers have knowledge about autism from their	General teachers have slightly knowledge about autism	General teachers mixed between autism and other disabilities

		experience more 14 years do not know anything about autism because the lack of training about on autism on Saudi universities	with behaviour problems	training and experience		
	Autism practices	General education and Special education practices	General education and more inclusive education for all practices	Special education practices	General education and Special education practices	Special education practices
Inclusion pedagogy concept	Understanding of Inclusion pedagogy	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Meaning of peer tutoring as inclusive pedagogy	Small teacher Group work	More traditional teaching method	PECS, ABA and modelling.	Cooperative learning and peer tutoring.	SEN strategy and PT

		Peer tutoring as friend not plan by teachers,				
Drivers	Religion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Salary	Only Special education teachers get 30% plus on salary	Only Special education teachers get 30% plus on salary	Only Special education teachers get 30% plus on salary	Only Special education teachers get 30% plus on salary	Only Special education teachers get 30% plus on salary
	Social justice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barriers	Time	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Lack of training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Crowded classrooms	Slightly Crowded	Slightly crowded	Not Crowded	crowded	Not much Crowded
	Curricula	General education	General	Special education	General	Special education

			education		education	
	Attitude	More positive	Positive	Negative	Negative	Negative about move to full inclusion.
	School environment	Not welcoming	Not welcoming	Not welcoming	Not welcoming	Not welcoming

6.11 Summary Remarks

This chapter started with the demographic data of the participants, followed by six themes generated by the interviews. The chapter went on to show what had been seen during the open observation process. The findings from these two methods were seen to complement each other. The chapter ended with a critical reflection by the researcher. The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the literature to address the research questions.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to critically review the findings in relation to the current research in this field to be able to state the contribution to knowledge of this thesis, and to discuss the main issues raised by this study. It starts with claims to knowledge followed by discussion on barriers and drivers of inclusive pedagogy for students with ASD.

7.2 Claims to Knowledge

Based on the literature review, the researcher can claim that this research is the only study on autism and inclusion in Saudi Arabia, which includes and goes beyond, teachers' attitudes with a pedagogical approach as the focus, featuring Peer Tutoring. Other research in this area tends to be in Western countries (i.e. Vaughn et al., 1996; Ainscow, 1998; Avramidis, et al., 2000; Van Reusen et al., 2000; Hastings and Oakford, 2003; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004; Ainscow, 2007), with some exceptions (i.e. Al Abduljabber, 1994; Alkhashrami, 2003; Alquraini, 2012; Abu Shaira, 2013; Alnahdi, 2013; Haimour and Obaida, 2013a; Haimour and Obaidat, 2013b; Alnahdi, 2014a; Alnahdi, 2014b) with a quantitative focus on teachers' attitudes in Saudi Arabia, along with some other research on inclusion in the Middle Eastern context (Gaad, 2011; Adibsereshki et al., 2015). Another significant feature of this study is that it looks for drivers that support inclusive education for students with ASD as well as the barriers. This is timely research given the recent implementation of the SEN policy for students with ASD in Saudi Arabia (Abdullah, 2001; Alhaznawi, 2010), as well as the rise in numbers of students with autism in mainstream Saudi schools (Ministry of Education, 2008).

This research challenges the ideas put forward by Lipsky and Harris (1959), that it is not possible to implement inclusion policies in Saudi society, but rather follows Murphy (2012) who shows a significant support for inclusion, and the implementation of inclusion policies in Saudi schools. As said by NN (SET, M): “We used to reject students with SEN and ASD but now we accept them”. Also, added by AA (SET, F):

“Now there is more social acceptance for students with SEN and autism because children see them in the school and even in the same classroom; before that, it used to be very strange to see a child with a mobility disability”

7.3 Barriers

This research has shown there is government policy to support implementation, and willingness on the part of the teachers and principals, but the policies are not being fully implemented. The reasons for this include: confusion over the meaning of concepts associated with inclusion (Florian, 2005), inaccessible buildings (Jha, 2002; UN, 2011; UNESCO, 2009), time constraints (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009; Horne and Timmons, 2009; Smith and Leonard, 2005; Talmor et al., 2005), curriculum (Avrimidis et al., 2000; Westwood and Graham 2003; UNESCO, 2009), and a lack of training (Florian and Rouse, 2010; DfES, 2013; Emam and Farrell, 2009). Other factors include negative attitudes by some teachers (Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Hastings and Oakford, 2003; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004; Alquraini, 2012), a lack of playground supervision for children with ASD (DfES, 2006; Pennsylvania Bar Institute, 2007; Emam and Farrell, 2009; Haimour and Obaida, 2013b), and pupil behaviour (Capper and Pickett 1994; Dyson et al., 2004; DfES, 2006). There are also problems of a lack of support and cooperation (UNESCO, 2005; Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Armstrong et al., 2011), and size of classrooms (Smith and Smith,

2000; Hay et al., 200; Mukhopadhyay, 2013) are noted as barriers. This research confirms common barriers to inclusion of SEN/ASD found in the literature.

These barriers are mentioned by MN (SET, F): “There is not enough time to do everything for students with autism”. Also, H (SET, F) stated, “Our curricula are not welcoming to students with SEN.” This is contrary to Ernsperger’s (2002) assertion of the importance of identifying children’s individual needs, ages and capabilities in order to provide them with adequate life skills, particularly for children with ASD. Most of the interviewees stated that barriers of inclusion for students with ASD included available time, inflexible curricula, crowded classrooms, negative attitudes, and a lack of training.

Regarding student behaviour, FM (SET, M) stated, “Sometimes they are aggressive and non-educational”. Also, confirming teachers' negative attitudes, NN (SET, M) said: “Not all students with autism can be taught in inclusive schools; only students with a medium level of autism and high IQ levels can be taught there.” Further, the teachers’ lack of training is a factor as stated by one interviewee: “I did not have any training about SEN, inclusion or autism” AM (GT, F). The crowded classrooms and school facilities continue to be a problem, as described IAA (SET, M) who said:

“Our schools are not welcoming environments for students with SEN. Some are out of order and have been for ten years, classrooms are too crowded, most of the toilets are blocked, paint is wearing off, there is dangerous flooring and sound echoes in class”.

