

## Inclusion Requirements of Special Needs Children in Kindergartens as Perceived by Kindergarten Teachers and Principals in Amman

Ridha Mawadhia<sup>(\*)</sup>

Mohammed E. B. Al-Azzawi

Lina Maharmeh

**Abstract:** The aim of the study was to investigate the inclusion requirements of special needs children (SNC) in kindergartens as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals in Amman. A valid and reliable questionnaire consisting (38) items, representing SNC requirements, covering educational, social, psychological, and school-environment; was developed and applied on a random sample of (247) subjects, (217) teachers, (30) principals. SPSS, t-test and ANOVA were used in data analysis. Results indicated a moderate level of inclusion requirements as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals in general, and a statistical differences related to teachers' and principals' professional variable, in both of inclusion requirements general mean, and its sub-dimension means. Requirements in details showed that, for example: "Preparing all the needed requirements for inclusion before starting" ranked first. "Adapting the daily program according to SNC needs and abilities" ranked second.

**Key words:** requirements, inclusion, kindergarten teachers and principals, special needs children.

### متطلبات دمج الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في رياض الأطفال كما يدركها معلمو ومدراء الرياض في عمان

رضا مواضية  
محمد العزاوي  
لينا محارمة

**المخلص:** استهدفت الدراسة الحالية معرفة متطلبات دمج الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة في مرحلة رياض الأطفال كما يدركها معلمو ومدراء الرياض في مدينة عمان العاصمة في الأردن. وتم تطوير استبانة تتمتع بالصدق والثبات مكونة من ٣٨ عبارة تتوزع على أربعة محاور بشكل غير متساو (المحور التربوي، والمحور الاجتماعي، والمحور النفسي، ومحور بيئة المدرسة)، وتطبيقها على عينة بلغ عدد أفرادها ٢٤٧ فردا (بواقع ٢١٧ معلما، و٣٠ مديرا). وباستخدام اختبار "ت" لعينتين مستقلتين، وتحليل التباين الأحادي بوساطة برنامج SPSS تم التوصل إلى أن درجة متطلبات الدمج بشكل عام- كانت متوسطة، وكانت الفروق دالة لصالح المعلمين مقارنة بالمدرءاء في تلك المتطلبات. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج تم تقديم عدد من التوصيات والمقترحات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** متطلبات، الدمج، معلمو ومدراء رياض الأطفال، الأطفال ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة.

<sup>(\*)</sup> Department of Kindergarten, College of Education, Zarqa University, Jordan,  
[radamwadhia@yahoo.com](mailto:radamwadhia@yahoo.com)

## **Introduction**

Most countries around the world nowadays give more interest to people with special needs, which it can be observed in some important dimensions, like health, social, educational and rehabilitative services in order to achieve the best of their abilities, and to develop full or partial independency, through their life. This care comes in response to human and civil rights legislation movements, to protect them. This new trend, based on integrating , opposes the old one which based on isolating them from society life-stream ( Alquraini , 2007 ; Alquraini & Gut , 2012 ) .

Logically, one expects that children with special needs will get most of the devoted care for this sector of special need people, especially in school, and family inclusion, in an effort of seeking a new function for these important institutes, based on love, acceptance and empowerment. This will lead them to feel as a real human beings .

Special education in the Arab world, during the last decade of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, achieved some important development, represented in a shifting from a dreaming era to an act stage. At this new stage the educators adopt including special needs children (SNC) into regular public schools, for a more comprehensive role in meeting the students' individual differences requirements, and to let the SNC share other students in a real and normal social environment. By this the public schools, will confirm that they can adapt and do the necessary changes to meet the society new needs, and to be a leading agency in human resources developmen (Abu Al-ola , 2008 ) .

Integrating SNC in the main-stream regular schools requires, as an objective to be successfully applied, a comprehensive plan for the whole educational components: curriculum, teaching methods, teaching-aids and special facilities, a positive school-environment toward SNC, and defining each component requirements ( Alquraini & Gut ; 2012 ) .

This study investigated the kindergarten teachers' and principals' perceived SNC inclusion requirements in their schools. These perceived requirements are of special importance, because teachers and principals are in the real field of the educational process, know what they need to achieve the inclusion goals, to develop all the children, whether they are ordinary or SNC in their critical years of life.

