

ROLE OF GOVERNANCE IN ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Mohamad Ahmad Saleem Khasawneh, King Khalid University

ABSTRACT

Specifically, this article looks at the Saudi Arabian policy planning and implementation in meeting the needs of learning disability. All stages of education for people with disabilities are mandated by law, including pre-school, elementary and secondary school, vocational and postsecondary education, and further education. The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia is responsible for overseeing the whole educational system, which includes both elementary and secondary education. Considering how important it is for Saudi Arabian policymakers to achieve the objective of providing high-quality education for individuals and children with disabilities in their decision-making, it is critical to recognize the issue as one of disability. The new special education policy for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offers clear standards on how to accommodate children and people with disabilities. Saudi Arabia's inclusive education strategy has been influenced by global education policy as well as the international framework for disabled people's rights. Progress in the inclusive process is being stifled by a scarcity of norms, techniques, and resources. People will continue to fall behind in terms of advancement as long as the country remains stagnant in its development.

Keywords: Government Role, Learning Disability, Assessing.

INTRODUCTION

Started in 1958, Saudi Arabian Government initiated the inclusive education for children with special needs (Haimour & Obaidat, 2013). The focus for this program was for only children with visual problems. Later in 2000 Saudi Arabian Law recognized disability as physical and motor impairment, speech and language disorders, hearing disability, learning difficulties, behavioural and emotional disturbances, mental handicap, autism among others. From this, the target of Saudi Arabian law had become broader to cover needs for children with disability, including learning disability.

The government ensure people with disability to have their right to care and access to rehabilitative services. Institutions and individuals are encouraged to become involved in humanitarian endeavors that help disabled persons (Forlin et al., 2013; Hashmi et al., 2017; Kantavong, 2018). Additionally, they must provide appropriate accommodations for those with disabilities, cooperating with local governments that have specific understanding in such areas. This is an indication of the government's efforts to ensure disabled individuals have access to suitable services. Individualized counselling and preventative examinations are also available to persons with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. According to Saudi Arabia's comprehensive disability

law, the government also ensures that individuals with impairments have access to suitable educational opportunities.

Individuals with disabilities are required by law to get an education at all levels, including pre-school, public school, technical school, and higher education. Additionally, educational institutions must provide reasonable adjustments for children and individuals with disabilities (Inckle, 2018; Sandoval et al., 2021; Willis, 2021). According to the legislation, individuals with disabilities must be evaluated on a regular basis, and their curriculum and services must also be evaluated (Ali, 2018; Bunbury, 2020; Al-Dababneh & Al-Zboon, 2022). The government guarantees individuals with unique impairments training and rehabilitation services that are tailored to their specific handicap. Education and training must be matched with the job market's skills and knowledge requirements. VET and social rehabilitation institutions are also required by law, and they must use the most effective training methodologies to help students in reintegrating into society.

Overview of the Emergence of Planning in Accommodating Learning Disability

Education was compulsory by Saudi Arabian government law passed in 1970, which stipulated that all residents have an education. The suggestions of the plan will be beneficial to students with disabilities at all phases of their educational careers. The changes in the general education sector are very discernible, and the differences between the old and new curricula are easily distinguished. At the time of the country's creation, Saudi Arabia's educational system was restricted, and not all people were permitted to participate in educational activities. There weren't enough schools or instructors to go around to satisfy everyone's needs. The most often used educational approaches were fundamental reading and teaching in Islamic law.

The majority of the children were forced to labor in order to help support their families, and they were forced to take on jobs like as herding animals and completing home chores in order to do so. In spite of this, as the country's oil riches increased, the educational environment began to change (Hamdan & Hamdan, 2020; Ali, 2021). In order to meet the needs of all citizens, the government increased the number of public and special schools throughout the country.

By contrast, the international education policy supports and strengthens the current educational policies in many countries. For want of a better expression, it shows that the administration is concerned about pleasing people throughout the globe. The fact that the educational system is so centrally organized is an issue (Meemar, 2018). Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education is in charge of supervising the whole educational system, which includes both primary and secondary education. The Ministry of Education, which was established in 1954, is responsible for managing all areas of children's educational development. The administration considered gender equality to be a top concern. The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing training to all persons, including those with disabilities.