Research findings expressed in the interviews were confirmed by the classroom observations. In all of the five schools visited, classrooms were overcrowded, and there was little time to

cover the required curriculum work. Many general classrooms in the observed schools had upwards of thirty students to one teacher in class. However, in contrast, the special education classes in schools D and E were not crowded, with student numbers of 4 to 8 in each classroom. The learning content was simple and the time frame more fixable.

Furthermore, this research confirms that there was general confusion of the meaning of autism and inclusion. This is a common feature in the literature with regard to inclusion and more particularly towards autism in general schools (Vaughn et al., 1996; Carrington, 1999; Avramidis et al., 2000; Leeman and Volman, 2001; Robertson et al., 2003; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004; Florian, 2005; Emam and Farrell, 2009).

One of the main problems discussed in the literature and confirmed by classroom observations is that teachers were working with more than one child with a disability in each class. In classes in schools A, B, C and D, pupils had hearing problems, learning difficulties, autism and language problems. In school C, students presented with autism and other intellectual disabilities. School D excluded students with intellectual disabilities from its general education classes. Finally, in school E, students with ASD had a special education class in the general school, but in separate classrooms.

There is no single definition of inclusion and inclusive education, and many define it according to their own views and experience. However, most seem to agree one thing: that school is for all and that difference is normal. Table 4.1(p. 86), summarised the different meanings of inclusive education (Carrington, 1999; Florian, 2005). While inclusion policy in Saudi Arabia dictated all students with disabilities should be involved in general education,

only few students with SEN are able to access general education due to their low IQ and severity of disability.

One of the main findings from the research is that policy is being implemented through a medical model framework, seeing the child as a problem, rather than the society; this approach to inclusive education relies less on the bio-psychosocial and human rights model. Some children are excluded from general education because of their IQ level, based on the medical model of assessment, as was evidenced from the observations in school D and E, where pupils with ASD were excluded from the general classroom. Also, in schools A, B and C only students with ASD average and high IQ levels were included in the general classroom. As AAA (SET, M) stated: “All students whose IQ is between average and more than average are accepted in general schools, and those who have low IQs are on special needs programmes”.

The research findings confirm other research on this topic suggesting that autism is less likely to be accepted by SEN and GT teachers than other disabilities (Humphrey, 2008; DFES, 2010; Branka and Majda, 2011). The teachers were less accepting of students with ASD in their general classroom compared with other categories such as hearing impairments, as mentioned by one of the interviewed teachers who stated that she “preferred to work with students with hearing impairments” JK (SET, F).

The literature emphasises that the attitude of principals is very important for the culture of the classroom (Booth et al., 2000; Ainscow et al., 2006). From observations and visits made to the schools the researcher found this to be the case. In school B the school principal appeared to be very collaborative, and believed in group work and sustaining good relationships with

parents, students and teachers. These good relationships were reflected in students' progress. This was also the case in school C, where the principal was in favour of collaboration and also had good relationships with parents, students and teachers; the same was also the case with school D. In contrast, at school E, the school's principal was in favour of separating SEN students from general classes. Although she expressed a positive attitude towards students with disabilities, the researcher did not observe evidence of much inclusivity in the school.

The issue of culture was confirmed in the interviews. In Saudi Arabian culture this can mean that principals can have an authoritarian attitude and are not interested in the opinions of others. This view was clearly expressed by both female and male teachers, as H (SET, F) said:

“The main problem in the Eastern culture is that one person takes charge of everything, and once they do not agree on any decisions, they will take it personally and you have issues, and as a result they try to exclude you.”

The same problem was pointed out by AAB (SET, M), where he described his school's head teacher as “a control freak” who did not accept other people's opinions.

Moreover, in special education classes, teachers use more special education intervention such as PECS, modelling and TEACCH, playing and PT in teaching children with ASD, but in the general classroom they use more PT “small teachers”, modelling and playing strategies to teach those with ASD, which is consistent with the literature (Kamps et al., 1997; Abdullah, 2001; Jordan, 2001; Shamey, 2001; Mastropieri et al., 2001; Ben-Itzhak and Zachor, 2007)

in helping to improve communication, social skills and behaviour.

With regard to gender, the findings confirm that this is significant variable, appearing to be both a barrier and driver for the promotion of inclusive education. This research and the literature show that male teachers hold less positive attitudes towards inclusion than female teachers (e.g. Curtis, 1985; Al Abduljabber, 1994; Chung et al., 2015). For example, a female teacher stated “My job as a teacher is to accept all students’ differences in the classroom” MK (GT, F). On the other hand, a male teacher said, “I do not like to teach them [students with ASD]; sometimes they are aggressive and not interested in education” FM (SET, M).

Experience is another factor that can be either a barrier or a driver of inclusive education. GTs who have more experience with ASD have more positive attitudes than inexperienced teachers. MK (GT, F), with 1 year of teaching experience with students with autism, said, “My experience with students with autism has been good. For that reason, I do not mind having them in my classes if they are like my old students” MK (GT, F). This confirms the findings of Gregor and Campbell (2001) that general teachers who have experience with ASD have the confidence to support inclusion policies. The findings of this research indicate that SEN teachers have more negative attitudes towards SEN students than general teachers, which confirms the findings in the literature. A reason for what appears to be a paradoxical situation is that teachers with training in SEN tend to work with more severe cases than general teachers (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996; Alquraini, 2012; Chung et al., 2015). However, as shown from the interviews, very negative attitudes do exist among some teachers. As IAA (SET, M) said “Special education needs institutes are unhealthy

environments to work in; it affects the teachers before the students ... I do not want to go back to that place”.

Training, too, is a key factor in promoting and limiting inclusive education. Teachers trained before 2009 have a very limited understanding of autism, as the university curriculum for SEN teachers did not include this issue, whereas teachers more recently qualified have more expertise and awareness of autism, but this is based on an understanding of the medical model. Taif University was the first university in Saudi Arabia to provide training and education on behavioural disorders and autism in special education, running since 2006 (University of Taif, 2012). The first department of Special Education opened in King Saud University in 1984-85 (King Saud University, 2013).

Another important issue that this research confirmed is that Saudi Arabian schools are not built with SEN/ASD students in mind. All of the schools that were visited were constructed in the same way: on two or more floors, with no lifts, nothing to limit pain from accidents; for example, no carpet on concrete floors, and lastly, without the proper equipment to support the learning of all students (International Consultative Forum on Education for All, 2000; UN, 2007; UNESCO, 2009).