The SNC inclusion is still a controversial subject between educators who support it; and those who oppose it, though the latter percentage is less than those of the former. Bigham (2010); Ross-Hill (2009); Bond and Dietrich (1982), found that some of the regular school teachers had negative or neutral attitudes towards SNC inclusion; and Prakash (2012) recommended in a study, that teachers need an intervention to foster more positive attitudes toward inclusive education if it has to be succeeded. In addition, studies and researches about SNC inclusion requirements, in general, and from teachers' and principals' point of view, are rare. The current study is to investigate this point.

**Problem**

According to the previous review of literature, there is an urgent need to investigate the SNC inclusion requirements in the regular schools. The problem can be put in the following questions:

1. How are the SNC inclusion requirement dimensions: educational, social, psychological, and school-environment ranked from highest to lowest, as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals?
2. What are the SNC inclusion requirements in details, as reflected in the questionnaire items, and their ranks, as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals?
3. Are there statistical differences in the SNC inclusion requirement dimension means as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals according to professional specialization variable: teachers, principals?

**Importance of the study:**

Investigating and identifying the SNC inclusion requirements can help all those who are responsible of the educational process in schools: teachers in general and SNC teachers in particular, principals, supervisors, and parents; to implement the inclusion plan successfully by preparing these requirements; and this will lead to a better development in children academic achievement and its other aspects.

**Objectives:**

The current study aims to achieve the followings:

1. Providing a frame of reference for SNC inclusion requirements in regular kindergartens and schools.
2. Clarifying the role of teachers' academic specialization and training in achieving successful SNC inclusion.

**Operational Definitions:**

Inclusion. Teaching mild cases of SNC in a least restrictive regular school environment, to let each child has an opportunity to learn at his own level, accompanied by a modification in the educational process elements to offer the needed requirements.

Inclusion requirements. the teachers' perceived needs to implement SNC inclusion successfully, in educational, social, psychological, and school-environment dimensions. These requirements can be identified and weighted by the questionnaire which had been developed for the purpose of the current study.

Special needs children. Students with different moderate cases of the disabilities .

**Review of Literature**

Bond and Dietrich (1982) found by a survey on (1232) regular school teachers that 80% of them had positive or indifferent attitudes toward implementing special education resource program, and 20% had negative attitudes.

Wischonowski and Eaton (2004) concluded from a review in study of SNC inclusion, that general education teachers believe that presence of SNC affect the classroom dynamics negatively.

Aljundi (2004) developed a training program to change the ordinary children attitudes towards SNC by inhancing acceptance, interaction, and knowledge about them. Results indicated statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups in posttest and follow-up tests in favor of the experimental group.

Alquraini (2007) investigated the availibility and effectiveness of the support services for special needs students.

Ellis, Tod, and Matheson (2008) concluded that teachers' training is necessary in implementing inclusion, to build competence, confidence, self-efficacy, and a sense of preparedness.

Abu Al-Ola (2008) investigated the inclusion obstacles which face kindergarten teachers, principals, and supervisors who implement the inclusion program in teaching SNC with mild mental retardation in Mecca and Jeddah. Results indicated that early intervention for SNC before they enter the kindergarten is an important requirement to succeed in implementing the inclusion program.

Ross-Hill (2009) investigated the attitudes of regular education elementary and secondary school teachers toward inclusion implementation. The results indicated that most teachers' support inclusion as it relates to full or partial inclusion.

Fakolade, Adeniyi, and Tella (2009) found that most teachers in general secondary schools in Oyo state in Nigeria had positive attitudes toward inclusion. Female teachers; the professionally qualified teachers, were more positive toward inclusion.

Bigham (2010) found in a study on a small sample consisting (8) general education teachers a negative attitude towards SNC and inclusion , and the reason was the lack of adequate training about (SNC) and inclusion.

Golmic and Hanson (2012) found that experience of inclusion had a positive effect on teachers' attitudes, feelings and interests, in the experimental group, which got a training program about SNC inclusion requirements for 12 weeks in secondary grades.