Saudi Arabian Planning

According to Saudi Arabian law, disability is defined as a complete or partial loss of an individual's physical abilities, sensory abilities, mental or communicative abilities, educational or psychological capabilities, such that the individual's ability to lead an ordinary life is reduced to a bare minimum.

It is certain that Saudi Arabia's disability law provides a clear explanation of the situation. As a result of the significance put on the goal of a quality education for people and children with disabilities in Saudi Arabian policy-making, recognizing the problem as one of disability is crucial. Although this is the case, there is still a significant gap between the recognition of impairments and the provision of inclusive education for all children (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021).

Saudi Arabia accepted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was a signatory to the Convention, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia adheres to the United Nations Optional Protocols on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Aldabas, 2015). Saudi Arabia has made facilities in its educational system for kids who are particularly less fortunate (Battal, 2016).

Analysis of the Planning and Implementation

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's new special education policy establishes clear guidelines on how to accommodate children and adults with disabilities in the country. The 2016 version clearly delineates the roles of mainstream educators as well as subject matter experts. As can be seen from an examination of the policy, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Individuals with Disabilities is clearly represented in the policy as a whole (Murray et al., 2020). The major emphasis of this policy is on students who have physical or mental disabilities. Observations on the assumptions and presuppositions behind Saudi Arabia's special education program, as well as the environment in which the subject is presented. Examining the policy text/discussion and evaluating the assumptions and presuppositions included within it may provide some insight into Saudi strategy.

Curriculum for Learning Disability

Education theory and the Saudi government's execution of the current curriculum are being studied in this paper. A look at Saudi Arabian policies on inclusive education is next on our agenda. Saudi Arabia's government places a high priority on education. The state offers free public education to all residents, regardless of physical restrictions. The objective of education for the whole population of Saudi Arabia has been connected to the teachings of Islam and international human rights (See for example: Rajab & Wright, 2020; Kim & Hamdan Alghamdi, 2020; Almutairi et al., 2021; Saleh, 1986; Pavan, 2013). It is a goal of Saudi Arabia's government and of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to ensure that all citizens have equal access to education (1948). According to Saudi Arabia's 1995 General Education Policy, all pupils must receive a high standard of instruction.

Clearly, Saudi Arabia's commitment to education is motivated by both Islamic ideals and international human rights duties. Saudi Arabia's education industry has seen significant alteration and expansion since its start in the 1970s. The state recognizes children with

impairments and makes provisions to ensure they get an acceptable education (Alquraini, 2011). As early as 1956, children with impairments were recognised as a group of individuals that need educational opportunities in order to live a normal life and eventually find job. From the start, basic education was provided to help children learn to read. Despite the fact that the government did not launch the process, it aided specialized educational institutions. The government was there in the thick of it, aiding with the construction of government facilities and equipping participants with the commodities they needed to succeed. The government eventually established its first school for those with physical or mental problems.

According to the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education's recommendations, the Kingdom has been focusing on rethinking assumptions regarding disabled children's education. People with disabilities were given the option to participate in the primary school program, but not all of them took advantage of it (Alquraini, 2011). It is very uncommon for individuals with impairments to have difficulties obtaining an education and increasing their capacity to study. When it comes to studying, it's very possible that those with impairments may benefit from physical support such as wheelchairs.

Things have changed, however, with the emergence of specialized assistive technology for those who have visual problems. A broad spectrum of impairments is now covered in the General Education Policy, which is a significant step forward. In addition, the government will guarantee that students with disabilities have access to a diverse variety of educational and cultural opportunities. As seen by this, the needs of children with impairments are taken into account by the federal government. The inclusion of kids with disabilities in the general education policy reflects a change in public perceptions about special education services for special needs pupils.

It has not yet been established to what degree this applies to inclusive education, but it certainly does. It is the responsibility of school districts to ensure that their courses are adapted to the needs of all children. Regulations for ensuring that children with disabilities get an appropriate education in Saudi Arabia are included in Article 189 of the General Education Policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (1995). According to the article, the training would be designed to meet the specific requirements of persons who have physical or mental limitations. Saudi Arabia's General Education Policy (published in 1995). Here, the government ensures that teachers have enough training in order to accommodate children who have special needs (Alnahdi, 2020).