7.4 Drivers

The research is significant because it looks at the drivers for supporting and developing work with SEN/ASD students. The most significant drivers for inclusive education are support for social justice, human rights, religion, positive attitudes, as well changing cultural perceptions

in Saudi Arabian society. These drivers are in line with previous research (i.e. Rosaldo, 1994; Oliver, 1996b; Morad et al., 2001; Bazna and Hatab, 2005; Al-Aoufi et al., 2012; Hassanein, 2015).

The researcher found that teachers are adopting strategies and teaching methods based on a social model of justice and positive attitudes towards students with ASD. As explained by one of the interviewees:

“I think about a teaching approach that works and promotes different students and learning styles through creating a problem and trying to find a solution that involves a rich learning experience, a good learning environment, equal opportunities and a contribution to real life...The best way to teach my students is through understanding their needs as individuals. Also, hearing their voices, giving them freedom and involving them in the learning process helps me to avoid an excluding pedagogy” WF (SET, F).

In classrooms such as these, the students are the focus, learning equally without discrimination against any student. As stated by one of the teachers “It makes students with SEN feel more human and not powerless” IAA (SET, M).

All the classroom observations showed use of peer tutoring as a “small teacher” strategy, with the students working together. Learning in pairs, students worked and learned from each other, as each student had something to pass on. The small teacher strategy focuses on students as the centre of the learning process, more than ‘banking’ education (see: Dewey 1938; Freire, 1970, 1997; Hook, 1994, 2003).

This small teacher approach is in line with Dewey, Freire and hooks, with a strong focus on the student learner in collaboration with other students and the teacher, rather than a focus on the teacher, which is a very pragmatic approach to the problem of teaching ASD pupils with SEN. It will be suggested in the concluding chapter that this approach to PT can be further developed through an application of the principles of Dewey, Freire and hooks to support pedagogy for all.

The findings show that while the general education curriculum is not conducive to teaching ASD students with SEN, the researcher found that teachers are finding ways to adapt their teaching for SEN students. These include peer tutoring, but also other forms of collaborative learning, which form part of the hidden curriculum of the classroom (Breakey, 2006). This was particularly evident from the ways in which teachers were able to support SEN/ASD pupils through the development of communication and social behaviour skills. From the interviews and observations this pedagogical approach was not part of lesson planning because teachers were not certain about autism as a condition. Rather, this form of teaching emerged as a type of natural and empathic practice. This is evident from this quotation: “Peer tutoring... do you mean the children as small teachers?” AM (GT, F). The researcher would like to refer to this natural and empathic approach as the “small teachers’ strategy”. The advantages of this strategy are that it helps students with ASD to build good relations with other students and improves their language and behaviour in class. This small teacher’s strategy is a type of informal peer tutoring approach.

The research findings with regard to the small teacher strategy confirm that peer tutoring (PT) supports and helps the learning of students with ASD, as reported by other research on PT and ASD (i.e. Tudge, 1990; Kamps et al., 1994; Kamps et al., 1997; DiSalvo and Oswald, 2002; Carter and Kennedy, 2006; Gena, 2006; Harper et al., 2008). Further, the PT approach helps to alleviate some of the problems associated with a lack of time, crowded classes and an inflexible curriculum. As AM (GT, F) said about peer tutoring: “It relieves pressure on teachers and the load on me in a crowded classroom... Peer tutoring is amazing; it includes many benefits for the teachers and for the students as well”. While individual teachers prefer to work autonomously and independently in their own classrooms, they do find ways through inclusive pedagogy to encourage pupils to work together. This was very clear from practice observed in the classroom. For example, in School A, a student with ASD worked with her PT on activities trying to spell given words. Other students that did not know how to write correctly were assisted by a student with autism who helped her peer to write a word by spelling it out for her. The research findings reveal that together with PT, special education class teachers use more special education approaches, for example, PECS, modelling and TEACCH. This is consistent with the literature (Kamps et al., 1997; Abdullah, 2001; Jordan, 2001; Shamey, 2001; Mastropieri et al., 2001; Ben-Itzhak and Zachor, 2007), which supports these strategies to improve communications, social skills and behaviour.

Religion is another driver in promoting inclusive education in Saudi Arabia. The researcher was particularly interested to hear how often the concept of inclusion was referred to as consistent with the word of God. As one teacher said, “To be honest, I really struggle with my students, but I do it for the sake of God” A (SET, F).

One of the main significant drivers is the level of salary. All of the teachers interviewed agreed that if they were paid an extra 30 per cent allowance they would be willing to have SEN ASD students in their classrooms. This is the most drives finding of the research; however, there is no reference to this issue in the supporting academic literature.

The literature emphasises the importance of play as a pedagogic device (UNESCO, 2001; Pritchard and Woollard, 2010). While the researcher was aware of play-like learning activities taking place in the classrooms, the researcher also observed the behaviour and attitudes of teachers and students in the playground. For example, the students were cooperative and worked together in classrooms, but outside in the playground the activities of students and teachers were very different. There was no attempt by the teachers to encourage inclusive play; some pupils played together in groups, while a child with autism played on her own according to the symptoms of the disorder, e.g., difficulty in speaking to other students in the playground. In fact, one teacher's reaction was to ask the other students to leave the student with ASD alone.

The researcher also found that the general layout of the classroom was important in supporting group work as well a peer tutoring strategies. Such strategies were seen to work best when tables and chairs were arranged for students to work in pairs. What the researcher found very interesting was the way in which students organised themselves into working in pairs, which appeared to form naturally. In the final chapter, strategies are suggested to support the 'small teaching strategy'; moreover, the building of schools themselves can be

thought of in ways that encourage a sense of inclusion and integration for pupils and school staff.

7.5 Summary Remarks

This chapter has shown the ways in which the concept of inclusion is understood by teachers and the ways in which this understanding is translated into practice in classrooms in the city of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This is a complex issue of which there is much misunderstanding, much of it as a result of ignorance due to a lack of training. Nevertheless, there is also an amount of real knowledge that teachers acquire from their own training and education, particularly teachers who are more recently qualified, as well a commitment by teachers to social justice which is come from their culture and Islamic religion. There are differences in attitudes and understandings depending on gender, as well as issues to do with the question of leadership and authority within the schools, and the ways in which schools are supported by their local communities, to be inclusive schools and not just places where inclusive education occurs. There are also other real barriers, including the construction of buildings, the size of classrooms, having more than one disability in the class and an inflexible curriculum. What this research has revealed on the issue of salary, is that SEN/ASD teachers are paid 30% extra than general teachers. This is a divisive issue and needs to be addressed. What the research data does reveal is that teachers are finding ways to cope with and adapt to these problems through the use of peer tutoring, other forms of participatory pedagogies and in some cases making use of children as small teachers.