Alquraini and Gut (2012) reviewed the literature regarding effective practice components for a successful (SNC) inclusion. they found that collaboration, special suitable methods and extracurricular activities , instructional strategies, students peers and family support, were the most important components.

Prakash (2012) investigated the needs of government and non-government teachers in Andhra Pradesh - India for (SNC), and indicated that they feel to know

effective strategies, and an intervention to enhance their positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Analysis of these studies shows that some of them investigated teachers' attitudes toward inclusion like Bond's and Dietrich's; Wischonowski's and Eaton's; and Bigham's studies, they showed different results. Others build programs to provide regular – school teachers with the required skills for implementing SNC inclusion, like Al-Jundi, Gulmic and Hanson, and Prakash. Some studies identified the needed practices for teachers to implement SNC inclusion program, like Al-Quraini's and Abu Al-Ola's.

The current study benefited from the related literature in identifying the problem, developing the tool, and defining the concepts.

### ***Method***

A theoretical and field descriptive method was used to build a framework, define the concepts operationally; developing and applying the tool, scoring it, and analyzing the data.

#### **Population**

The population was (260) subjects representing all kindergarten teachers and principals in the second directorate of education in Amman, according to the planning department statistics, of the year 2011/2012.

#### **Sample**

The questionnaire was sent by mail through ministry of education to each subject in the population, (252) were retrieved, (5) were uncompleted, the remaining (247) represents the sample, and its (95%) of the population.

#### **Questionnaire**

A questionnaire about SNC inclusion requirements was developed, containing (32) items from a pilot study, and related theoretical and applied studies., covering (4) dimensions: educational: items 4, 7, 12, 15, 17, 19, 26, 27, 30, 32; social: items 1, 20, 25, 26, 28; psychological: items 4, 7, 12, 15, 17, 19, 27, 30, 31; and school-environment: items 3, 9, 16, 18, 21, 24. Internal consistency by Cronbach's alpha coefficient was (.87). Face validity was (.90), through assessing the questionnaire items and dimensions by (10) specialist experts. Agreement of (80%) as a minimum level among experts about each item validity, was the cutting-point criterion to accept it.

A Likert-type rating scale of five points was used to assess the requirement-level for each item. Number (5) referees to a very important SNC requirement; and (1) referees to a very unimportant requirements. Range of total score is (38-190).

Three levels of SNC requirement importance were defined: low (1-2.33), moderate (2.34-3.67), high (3.6- 5).

### **Results and Discussion**

**Answering question (1):** “How are the SNC inclusion requirement dimensions: educational, social, psychological, and school-environment ranked from highest to lowest, as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals? “

Means and standard deviations of the questionnaire total score, and its (4) dimensions sub-scores were calculated. Table (1) shows the results:

Table (1)

*Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of total scores and dimensions sub-scores: their levels and ranks*

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Level</i>
Educational	3.27	.60	3	moderate
Social	3.45	.95	1	moderate
Psychological	3.42	.85	2	moderate
School-Environment	3.21	.61	4	moderate
Total score	3.34	.51	--	moderate

Results in table (1) indicate that the level of SNC inclusion requirements as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals mean of total scores is (3.34) with a standard deviation of (0.51). This result referees to a moderate level of inclusion requirements. The same thing can be said about the four dimensions means sub-scores. Results also indicate that social inclusion requirement dimension got the first rank, with a mean of (3.45); followed by: psychological, educational and school-environment inclusion requirement dimensions; with means of (3.42), (3.27), (3.21), respectively.

The results explain that kindergarten teachers and principals believe that a successful SNC inclusion need a moderate.

Requirements, and show, to a some degree, a positive attitude toward SNC inclusion. They perceive also that preparing social requirements must come at first, to make SNC parents accept the idea of inclusion; followed by psychological factors to support all those who contribute in inclusion process; educational requirements comes third in rank, perhaps teachers and principals perceive that basic educational inclusion requirements are available; or can be prepared with a moderate effort by them with a ministry of education, schools, and SNC parents support. School-environment requirements were the last in rank, perhaps because of their generality. This result is in agreement with Fayez's study results: teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are moderate or neutral.

These results are, in general, like that of Abu Al-Ola; Qadri; Golmenk and Hensen, who concluded that SNC inclusion need requirements to overcome obstacles in the process of integration.

