

Students with disability perspectives towards inclusive education at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait: Barriers and challenges

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Abstract: This research is a qualitative interpretive case study focuses on the perspectives of (6) students with physical and visual disability who study at college of basic education in Kuwait. It sought to elicit the “voice” of students with disabilities, seeking to identify their experiences of inclusive practice and any barriers to participation. The researchers conducted semi structured interviews. It was processed and analysed through data coding, categorising and emergence of themes. Participants of the current study showed a willingness towards the concept of inclusion with some concerns, which include the cultural, structural, and social barriers of implementing inclusive education. The results of this study emphasise the importance of increasing the knowledge of inclusion and how to deal with students with disability. Overall, recommendations include a need for training courses for the faculty members at the College of Basic Education in the field of disability and inclusion.

Keywords: Inclusive education, disability, students perspectives.

اتجاهات الطلبة ذوي الإعاقة تجاه الدمج التعليمي في كلية التربية الأساسية في دولة الكويت: العوائق والتحديات

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المستخلص: هدفت هذه الدراسة الكيفية إلى تسليط الضوء على اتجاهات الطلبة ذوي الإعاقة الحركية والبصرية نحو الدمج التعليمي في كلية التربية الأساسية في دولة الكويت، وذلك من خلال إجراء المقابلات الشخصية مع عينة قوامها (6) طلبة. دلت النتائج على أن هناك ترحيباً بشكل عام- من الطلبة نحو فكرة الدمج التعليمي مع تسليط الضوء على وجود العديد من التحديات والعوائق الثقافية والاجتماعية والتنظيمية التي تواجه الطلبة ذوي الإعاقة الحركية والبصرية في كلية التربية الأساسية. أوصت الدراسة بضرورة تعزيز ثقافة الدمج وزيادة درجة الوعي حول طريقة التعامل مع الطلبة ذوي الإعاقة من قبل الطلبة العاديين، بالإضافة إلى ضرورة اهتمام أعضاء هيئة التدريس بالاحتياجات التعليمية للطلبة ذوي الإعاقة؛ وذلك من خلال تزويد أعضاء هيئة التدريس بالدورات التدريبية الدورية المتعلقة بالإعاقة والدمج التعليمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدمج التعليمي، الإعاقة، اتجاهات الطلبة ذوي الإعاقة.

Introduction.

Inclusion, a word used much more in this century than in the last, describes people and the larger society valuing diversity and overcoming social and educational barriers (Topping & Maloney, 2005). Inclusive education refers to the education of all children being educated together, regardless of their disabilities. A major factor influencing the movement towards inclusion in many countries was the adoption of Salamanca Statements at the World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. The concept of inclusive education has gained significant interest since the 1990s (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca World Conference, which attained agreement by 92 countries and 25 international organisations, established one of the most significant documents that embraces the principle of education for all, by encouraging schools to be inclusive (Miles & Singal, 2008). To illustrate,

Schools should accommodate all 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 disadvantages or marginalized areas and groups. (UNESCO, 1994, p.6)

Ainscow and Miles (2009) claim it is important first to use evidence to address barriers to education facing some learners which requires collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative research data in addition to gathering the opinions of students and their parents. Various types of data could provide evidence that stakeholders could use not only to modify moving policy and practice but also to gather the information on the stages of development of education systems in various regions.

Aims and Importance of the Study:

The current study aims to investigate disabled students perspectives about the barriers and challenges of inclusive education at the PAAET Colle of Basic Education of the State of Kuwait. The Salamanca Statement and framework for action recommends and advises the signatory countries that "Pilot experiments and in-depth studies should also be launched to assist in decision-making and in guiding future action" (UNESCO, 1994, p.25). Increasing research in the field of inclusive education and understanding disability is a key factor in developing education for all in Kuwait; more studies are needed to expand this knowledge base as research in the region, in this field, is scarce. To our knowledge, the present study is the first study which focuses on the perspectives of students with visual and physical disability towards inclusion in the context of Kuwait. In addition, the need to present a detailed view of inclusive education in Kuwait encouraged my decision to conduct a qualitative study, especially because of the limited number of qualitative studies in the field of special education in Kuwait. Therefore, this study aims to identify, through the perspectives of students with disabilities, barriers to participation and examples of inclusive practice in order to ensure that students with a disability are not at an extensive disadvantage as compared to non-disabled students.