The next chapter will conclude the thesis by suggesting some areas for further research and suggesting some activities and events to promote the development of inclusive education in Saudi Arabia for SEN/ASD students with specific reference to peer tutoring.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

It is now nearly twenty years since the Saudi government introduced the policy of inclusive education in schools. This research has in a limited way attempted to explore the way in which this policy has been understood by primary teachers, general teachers as well as special educational needs teachers, and put into practice in Saudi classrooms. But more than this, the purpose of this exploratory research is to facilitate the development and understanding of inclusive education for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the context of Saudi Arabia. ASD is a complex disorder due to its characteristics, which include a lack social skills, communication difficulties, and behaviour problems.

The current findings suggest that teachers have confuse inclusive education with the concept of integration. They also have many of the key elements in place that work towards encouraging and promoting the growth of inclusive practices. Moreover, the findings show that teachers are supportive and have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with autism in mainstream classrooms. However, mainstream schools and classrooms are currently not suitable for SEN in general, and more specifically, for students with ASD. All the teachers involved in this study were qualified, but they required additional training and knowledge about inclusion and ASD. In addition, they needed more autonomy with regards to their pedagogy to include children with ASD and to extend peer tutoring.

8.2 Original Contribution

This research is the only study on autism and inclusion in Saudi Arabia, which includes and goes beyond, teachers' attitudes with a focus on pedagogical approaches, featuring peer tutoring. Other research in this area tends to be in Western countries (i.e. Vaughn et al., 1996; Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Van Reusen et al., 2000; Avramidis et al., 2000; Hastings and Oakford, 2003; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004; Ainscow, 2007), with few exceptions (i.e. Al Abduljabber, 1994; Alkhashrami, 2003; Alquraini, 2012; Abu Shaira, 2013; Alnahdi, 2013; Haimour and Obaida, 2013a; Haimour and Obaidat, 2013b; Alnahdi, 2014a; Alnahdi, 2014b) and they tend to be quantitative with a focus on teachers' attitudes in Saudi Arabia , while there are few studies on inclusion in the Middle East context (Gaad, 2011; Adibsereshki et al., 2015). Another significant feature of this study it is the identification of drivers that support inclusive education for students with ASD, as well as barriers. This is timely research, given the fact that recent implementation of SEN Policy for students with ASD (Abdullah, 2001; Alhaznawi, 2010), as well the rise in number of students with autism in mainstream school (MoE, 2008).

8.3 Practical Implications

The role of the school in helping teachers in supporting inclusion education for students with ASD is crucial to the successful adoption of inclusive practices. Thus, improving and developing teacher education programmes is a task that must be taken seriously by school management. Furthermore, employing more inclusive education policies, culture and practices could have more impact on development teachers' attitudes and abilities in offering a higher standard of service for Students with ASD.

8.3.1 Implication on the ‘children are small teachers’

The research revealed that children can be ‘small teachers’. ‘Children are small teachers’ suggests the effectiveness of peer tutoring in inclusive classrooms is a mixture of cooperative learning and peer tutoring. This research has shown that it might be a successful strategy within inclusive classrooms with a diverse range of abilities (Kamps et al., 1994; Carter and Kennedy, 2006). This expression ‘small teachers’ is not to be taken literally; it does not mean that students take on the role of the teacher, but that students can be encouraged to support the learning of other students. There is a clear link in the pedagogical literature about the benefits of students learning from each other as well as the teacher (Dewey 1938; Freire 1970; hooks, 1994). It is important to give parents opportunities to know about this practise and explain the benefits of using it in classrooms.

8.3.2 Recommendations

The researcher suggests some useful recommendations to move forward into more inclusive education for all including ASD students. The findings of this study suggest making improvements in practices as follows:

- 1) The MoE should make sure that enough specialist support is provided to help teachers and their ASD students. This includes ensuring there are qualified staff that have specialised training in this area.
- 2) The incentive policy of 30 per cent salary increment given to SEN teachers should be extended to include GTs whom accept students with disabilities in their classes. This would not only help increase the numbers of students with SEN/ ASD in general classes but also generate a more positive attitude towards students with SEN /ASD. According to the findings, GT teachers who have experience with ASD have a more positive attitude towards ASD than SEN teachers.

- 3) The MoE should provide appropriate training for all teachers in general education on inclusion concepts and other SEN categories, following a suggestion highlighted by Alghazo and Gaad (2004). Hence, teachers with appropriate training can supply inclusive education and a suitable learning environment so that students with ASD can benefit from and become successful in schools.
- 4) Courses meant for preparing general education teachers on inclusive education, special education needs and education pedagogy should incorporate modules on participatory pedagogy, as described by Freire, Dewey and hooks, building up students' self-esteem and their sense of freedom (Freire, 1973). Such a pedagogy would promote engaged students and teachers in the learning process to minimise discrimination and endorse a more equal society driven by schools (hooks, 1994b). Also, such modules support progressive education and a school transformation that thrives on fairness and equality (Dewey, 1915).
- 5) Adopting pupils as consultants. As children become small teachers for other children, ways should be found to extend the learning of teachers about classroom practices from their own pupils, as suggested by Freire (1997) and hooks (1994b, 2003). Furthermore, Thompson and Gunter (2006) argue that viewing pupils as consultants is a stepping stone in the right direction for more independent students to promote learning from each other and share their knowledge in a collaborative environment with their teachers. This approach has been adopted at Broadstone First School and The Sweyne Park School in the UK (Broadstone First School, 2016; The Sweyne Park School, 2016). This promotes students' freedom as a way to practise inclusive education and learning for all.
- 6) More consideration should be given to the organisation and layout of classrooms to promote inclusive teaching to improve academic achievement (Tanner, 2000) as well as

to the architectural design of schools. From the researcher's observations, the similarity of school architecture was striking. Hence, attention should be paid to taking the needs of ASD students along with other SEN students into account to provide a safe and welcoming environment in schools (Weinstein, 1979; Gump, 1987; Fisher, 2001; Schneider, 2002; Clark, 2002; Earthman, 2004).