**Answering question (2)** "What are the SNC inclusion requirement items in details and their ranks, as perceived by kindergarten teachers and principals?"

Mean for each item was calculated, and ranked from highest to lowest. Table (2) shows item means, ranks, and SD.

Table (2)

*Requirement Item Means (M), Ranks, and Standard Deviation (SD) in details for first upper and lower five items*

#	Items	M	SD
30	Preparing all the needed requirements for inclusion before starting.	4.49	.58
27	Adapting the daily program according to SNC needs and abilities.	4.43	.68
28	Activating mass communication media role in changing people attitudes toward SNC.	4.42	.67
7	Sharing SNC regular children's' playing.	4.31	.85
22	Providing emotional care to reduce psychological and social problems.	4.31	.85
11	Motivating SNC to communicate with other students.	3.43	1.13
16	Kindergarten building must be suitable to the needs of SNC.	3.52	1.08
14	SNC emotional maturity must be given a special care.	3.70	.97
5	SNC active sharing in corner stages free expression.	3.71	.87
7	Equality between SNC and regular students in dealing.	3.75	.37

The results showed that "Preparing all the needed requirements for inclusion before starting" got the first rank, with a mean of (4.49). "Adapting the daily program according to SNC needs and abilities" ranked second, with mean of (4.43). "Activating mass communication media role in changing people attitudes toward SNC", with a mean of (4.42) ranked third. "Sharing SNC regular children's' playing" ranked 4th and a half, with mean of (4.31). "Providing emotional care to reduce psychological and social problems", ranked also 4th and a half, with mean of (4.31).

The least needed requirements were: "Motivating SNC to communicate with other students", ranked 32sc, with mean of (3.43). "Kindergarten building must be suitable to the needs of SNC," ranked 31st, with mean of (3.52). "SNC emotional maturity must be given a special care", ranked 30th, with a mean of (3.70). "SNC active sharing in corner stages free expression", ranked 29th, with mean of (3.71). "Equality between SNC and regular students in dealing", ranked 28th, with mean of (3.75).

**Answering question (3):** "Is there a statistically significant difference at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$  between kindergarten teachers' and principals' perceived SNC inclusion requirements?"

Results of means and standard deviations are shown in table (3):

Table (3)  
Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of Kindergarten Teachers' and Principals' Perceived SNC Inclusion Requirements

Specialization	Index	Educational	Social	Psychological	Environment	Total
Kindergarten teachers	N	217	217	217	217	108
	M	3.30	3.47	3.44	3.23	3.47
	SD	.55	.95	.85	.63	.48
Kindergarten Principals	N	30	30	30	30	30
	M	3.08	3.25	3.35	3.11	3.20
	SD	.76	.83	.65	.30	.47

Results in table (3) show that kindergarten teachers' means across the four dimensions: educational, social, psychological, and environmental are higher than those of the principals'. ANOVA was used to test the mean differences among sample groups. Table (4) shows the results.

Table (4)  
ANOVA Results of Kindergarten Teachers' and Principals' mean differences in Perceived SNC Inclusion Requirements

Dimensions	Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Educational	Between groups	3.352	2	1.676	4.923	.008
	Within groups	83.069	244	.340		
Social	Between groups	2.554	2	1.277	1.432	.241
	Within groups	217.648	244	.892		
Psychological	Between groups	7.292	2	3.646	5.237	.006
	Within groups	169.868	244	.696		
Kindergarten environment	Between groups	2.390	2	1.195	3.314	.038
	Within groups	88.002	244	.361		
Total	Between groups	3.449	2	1.725	7.144	.001
	Within groups	58.904	244	.241		

Table (4) shows a statistical differences in (3) dimensions: educational, psychological, and environmental and in total general mean; but not in social, due to their professional responsibility. They were in favor of teachers. These results indicated that teachers call for more inclusion requirements than principals, because of their direct responsibility in implementing them in classroom-work.

### Conclusion

Kindergarten teachers and principals perceived that they need social, psychological, educational, and school-environment moderate requirements, to implement successful SNC inclusion. They have implicit agreement on SNC inclusion. Teachers perceived that they need requirements more than their principals' perceived requirements.



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