Terms and definitions of the study:

Disability: "Disability" is defined under the Equality Act Gov. UK (2010) as "A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term, negative effect on an individual's ability to do normal daily activities" (Gov. UK, 2010)

Inclusion: "Inclusion is about the quality of children's experience; how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school" (DFES, 2004).

Research Questions:

- 1- What are the perspectives of students with disability towards inclusion?
- 2- Is there any barriers and challenges of inclusion from the perspectives of students with disability at the college of basic education?
- 3- How could the implication of inclusion be improved from the perspectives of students with disability at the college of Basic Education?

Literature review

Inclusion of students with disabilities in a general education setting has become an international trend. Simui et al. (2009) noted that inclusive education is a "continuous process of increasing access, participation, and achievement for all learners in general education settings, with emphasis on those at risk of marginalization and exclusion" (p. 9).

In order for meaningful inclusive education to occur, school communities should acknowledge diversity and differences and support human rights for all (Artiles et al., 2011). Martins et al. (2018), emphasise the fact that while faculty members do perform different reasonable adjustments in relation to evaluation but that they can be unaware of disability-related needs and that they are not ready for the development of the inclusive pedagogical approaches that are necessary to teach in diverse classrooms. In fact, there are many authors who acknowledge that faculty members need to be trained in this field (Collins et al., 2018; Subban et al., 2018; Black et al., 2014). In addition, some studies have concluded that training faculty members in disability, inclusivity, and universal design for learning (UDL) benefits all students, including those with special needs (Veitch et al., 2018; Cunningham, 2013; Garrison-Wade, 2012; Hassanein, 2010; Getzel, 2008).

Barriers to inclusive education have been discussed by many researchers in the field of disability and inclusion (Parey, 2020, Zwane & Malale, 2018; Tchintcharauli & Javakhishvili, 2017; Jenova, 2015; Ahmad, 2012; Copley & Ziviani, 2004). For instance, Parey (2020) examines the accommodations for the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular schools in Trinidad in which a multiphase mixed-method design, consisting of three phases is used. The findings indicate that existing environmental accommodations, qualified human resources, educational materials, physical access, supportive learning systems, law, and policy do not fully support the inclusion of children with disabilities in Trinidad. They

further illustrate the need for national discourse to move beyond access to maximum participation, and for stronger legislation to ensure inclusion in schools.

It has been widely reported in previous research that a lack of teacher training and professional development are crucial barriers to inclusive education (Morina et al., 2020; Kendall, 2016, Lovet et al., 2015; Moswela & Mukhopadhyay, 2011). For example, Morina et al., (2020) conclude that universities must provide more meaningful training in the field of disability and make firm institutional commitments to support their faculty members.

Regarding a lacking sense of social belonging felt by students with disability within inclusive settings, several studies reported that students with a disability are less accepted and more rejected by their mainstream classmates (Vetoniemi & Kärnä, 2019, Alves, et al., 2018: Bossaert et al., 2013: Frostad and Pijl, 2007: Pavri and Luftig, 2000). For example, the inclusion study of Vetoniemi and Kärnä (2019) focus on the narratives of four disabled students concerning their social participation in a mainstream school. According to the results, students perceptions of social participation were strongly related to their experiences in the learning environment as their experiences and emotions relating to the school environment were often negative because they had been totally socially segregated. Furthermore, although research conducted on the experiences of students with disabilities in the Brazilian context is still scarce, Alves and Duarte (2018) found that students with visual impairments or physical disabilities in Brazil tend to experience exclusion in PE classes, which is typified by social isolation by peers, neglect of their needs by teachers, and resulting feelings of weakness.

Participation in activities is typically restricted due to limited access to class locations, as well as an absence of accommodations made by the teacher. In addition, an American study by Pavri and Luftig (2000), found that 11-year-old students with learning difficulties in inclusive settings were less popular than those without learning disabilities and that they experienced more loneliness. Further, Vetoniemi & Kärnä (2019) analyse the narratives of students with learning and physical disabilities concerning their social participation in a mainstream school. According to the results, students perceptions of social participation were strongly related to their experiences in their learning environment. In addition, although their experiences and emotions relating to the school environment were often negative, their personal strengths protected them from total social segregation. The results indicate that in order to create inclusive schools, we should improve learning environments to preserve students diversity and to promote the social participation of all students.