- 7) Technology is the frontier of improvement in education. From the classroom observations it was noted that technology was being utilised, but more use could be made of Mobile devices, tablets and laptops to build a more interactive engaging environment for SEN/ASD students. Further, it would save time for teachers and support more collaborative learning (Christensen, 2002; Cramer et al., 2011; Mintz et al., 2012; Mintz; 2013).

8.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

8.4.1 Methodological Limitations

This study is geographically limited to the inclusive education practices of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, as the methodology chapter makes clear. Furthermore, it focuses on primary mainstream schools and excludes high schools. Hence, the results of this qualitative approach cannot be generalised to other schools in Riyadh. In this study, non-probability sampling is utilised; thus, generalisation of the findings is limited because of the small number in the sample. Generalisation is not the aim of the current study; rather, it seeks to provide a deep understanding of the development of inclusive education in a particular setting. The different tools used are interview and open observation which enabled methodological cross-referencing and increased the degree of reliability of the findings from the rich data that was collected.

8.4.2 Future Research Directions

This study provides several opportunities for future research, such as addressing the limitations of this study in order to examine more closely the relationship between teacher training, experience and attitude. Moreover, based on the findings of this study, teachers can not always deal with the types of behaviour problems exhibited by students with autism. Therefore, research needs to investigate the strategies used by teachers to control the behaviours of students with ASD in the classroom. This research can then be used to compare the attitudes of the teachers who work with students and teachers who work with children with other disabilities. Further, the research has shown differences between male and female teachers in their attitudes and abilities to help and support the improvement of education for students with ASD. To the extent that this is an obstacle to inclusive education, it would be worth reviewing ways in which this gender gap in attitudes might be reduced. Also, research into the limitations of banking education as a barrier to the successful application of inclusion for all would be interesting in light of past research, so as to draw out the benefits of collaborative learning. Moreover, other research can be done on how the small teacher strategy can be helpful for pupils with other severe disabilities. This area of research could be done using control group research analysis.

Lastly, a national study could be commissioned by the MoE to see if the policy that was introduced nearly twenty years ago is effective. Furthermore, scientific conferences could be set up calling for researchers who work in this field so that they can learn from each other adding to the academic literature and the body of evidence to support inclusive pedagogic strategies. This could be further enhanced by holding regional events for parents and students to listen to researchers' present research in a way that is accessible and meaningful for them, and to contribute to the discussions about this issue. These events would send out an

invitation to officials from the Minister of Education so that they can hear voices about the constraints and limitations that teachers are working under, to improve the development and implementation of policy in this area. As became apparent from this research, teachers are willing to become involved in more inclusive research practices. This was highlighted by one of the teachers:

“I thank you for listening to me and others... We actually each year have researchers come and ask us to fill out a survey, and as you know, yes or no does not describe the situation or capture our voice and views” AA (SET, F).

The majority of responses from participants who took part in this research appreciated the use of the interview approach rather than a survey, as it helped them to voice their opinions about how to transform the education system for the benefit of SEN/ASD students and their teachers.

8.5 Conclusion

The first chapter sets out the thesis outline, as well as highlighting the main issues; this includes a rationale for doing the study as well as aims of the study followed by the research questions. Chapter two described the social and political context out of which the Saudi approach to the implementation of inclusive education has emerged, and reviewed the policies which have been implemented by the Saudi government in this area of social concern. Chapter three reviewed the ways in which SEN/ASD is defined and understood through a range of different models, including medical, social, bio-psychosocial and human rights model. The review looked at barriers and drivers to inclusive education. A central aspect of

this research is pedagogical approaches. The final section of the chapter refers to authors: John Dewey, Paulo Freire and bell hooks, which have developed participatory pedagogies as a way of thinking through how the practice of inclusive education can be substantiated and developed. Chapter five involved a full description of the research approach used, including the philosophical perspective in relation to the ontological and epistemological issues that are a central part of knowledge construction. Chapter six presented the findings from the interviews with teachers and observations of classroom practice interviews and observations with a focus on autism from an inclusion perspective. According to the literature review and the findings from the research the important drivers that support the education inclusion movement in Saudi Arabia are religion, and social justice; another key issue revealed by the research is teachers' salaries. In contrast, barriers to inclusive education in Saudi schools can be seen in the lack of time and training given to teachers, crowded classrooms, inflexible curricula, teaching methods, teacher attitudes and school environments. One factor to emerge from the research is the significance of peer tutoring. Chapter seven critically reviewed the findings in relation to the current research in this field to be able to state the contribution to knowledge of this thesis, and to discuss the main issues raised by this study. Finally, this chapter presents a summing up of the research main findings and the theoretical and methodological contribution to the field. Further, practical implications are elaborated in relation to significant findings and the limitations of the study. Last but not least, the study provides some practical recommendations as well as some ideas for further research.

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APPENDIX I

Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your career in education?
2. One of the special education need categories is autism, could you please tell me about ASD?
3. How do you describe your own experience on teaching students with autism?
4. What do you know about inclusive education and integration?
5. How do you describe the ideal model of inclusion from your viewpoint?
6. Could you describe your own pedagogy?
7. How do current education practices need to be changed to accommodate all students with ASD?
8. What are your thoughts and experience about peer-tutoring as an intervention or support for children with ASD?
9. How has inclusion affected you as a teacher and a person?
10. How do you describe the Saudi society from your understanding of inclusion?
11. At the end, do you want to add anything else?

In Arabic

أسئلة المقابلة :

- (1) هل لك أن تخبرني عن نفسك وعن خبراتك المهنية في التعليم؟
- (2) التوحد فئة من فئات الطلاب ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة فأرجو أن تخبرني ماذا تعرف عن هذه الاعاقة؟
- (3) كيف تصف تجربتك الخاصة في تعليم الطلاب المصابين بالتوحد؟
- (4) ماذا تعرف عن التعليم الشامل والدمج؟
- (5) كيف تصف النموذج المثالي للتعليم الشامل من وجهة نظرك؟
- (6) هل يمكن أن تصف طرق التدريس الخاصة بك؟
- (7) كيف تصف الممارسات التعليمية الحالي بحث أن يتغير لاستيعاب جميع الطلاب الذين يعانون من التوحد
- (8) ما هو وصفك والخبراتك حول التعليم بمساعدة الاقران باعتبارها طريقة لدعم للأطفال الذين يعانون من التوحد لديك؟
- (9) كيف اثر فيك التعليم الشامل على صعيد المهني وشخصي؟
- (10) كيف تصف المجتمع السعودي من فهمك للتعليم الشامل؟
- (11) في النهاية، هل تريد إضافة أي شيء آخر؟

APPENDIX II

Pilot Interview Questions

Types of interview questions	Interview questions
Demographic/ Opening	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Could you please tell me about your- self?2. How did you be training to teach in inclusive class?3. How would you describe your own experience on teaching students with SEN in inclusive education?4. How do you think your training could have better prepared you with experience to work with students with SEN?5. What courses or experiences have you had to prepare you to include students with autism in the classroom?6. How do you know about inclusive education for students with SEN?
Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. How do you come to know about inclusive education?8. How could you describe inclusive education?9. How does inclusive quality education lead to more inclusive societies?10. How would you describe you school as inclusive environment?11. How does the school support you in this matter?