Social and cultural factors have played a role in the movements and practice of inclusion (Alenezi, 2016; Gaad, 2011; Aldaihani, 2010; Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2004; Singal, 2005). Chitiyo and Wheeler, (2004) indicate that until recently, individuals with disabilities in most African countries were isolated and segregated from society. Successful inclusion requires a consideration to develop the culture of the school and the attitudes towards disability within the school culture as well as accepting all learners with an aim

to foster their well-being. As indicated by Armstrong (2005), implementing inclusion involves the removal of cultural and environmental barriers in order to increase the participation of students with disability in mainstream school. In this regard, schools attempts to provide inclusion are not simply seen as making additional provision for children with special needs. However, central to this end is effective educational leadership (Hassanien, 2015). Thus, head teachers positive perspectives towards inclusion contribute to enhanced inclusive values and practices and create an educational environment for all students, regardless of their conditions.

Methodology of the study.

In this research, we have adopted a case study methodology within an epistemological framework of constructivism (Crotty, 2003). Case study "has been tried and found to be a direct and satisfying way of adding to experience and improving understanding" (Stake, 2000, p.25). This case study carries the potential to add insight to the international discourse on inclusion and to prompt consideration of the complexity of such an approach within the Kuwaiti context

Methods:

This research is a qualitative interpretive case study based on selected students with disability at the college of basic education. Data was obtained through semi-structured research interviews. It was processed and analyzed through data coding, categorising and emergence of themes, which became the findings of the study. Mertens (2010) argues most qualitative researchers decide to employ interview methods because they can gather significant information from them. Additionally, it is an essential method that allows the researcher to understand others through investigating individuals beliefs, experiences, wishes, and intentions in their own words (Kvale, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interview duration was approximately 90 minutes and the interview questions included the following:

- 1- What is your experience with inclusion at the college of basic education?
- 2- What are the barriers or difficulties have you encountered at the college?
- 3- What is your experience with non-disabled students?
- 4- How do you describe your social relations with non-disabled students?
- 5- How did you find the facilities for students with disability at the college?
- 6- To what extend do you feel that you are included and socially belonging?
- 7- what is your suggestions to improve inclusion at the college?

Regarding the ethical issues relating to this research, we guaranteed that the information was confidential and anonymous. In this regard, the participants and researchers signed a confidentiality document before starting the interviews. In addition, the participants were informed that, should they

wish to withdraw from the study, their data would not be taken into account for the analysis and would be removed.

The study sample:

The intent of a qualitative inquiry is to develop an in depth understanding of a central phenomenon rather than to generalise to a population. Thus, the qualitative researcher selects individuals and sites, which can help understand the central phenomenon, purposefully or intentionally with an aim to learn about people, events, or phenomena, in addition to an understanding that provides voice to individuals who may not be heard otherwise (Creswell, 2012). Considering the mentioned advantages, we adopted purposive sampling, which helped in the current study to select individuals with different disability. According to Wellington (2000), "purposive sampling, as its name implies, involves using or making a contact with a specific purpose in mind" (p.59). Therefore, the participants, comprising students with physical disability and visual disability, were selected purposively to gain rich data about barriers and challenges of inclusive education in Kuwait. (See Table, 1):

Number of participants	6
Age range	19-23
Gender	3 Male 3 Female
Area of study	Special Education
Type of disability	4 Physical disability (Case 1, 2, 3, 4) 2 Visual disability (Case 5 & Case 6)

Data analysis:

In the current study, the coding process was based on two main aspects. The first was the research questions as Creswell (2012) indicates that "In a qualitative research study, you need to analyze the data to form answers to your research questions. This process involves examining the data in detail to describe what you learned and developing themes or broad categories of ideas from the data" (p.247). Following Creswell's (2012) suggestion that, "you can state codes in the participant's actual words" (p.244), we drew up a list of codes for each interview separately, the list of codes arose from the participants' actual words. Such a way of coding the data facilitated the process of being able to go back and search for participants' quotes that support such codes easily. The next step was to identify and group similar codes and look for redundant codes, as suggested by Creswell (2012)), who indicates that the main objective of this process is "to reduce a list of codes to a smaller, more manageable number such as 25-30. It is best not to overcode the data because, in the end, you will need to reduce the codes to a small number of themes" (p. 245), we designed a colour and shape guide for the process of reducing the codes and categorising them under

broad theme. The process of identifying the themes was executed "by examining codes that the participants discuss most frequently, are unique or surprising, have most evidence to support them" (Creswell, 2012, p.245). It was essential to read the transcribed data more than once to generate the initial categories of themes and sub-themes. Grouping and categorising the codes required a continuous process of modification, including adding emerging themes, relevant categories, and deleting non-related ones and combining others. Finally, it is worth mentioning we translated the codes and the quotations related to each code from Arabic to English. The translation was checked and verified by a professor of English at the University of Kuwait.

Pilot study:

A pilot study with two students with physical disability was conducted to evaluate the semi-structured interview questions before conducting the main study. These participants were not included in the main study. A pilot study allows the researcher to identify potential problems that might occur during the interviews and excluded any misleading questions. In addition, it allows the researcher to determine the time needed to complete the interviews (Kvale, 2007; Creswell, 2012).

Reliability and validity:

In relation to the reliability of this research, the interview questions excluded any misleading questions, as determined in the pilot study, and we made sure that during the interviews we did not indicate or point to any answer or exert any kind of influence over the interviewee, towards specific answers. Furthermore, the pilot study allows clarification of ambiguous questions, re-adjusting the focus if necessary, changing question order, and removing any redundancies. All this helps the researcher to ensure that the main study will proceed as planned (Gillham, 2005). As recommended by Kvale (2007, p.8), "reading the transcribed interviews may inspire the researcher to new interpretations of well-known phenomena". Thus, we continuously re-examined the data in an effort to deepen my understanding and interpretation of it.

In addition, certain criteria were defined to allow readers to confirm the results of the study. For instance, the process of analysis, in this research, was explained systematically by providing examples drawn from the raw data, in each step of the analysis. This was done so as to help the reader to make sense of the analysis and to assure that the results are compatible with the analytical criteria. Regarding the validity, our intention was not to make any generalisation of the results of this research cross all the colleges in Kuwait, but rather to enhance an in depth understanding and gain a clearer picture of the situation of inclusive education for students with disability at the college of basic education.

Results.

The results of this work describe how the participants valued their experiences in relation to the disability and inclusion of students with disabilities, the barriers and difficulties encountered, and the reasonable adjustments that should be made have been highlighted:

Views towards inclusive education from the perspectives of students with disability:

Participants in this study hold positive perspectives towards inclusion as they support the idea of inclusion of student with disability to be alongside non-disabled students at the college of basic education. Their support for inclusion is based on several reasons: social benefits, increased confidence and acceptance, avoidance of labelling, human rights, and acknowledgement that individuals with disability are a part of society. Such views are exemplified by the following responses:

- Case (1): I believe that implementing inclusion at early stages is very helpful for us in order to increase the acceptance among disabled and non-disabled students
- Case (2): I support the idea of inclusion at school and college because inclusion helps us to not feel unable and different
- Case (3): Inclusion is important for students with disability because it gives us confidence to deal with others without feelings of shyness.
- Case (4): Inclusion is a fundamental part in the life of people with disability, and it prepares students with disability to be ready for a work life after they graduate from the college as the will be able to deal and socialize with non-disabled individuals without any difficulties.
- Case (5) states: Inclusion is very important and benefits us because we need to socialize with other people and live a normal life like others.
- Case (6): Inclusion is a human right. I prefer studying together alongside non-disabled students because we are not different. If we are excluded and placed in a special college only for students with disability, that labels students with disability and makes them to feel they are different.

Disability from the perspectives of students with physical and visual disability:

Participants were asked about the meaning of the term disability with an aim to investigate the concept of disability from the disabled students point-of-view and how it affects their lives. All of the participants did not consider their disability itself as a barrier. It could be argued that for most of participants, the deficits of the individuals with disability, whether physical or mental, were not the main concern. However, they considered the surrounding environment, structural, attitudes, and cultural aspects as the main barriers preventing them from living a better inclusive life. Such views are exemplified by the following responses:

- Case (1) states: From my point- of-view, disability is the negative attitudes of others towards individuals with disability, most people think that people with disability cannot achieve, whereas, there are many people with disability who can achieve and win in different fields and activities.
- Case (3): The real disability that I face is the culture of our society in Kuwait because most of people here think that the individual with disability can t achieve and always consider us as unable and un independent
- Case (4) First of all, I prefer the term people with special needs instead of disability because it is not just us who need help from others but all people need help from others in different aspects. I don t like the term disability and prefer to be called disabled at all as we can achieve in different aspects or fields more than non-disabled individuals.
- Case (6): Disability is not in the body but in the way of thinking, so it s in the negative attitudes towards individuals with disability; in fact, the disability does not prevent me to live my life in normal way.

Socio-Cultural barriers: Views of kindness and pity towards students with disability:

Some participants emphasised the role of socio-cultural barriers in creating disability, they concur that they could not live independent life because of the common socio cultural attitudes towards disabled individuals in Kuwait and middle east country such as view of pity, care, helplessness and the view of dependency towards disabled individuals with disability, All these concerns are exemplified by the following responses:

- Case (1) stated: one of the main barriers at the college is the view of kindness and pity which make us uncomfortable because we have ambitions and can achieve like others.
- Case (2): at the school all the staff was specialized to deal with us and there was acceptance, however, when we join the college we face problem with non-disabled students such as view of pity and help without permission because they consider us as unable individuals
- Case (3): At public places the main barriers are a view of pity from others, some people did not deal with us normally
- Case (4): Some of the people in society don t have enough awareness about disability, they think that the disabled individual cannot live an independent life and only setting on a wheelchair and can t do nothing.
- Case (5): Some times over care and help form non-disabled students make us feel unable to be independent person like others so they should be aware that we prefer to be treated normally

Social Belonging, Friendship and Social relations with non-disabled students:

The social belonging, relations and friendship with non-disabled students consider as a main barrier in this research. Most of the participants concerns that they face difficulties to feel socially belonging, and that their social relations with non-disabled students is very rare at the college, they are not prepared for inclusion as they was excluded at special schools during their study at the college. Such issues have been highlighted by the participants as following:

- Case (1) states:

I have friends from both disabled and non-disabled, and I don t have any problem to have friends from non-disabled people, , but to be honest my non-disabled is very few and I just meet them at the college

- Further, Case (2) indicates: My friend relationship with non-disabled is very rare

- Case (3): I have a few friends from non-disabled students, inside and outside the college and I feel happy when they dealing with me without the view of pity .

- Case (4): I prefer to implement inclusion at schools because when I joined the college I felt I was because of the strange views from non-disabled students

- Case (5): We are an excluded groups as a result of that our social interaction with other is very weak, thus, after graduation, I suggest to increase work opportunities for us in different sectors not only at limited places.

- Case (6): I think inclusion should be implemented at mainstream schools because that will facilitate our inclusion at the college as we feel like strangers who did not belong when we joined the college.

Lack of awareness:

Most of the participants highlights the issues of lack of awareness at the society about disability as they feel non comfortable from some behavior of non-disabled students for example,

Case (2):

Non-disabled students should be aware how to deal with disabled students, as they have to not ask personal questions about our disability

Further, Case (5) indicates that:

We are all the same, so non-disabled students should learn how to deal with us normally and should know that we are not different

Case (6) states:

There is a shortage of media campaigns dealing with individuals with disability in our society and most of people do not have awareness about how to deal with individuals with disability, and some people consider us as abnormal

Case (4) indicates:

Some non-disabled students use the places specialized for students with disability, such as car park and toilets.