Experience	<p>12. How could you describe your own inclusive pedagogy?</p> <p>13. How does education need to change to accommodate all students with SEN?</p> <p>14. How do curricula need to change to improve learning and encourage the inclusion of all students?</p> <p>15. How affordable is inclusive quality education?</p>
Opinion	<p>16. Why is inclusive education important?</p> <p>17. As you apply and know about inclusive, how do you describe the Saudi society as in terms of gender segregation?</p> <p>18. How do the students with SEN respond to your inclusive pedagogy?</p> <p>19. Why do you think is important in the Peer Tutor Program?</p> <p>20. What is the effect of Education Ministry policies on teachers' attitude about inclusive education?</p>
Practice	<p>21. How do you make sure your include students with SEN in your classroom? And what about students with autism?</p> <p>22. How do you extend use of inclusive practises?</p> <p>23. How do you include students with SEN in your class?</p> <p>24. How is inclusive education related to or different from your own practices in the classroom?</p> <p>25. What are your thoughts on including students with autism in the general education classroom?</p> <p>26. How has inclusion of student with autism in your classroom affected you as a</p>

	<p>teacher and a person?</p> <p>27. What challenges do the students with autism have in the school?</p> <p>28. What are the strategies you use to build inclusion in your classroom?</p> <p>29. What does examination of the current teaching and learning of children with autism and how peer can help, tell us about the barriers to the development of inclusive primary classrooms?</p> <p>30. How does inclusive education promote successful learning?</p> <p>31. How do you teach students with autism with ASD to manage their own behaviour?</p> <p>32. Could you explain how tutoring works with ASD students?</p>
Conclude	<p>33. Do you want to add anything also?</p>

APPENDIX III

Observation Note

Observation No:	School:	Date:	Level:
Subject:	Student's Number:		
SEN Number:	Teacher accepts to be one of interviewee:		
			Others:

Observation:

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APPENDIX IV

Permission for Data Collection

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

NO:11/35355688

Ministry of Education

Date 27/12/2013

280

General Administration of Education in Riyadh

Department of Planning and Development

Facilitation of Research

Name	Faten Alzaidi / University of Lincoln – UK.
Purpose of Research	Requirement for PhD degree.
The study title	Inclusive education for students with autism on Saudi Arabia schools
Type of facilitation	Provide the researcher with comprehensive data according to permitted system of exchanging and publication: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1- Provide the researcher with name of schools applying inclusive education2- Provide permission to access the school and special education institutes in Riyadh.3- To be sent to the researcher by email: <u>Mrs.faaaten@hotmail.com</u> Contact mobile: 0563337415.

Dear / Director of information system and technical support department.

Based on generalisation and Minister of Education number 55/610 date 17/09/1416 H. Regard the authorisation for administrators Educational by issuing permission letter for researcher to conduct and facilitation of researches and studies. Regard on that generalisation by the director of General Administration of Education and Department of Planning and Development in Riyadh to facilitate and grant permission to the researchers (Male, Female) in the letter number 11/33674823 on data14/04/1433 H. Hence, the researcher that mentioned above name applied for a permission to conduct her research. We request kindly to facilitate her mission and provide her with required information and statistics. Noticing researcher is fully responsible for distribution of tools and receiving a sample of her studies after accomplishment that not necessarily means Ministry of Education responsible of the tools implied to gather data.

Sincerely,

Manger of planning and development department

Saud Rashid Abdullatif



04/02/2014

رقم الملف: S12655

إفـادة

تفيد الملحقية الثقافية بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن بأن الطالبة / فائقن عبدالهادي سفران الزايدى (رقم السجل المدني 1049033713) مبعثة من قبل وزارة التعليم العالي لدراسة الدكتوراه في تخصص تربية لذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة بجامعة Lincoln اعتباراً من 01-03-2015 إلى تاريخ 02-03-2015.

وبناء على توصية المشرف الدراسي على بحث الدكتوراه ستقدم المبعثة بطلب القيام على رحلة علمية الى المملكة العربية السعودية لإكمال اجراءات بحثها في " Education Research and Development".

ونظراً لضرورة إرفاق موافقة من الجهة المستضيفة في المملكة لاستكمال طلب الموافقة على الرحلة العلمية تم منحها هذا الخطاب بناء على طلبها وذلك لتقديمه إلى وزارة التربية والتعليم.

الرجاء التكرم بالموافقة على استضافتها.

وتقبلوا خالص التحية والتقدير،،

مساعد الملحق

للشؤون الأكاديمية والتعليمية

د. محمد بن سعيد الاحمدي



الرفقات :

الموافق :

التاريخ :

الرقم

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia

Date: 01/11/2014

Cultural Bureau in London

630 Chiswick High Road

London

W4 5RY

United Kingdom

Subject: Permission for Data Collection

Dear Sir/Madam,

Faten Alzaidi is currently undertaking research for a PhD in the Centre of Education Research and Development at the University of Lincoln in the U.K. Her research interests are focused in the inclusive education and use of peers as resource of learning children with autism integrating peers in the teaching in inclusion classrooms. The thesis entitled, "An exploratory study on educating learners with ASD in primary inclusive setting in Saudi Arabia, issues, attitudes, and challenges".

The purpose of the research is to facilitate the development of inclusive education practices for students with ASD among other students. Also, to try to identify the needs of primary schools for students with autism in Saudi Arabia. Hence, qualitative approach will be adopted to gather data consist of a semi structured interviews, observation and documents from the schools. The study will provide a twofold contribution on theoretical and practical levels.