Lack of trained faculty members in the field of disability and inclusion:

Participants highlighted the importance of addressing the potential of every student and accommodating the teaching process according to the students needs and abilities. lack of training in the field of disability and inclusive education makes it hard for a faculty member to be in a position to support a learner with disability. The participants highlight some barriers regarding the difficulties in meeting their needs below:

- Case (1): Most of the faculty members deal with us as a non-disabled students and do not consider our needs, in terms of accommodations to the curriculum and teaching materials.
- Case (3): Teachers or professors at college did not use teaching methods that meet students diversity thus they need training about how to use suitable teaching methods to meet students diversity.
- Case (4): I suggest adopting other countries experiences in the field of inclusive education, specifically, in the field of training the faulty members to meets students diversity at the inclusive classes
- Case (5): I only find support from the faculty members at the departments of special education needs because they are specialized in the field of disability and are aware how to meets our needs, as well as how to deal with us.
- Case (6): Unfortunately, I didn t find any support at the class from the faculty members at the college. The teaching methods are traditional methods which does not meets our needs for understanding the lessons at the lectures

Lack of facilities at the college for students with disability:

The participants have mentions some of the barriers that they faced at the college in terms of the lack of support, facilities and services, Such barriers affects their level of satisfaction at the college, they suggests some important services to be available for them at the college these concerns are exemplified by the following responses:

For example:

- Case (1) states: We need specialised staff at the college to write for us during exams.
- Case (5): We need teacher s assistance or special staff to write for us at the exam because some faculty members ask us to bring someone from outside the college to write for us; however, this is the college role not our role.

- Case (3) added: There are no meetings with us each terms at the college from the faculty administration to hear our problems, suggestions and requirements.
- Case (6) The college is still not prepared for inclusion because the administrators, non-disabled students, faculty members are not prepared or aware of our academic or social needs.
- Case (4): The buildings need to be prepared before inclusion; for example, the doors are very small, and there is no special desk in the classrooms to fit our wheelchairs.

Discussion.

The majority of the participants show a willingness towards the concept of inclusion with some concerns. A number and range of key barriers to inclusion were identified by the participants who claimed that such barriers should be overcome in order to establish inclusive education in Kuwait. These barriers include lack of trained faculty members in the field of disability and inclusion, social belonging and cultural barriers.

Insufficient experience and training of the of the faculty members in the field of disability was considered to be one of the main barriers to inclusivity for students with disability, as other studies have confirmed. Morina, et al, 2020, Kendall, 2016, Lovet et al., 2015; Moswela & Mukhopadhyay, 2011, Florian, 2008; Santoli et al., 2008). These findings have been confirmed in another research. For example, Kendall (2016) conducted a small-scale qualitative study of 13 students with a declared disability within a UK university in the North of England. The barriers were identified as: staff being unaware of a student s disability, unwillingness to make reasonable adjustments and a lack of assessment choice. Further, overall recommendations include a clear need for staff training in disability awareness. Similarly, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) argue that without a coherent plan for faculty members training in the educational needs of students with disability, attempts to include these students in the inclusive settings would be difficult. Hence faculty members at the college and universities play a central role in the inclusion of a student with disabilities, it will be essential that they understand the importance of including these students and are committed to this goal (Mortier, 2020).

Responses of students with disability indicates that they needs special staff to assist them in writing at the exams as the college do not always offer that for them, such issue consider as a barriers of their inclusion at the college. Calculator (2009) argue that without reliable methods of responding to assessment tasks, students potential is often underestimated and therefore remains unrealized, and inclusive education would not be reached. Thus, inclusive education requires human and material resources available to support those students who have a variety of barriers to communication. Accordingly, in the Kuwait context inclusion is not seen in its holistic concept, principles and philosophy; it is still perceived under the umbrella of special education. Such a situation can lead to confusion in the process of implementing inclusive education.

Participants responses regarding the lack of social belonging, relations, and friendships with non-disabled students was also confirmed in previous research which revealed that students with disability recorded fewer social interactions with non-disabled peers in inclusive settings (Vetoniemi & Kärnä, 2019; Alqallaf, 2015; Bossaert et al., 2013; Frostad and Pijl, 2007; Carter et al., 2005; Mu et al., 2000). The data reflect a clear absence at the college of the main important principles of inclusion promoted by the Salamanca Statement that Kuwait signed in 1994, such as increasing the participation of students with disability and promoting positive attitudes throughout the school community (UNESCO, 1994). Although inclusion may be considered socially beneficial for students with disabilities, concerns about social barriers remain very real.