In order for Faten to gather the necessary research data for her research project, she needs your formal consent and finding to carry out the data collection phase in Saudi Arabia, as a scientific trip, for three months. She has received permission from, the Ministry of Education in Riyadh and plans to start by January 2015. She needs to conduct interviews with a sample of 20 teachers at selected schools and class observation.

I respectfully request your approval of this request and thank you in advance for any help you can provide her in order to guarantee the success of this important research project.

Sincerely,

Prof. Mike Neary.

Dean of teaching and learning political sociology.

University of Lincoln

"إفادة"

الموضوع: الموافقة على تطبيق أدوات دراسة في مدارس وإدارات تابعة لإدارة التربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض

اسم الباحث/ة	فائق عبد الهادي سفران الزايري .
الكلية / الجامعة	.Lincoln-
الغرض من الدراسة	متطلب للحصول على شهادة / .
مجال الدراسة والعينة	ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في مدارس تابعة لإدارة التربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض .

حفظه الله

سعادة الملحق الثقافي السعودي في / لندن

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد ...

بناءً على تعميم معالي وزير التربية والتعليم رقم ٥٥/٦١٠ وتاريخ ١٧/٩/١٤١٦هـ بشأن تفويض الإدارات العامة للتربية والتعليم بإصدار خطابات السماح للباحثين بإجراء البحوث والدراسات . وبناءً على تفويض مدير عام إدارة التربية والتعليم وإدارة التخطيط والتطوير ذي الرقم ١١/٣٣٦٧٤٨٢٣ والتاريخ ١٤/٤/١٤٣٣هـ بشأن تسهيل مهام الباحثين والباحثات . نفيدكم أنه لا مانع من تطبيق الدراسة على نطاق مجال العينة المحددة /التابعة لإدارة التربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض . مع ملاحظة أن الباحث/ة يتحمل كامل المسؤولية المتعلقة بمختلف جوانب البحث . ولا يعني سماح الإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم موافقتها بالضرورة على مشكلة البحث أو على الطرق والأساليب المستخدمة في دراستها ومعالجتها . وبناءً على طلبها تم منحها الإفادة .

شاكرين طيب تعاونكم .

مدير إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

عنه بيدت الجوري

سعود بن راشد آل عبد اللطيف



نموذج ١/٦

من قسم الدراسات والبحوث .



04/02/2014

رقم الملف: S12655

إفـادة

تفيد الملحقية الثقافية بسفارة المملكة العربية السعودية في لندن بأن الطالبة / فائقن عبدالهادي سفران الزايدى (رقم السجل المدني 1049033713) مبعثة من قبل وزارة التعليم العالي لدراسة الدكتوراه في تخصص تربية لذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة بجامعة Lincoln اعتباراً من 01-03-2015 إلى تاريخ 02-03-2015.

وبناء على توصية المشرف الدراسي على بحث الدكتوراه ستقدم المبعثة بطلب القيام على رحلة علمية إلى المملكة العربية السعودية لإكمال إجراءات بحثها في " Education Research and Development".

ونظراً لضرورة إرفاق موافقة من الجهة المستضيفة في المملكة لاستكمال طلب الموافقة على الرحلة العلمية تم منحها هذا الخطاب بناء على طلبها وذلك لتقديمه إلى وزارة التربية والتعليم.

الرجاء التكرم بالموافقة على استضافتها.

وتقبلوا خالص التحية والتقدير،،

مساعد الملحق

للشؤون الأكاديمية والتعليمية

د. محمد بن سعيد الأحمدى



الرفقات :

الموافق :

التاريخ :

الرغم

APPENDIX V

University of Lincoln Ethical Approval (EA2)

Reply all | Delete | Junk | ...

RE: EA2 approval



Julian Beckton

05/12/2014

Faten Alzaidi (11251693); Mike Neary; Beverley Potterton ✕

Inbox

Hi Faten

I have now consulted with all the members of the Ethics Committee about the revisions you submitted and we are happy to grant ethical approval for your data collection.

Good luck with your research

Best wishes

APPENDIX VI

Informed consent for participants

I of

Hereby agree to be a participant in this study to be undertaken by Mrs. Faten Alzaidi, **and I understand** that the purpose of the research is exploratory study on educating learners with ASD in primary inclusive setting in Saudi Arabia, issues, attitudes, and challenges

(a). The aim of the research is:

To explore teachers' experiences and attitudes towards developing more inclusive primary classrooms for SEN children, with specific reference to ASD.

To identify drivers/barriers to the development of inclusive classroom practices in primary schools in Saudi Arabia for ASD learner.

(b). This study attempts to answer the following study questions:

1. How have inclusion policies and practices evolved in Saudi Arabia?
2. What are the barriers to developing inclusive practices in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?
3. What are the drivers for the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in Saudi Arabia?
4. How do teachers understand the concept of inclusion for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?

5. What are the main factors that support/limit inclusive education in Saud Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?

6. What are the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education for SEN students in Saudi Arabia, with specific reference to ASD?

7. What do teachers consider to be the best ways to facilitate inclusivity, with specific reference to peer-assisted learning?

(c). Methodology or methodologies to be used: Semi-structured interviews and open observations will be used to find the answers to the study questions.

(d). Who are the participants in this research? The sampling strategy for this study will involve the participants from the primary inclusive schools who have special educational needs teachers who work with students with ASD.

(e). Security and data protection: I understand data will be securely stored and later destroyed after finishing with it. The data gathered through interviews from both audio and written formats will be stored safely in the researcher's possession and confidentiality will be maintained. When there is no longer a need for them, all materials will be destroyed. Information gained during the research process will be used only for the purpose of the thesis and the participants will remain anonymous. As well as the data being stored electronically on a password protected computer, any hard copies of information will be kept secure using lockable cabinets. Also, I understand only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to data relating to the research.

(f). Anonymity and confidentiality: I understand that my identity will be anonymous and my confidentiality will not be disclosed. Hence, my name and school in the interviews will be coded using letters for anonymity to avoid their being easily identifiable. Further, recorded interviews will be transcribed as soon as possible, and any identifying information will be removed.

I understand that:

1. The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.

3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.

5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used in research.

6. The participant will receive a summary report on the results if they ask for it.

7. Permission to start recording the interview:

Yes No

8. I would like to receive a summary of the results when the research is done:

Yes No

9. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

10. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature:

Date:

The researcher can be contacted through e-mail at: mrs.faaaten@hotmail.com. The research supervisor is Prof. Mike Neary can be contacted through e-mail at MNeary@post01.lincoln.ac.uk or telephone: 0044 (0)1552886015.

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the centre for educational research and development, University of Lincoln, Brayford Pool, Lincoln, LN6 7TS; Telephone number 00441522837017; Fax 004415228860230.

Informed Consent for Participants in Arabica

إقرار بالموافقة على المشاركة في البحث

أنا.....من.....

أوافق على أن أكون أحد المشاركين في هذه الدراسة التي ستقوم بها فاتن الزيدي، وأنا أفهم أن الغرض من هذا البحث وهو دراسة استكشافية على تعليم المتعلمين الذين يعانون من التوحد في المرحلة الابتدائية في المملكة العربية السعودية، القضايا، والسلوكيات، والتحديات.

الهدف من هذا البحث هو:

1. لاستكشاف خبرات المعلمين ومواقفهم نحو تطوير الفصول الدراسية الابتدائية لكي تكون أكثر شمولية لأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة ، باتحديد الأطفال المصابين بتوحد.

2. لتحديد الدوافع / العوائق التي تحول دون تطوير الممارسات التعليم الشامل في المدارس الابتدائية في المملكة العربية السعودية للأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات ، وكذلك التعليم بالأقران.

تحاول هذه الدراسة الإجابة على أسئلة الدراسة التالي:

1. كيف تطورت سياسات و ممارسات الدمج في المملكة العربية السعودية؟
2. ما هي العوائق في تطوير ممارسات دمج الشامل في مدارس الابتدائية العامة في المملكة العربية السعودية؟
3. ما هي الدوافع تطبيق التعليم الشامل في المدارس الابتدائية العامة في المملكة العربية السعودية؟
4. كيف يفهم المعلمين مفهوم الدمج الشامل لذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في المملكة العربية السعودية بتحديد طلاب المصابين بالتوحد؟

5. ما هي العوامل الرئيسية التي تدعم / تحد من دمج الشامل في المملكة العربية السعودية، بتحديد طلاب المصابين بالتوحد؟
6. ما موقف المعلمين من الدمج الشامل لطلاب الاحتياجات الخاصة في المملكة العربية السعودية، مع بتحديد طلاب المصابين بالتوحد؟

7. ماذا هي أفضل الطرق التي يعتقد المعلمين لتسهيل عملية الدمج الشامل ، بتحديد عن طريق التعلم بمساعدة الأقران؟

- المنهجية أو المنهجيات المستخدمة: سيتم استخدام المقابلات للمعلمين والملاحظة للفصول الدراسية للعثور على

إجابات لأسئلة الدراسة.

- من هم المشاركين في هذا البحث؟ الفئة المستهدفة لهذه الدراسة هم العاملين في مدارس الدمج الابتدائية.
 - حفظ البيانات: أنا أفهم انه سيتم تخزين البيانات بشكل آمن وتتلّف في وقت لاحق بعد الانتهاء منها. وسوف المشرف له الحصول على البيانات المتعلقة بالأبحاث.
 - عدم الكشف عن الهوية والسرية: أنا أفهم أن هويتي ستكون مجهولة ولن يتم الكشف عنها لى طرف آخر.
- وأنا أتفهم أن:

1. أهداف وأساليب والفوائد المتوقعة، والمخاطر المحتملة في دراسة بحثية، وقد شرحت لي.
2. أنا متطوعاً و موافق على مشاركتي في هذه دراسة بحثية.
3. أن النتائج المجمعّة سوف تستخدم لأغراض البحث ويمكن أن تذكر في المجالات العلمية والأكاديمية.
4. البيانات والمعلومات المجمعّة من قبلي لن تعطي لأي شخص اخر الا بعد موافقتي.
5. لى حرية الخيار في الانسحاب في أي وقت خلال المقابلة ولن يتم استخدام أي من المعلومات التي تم الحصول عليها في مجال هذه الدراسة .
6. المشارك سيحصل على تقرير موجز عن نتائج إذا تم طلبه.
7. الإذن لبدء تسجيل المقابلة:
نعم
لا
8. أود أن أحصل على موجز للنتائج عندما يتم الانتهاء من البحث:
نعم
لا
9. لقد قرأت وفهمت ما تم ذكره أعلاه، وتمت الإجابة على جميع أسئلتني وانا أوافق طوعاً على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

التوقيع.....:

التاريخ.....:

يمكن الاتصال بالباحث من خلال البريد الإلكتروني على العنوان التالي. mrs.faaen@hotmail.com: المشرف
الدراسي مايك نيري من خلال البريد الإلكتروني التالي MNeary@post01.lincoln.ac.uk أو الهاتف: 0044 (0)
152886015.

إذا كان لديك أي استفسار حول هذا المشروع البحثي، يرجى الاتصال على مركز للبحوث التربوية والتنمية، جامعة

لينكولن، برايفورد بول، لينكولن. LN6 7TS، رقم الهاتف. 00441522837017.

APPENDIX VII

Summary of School Backgrounds

School code	Number of students	Number of student on classroom	Number of teachers	Type of students	Type of school building
School A	416	30 Students in each general classroom SEC 5-9 Students	69 GT, 50 SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing Impaired • Communication Disorders • Physically Impaired • Learning Difficulties • Autism • Intellectual Disability 	<p>In middle class area</p> <p>Welcome SEN since 15 years ago</p>
School B	373	35 Students in each general classroom Integration 20 students	54 GT, 1 SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing Impaired • Learning Difficulties • Autism • Physically Impaired 	<p>In middle class area</p> <p>Welcome SEN</p>

		SEC 4-6 students			since 4 years ago
School C	400	30 students in each general classroom Integration 20 students SEC 4- 9 students.	50 GT, 20 SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing Impaired • Learning Difficulties • Intellectual Disability • Autism 	In middle class area Welcome SEN since 5 years ago.
School D	900 students	45-50 students in each general classroom SEC 4-15 students	63 GT, 20 SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Disorders • Physically Impaired • Learning Difficulties • Autism • Intellectual Disability 	In middle and poor class area Welcome SEN since 20 years ago
School E	345	30 students in each general	51 GT,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talented and Gifted 	

	students	classroom SEC 7 Students	17 SET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism • Intellectual Disability 	<p>In middle and poor class area</p> <p>Welcomed</p> <p>SEN 5 years ago</p>
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