Respondents of the most participants reflected the social model of understanding disability to describe the meaning of the term "disability" by considering the role of the culture, social environment, structural facilities, and attitudes towards individual with disability as a main factors in creating disability (Norwich, 2013; Allan, 2010; Thomas, 2004; Oliver, 1996). For example, Oliver and Finkelstein, activists for the disabled, emphasise the need to consider the role of barriers --structural, environmental or attitudinal -- rather than individual s impairment in the exclusion of people with special needs (Allan, 2010). In this view, focusing on society s structural, cultural barriers more than the impairment of disabled people, could be more realistic because changing society s views towards disabled people might increase the accessibility, participation, services, and expectations extended to people with disability within society.

Some cultural barriers have been highlighted by participants in this study, such as the attitude of sympathy and pitying kindness by society towards disabled individuals, as well as other cultural beliefs towards disability in the region - encouraging dependency of the disabled individual - could be an important underlying reason for current exclusionary practices in Kuwait. These finding have been confirmed in previous research (Hassanein, 2015; Sakız & Woods, 2015; Gaad, 2011; Aldaihani, 2010; Chitiyo & Wheeler, 2004). Fr example, Sakız and Woods (2015) indicate that in Turkey all aspects of the system (within school, society, and policy level) are considered as barriers to full inclusion of students with disabilities. Moreover, a culture that emphasises dependency might underestimate disabled students abilities (Aldaihani, 2010). It could be argued that such cultural aspects may strongly affect the policy makers of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait. In fact, Brown (2005) states that in the Middle East, traditional powers have worked to both protect and care for the disabled. In addition, Hassanein (2015) argues that the concept of inclusion, from the western perspective, might not fit within the socio-cultural beliefs held in the Middle East as the "Concepts of disability and inclusion are culturally constructed" (p. 1).

Exclusionary cultural attitudes related to disability such as dependency and helplessness, care, sympathy and view of pity towards disabled students is one of the key challenges to inclusive education in Kuwait. These negative social views need to be addressed carefully in order to change the negative social

practices. This research gives rise to a number of recommendations to enable Kuwait to better meet its obligations as a signatory to the Salamanca Statement. Conceptualisation of inclusion in countries in the Arabian Gulf region is limited, as such this study contributes to the understanding of inclusion through its consideration of multiple factors. It has identified cultural beliefs towards individuals with disability and explored current practice of inclusion. This study contributes to knowledge by suggesting reconsideration of the way disability is understood, as well as the way of caring within the culture of Kuwait. Such reconsideration could lead to changes in current exclusive thinking and practices. Thus, this research contributes to our knowledge about inclusion within Kuwaiti culture and provides a theoretical framework about inclusion in Kuwait at different levels, such as, culture and practice.

Conclusion.

It can be clearly seen that lack of community commitment towards inclusion through showing negative attitudes towards disability were considered as a key challenge facing inclusion movements in Kuwait. Inclusive education requires promoting independence of individuals with disability. For example, Brown (2005) suggests that "Inclusive thinking emphasizes conditions that promote the independence and self-reliance of the individual with disability, while discouraging practices that promote dependence and helplessness" (p. 255). Additionally, Gaad (2011) indicates that cultural attitudes towards individuals with disability play a key role in shaping some elements of inclusion in the Middle East. As it happens, the findings shows that current attitudes, in the culture of the context of Kuwait, towards individuals with disability, are mostly consistent with the medical model of disability, which inhibits the transition of the concept of inclusion and equal rights discourse, as promoted in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Finally, we decided to limit the scope of the current study by only considering the views and voices of disabled students which were not heard as such considerations would enable us to deepen our understanding of how identified barriers and facilitators to inclusive education for students with disability at the College of Basic Education in the context of Kuwait.

Recommendations.

The following points are vital aspects which need to be considered in an attempt to draw the attention of policymakers, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders towards improving inclusive education in Kuwait.

- 1- Provide practical courses and visits to other countries, who have had successful experiences with inclusive education, for the acquisition of new information about the development of inclusive education.
- 2- Encourage researchers to conduct research and surveys about inclusion and disability in the context of Kuwait.

- 3- Non-disabled students need to be educated about students with disability and how to deal with them.
- 4- Develop specialists in the field of inclusion, who understand the situation of students with disability and their needs.
- 5- Provide faculty members at the college a training courses and organise seminars regularly to explain the aims and concept of inclusion and how to deal with students with disability.
- 6- Increasing public awareness about people with disability and encourage them to be more independent.
- 7- teaching assistance staff should be available at the college to support students with disability.

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