Schools in Adopting Learning Disability

Instructors are also expected to participate in the development and execution of special education for children, according to the 1995 General Education Policy. In the beginning, it was the parents' responsibility to raise and educate their children (General Educational Policy of Saudi Arabia, 1995). As the General Education Policy demonstrates, however, the Saudi Arabian government has moved to gradually modernize its education system to ensure that all students get an equal education. Still up for contention, however, is whether or not it constitutes an "*inclusive*" educational system.

The General Education Policy also intends to develop a purposeful plan for the advancement of all educational branches and to guarantee that they achieve their objectives, as well as to develop a list of regulated requirements for educational institutions (General Education Policy of Saudi Arabia, 1995). This policy has been adopted in accordance with the objectives of the International Education Policy. According to many academic researches, however, only a small number of teachers are knowledgeable with educational policy (Alharbi & Madhesh, 2018). Teachers in Saudi Arabia seem to be more influenced by school regulations than by the country's General Education Policy, according to recent research findings. In part, this may be explained by the fact that educational policies are developed to satisfy the requirements of the institution while also taking into consideration the viewpoints of both staff and students. Teachers become more dedicated to the systems as a consequence, believing that they are more beneficial than the government's education approach.

In this study, the researchers look at the obstacles that prevent schools from adopting inclusive education practices. The absence of financial aid, guidance, and monitoring in educational institutions may be a contributing factor, but that is not the subject of this investigation. As discovered, the Saudi government attempted to build a strategy for children with disabilities that was consistent with international education policy, but it has not yet achieved inclusive education.

Learning Disability and Students Needs

This inquiry also looks on the educational requirements of children who have physical or mental problems. The policy's ultimate purpose is to ensure that persons with disabilities are appropriately recognized and accommodated. A revision to the education policy for kids with disabilities was made in 2016 to offer additional information on the responsibilities of educators, experts, and those who work in the field of special education and related fields. This strategy may also be used to establish methods for early intervention and instruction, among other things (Cook, 2002). In spite of the fact that the policy's parameters are clearly defined, it seems that the Saudi Arabian government has failed to put them into effect.

In this study, the aspects approach was used to analyze Saudi education policy documents. The findings were then presented in a report. After doing this study, it was discovered that Saudi Arabia's inclusive education plan has been impacted by global education policy as well as the international disability law framework. At the same time, questions have been raised about the efficacy with which the school system is implementing inclusive education practices in the classroom. It is certain that Islamic principles as well as international human rights obligations have had an influence on Saudi Arabia's objective of educating the whole country. Since its inception in the 1970s, the Saudi Arabian education sector has seen substantial transformation and growth.

Despite the fact that Saudi policy documents explicitly mention that instructors must actively engage in inclusive education processes, the country's inclusive education policy does not give adequate guidelines as to how they should participate. Only a small percentage of the suggestions have been implemented by educational institutions in the past. Saudi Arabia's education system for disabled children has a long way to go. It seems that the Saudi educational

system still has a long way to go in terms of policy implementation in schools. Schools haven't been provided enough guidance on how to execute the policy to help students with impairments study. A worldwide agenda for inclusive education has been endorsed by the Saudi government. As long as people are lagging behind in terms of progress, the nation will remain behind. As stated in the policy, all students with disabilities should get an education on par with their counterparts in society. Using the inclusion process, we are able to meet the unique needs of each kid. It seems that the lack of standards, tactics, and resources is stifling progress in the inclusive process.

CONCLUSION

Students with disabilities enrolled in Saudi Arabia's special education institutions and institutes are directed by the country's Special Education Policy, which is published annually. It was as a consequence that children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia were forced to depend on the support of their parents for both their education and their care. It wasn't until 1958 that the first special education for the blind program was established as a way for blind adults to learn how to read Braille on their own. According to Saudi Arabia's disability law, other impairments are now covered under the umbrella term "*disability*". Saudi Arabia has adhered to international standards and laws in the areas of disability legislation and education policy. However, it has fallen behind other countries in its efforts to ensure that all children have access to an education. Saudi education institutions would benefit from defined norms and expectations that go beyond integration and toward inclusivity, rather than being loyal to the foreign community, rather than being loyal to the foreign community. People's first-person descriptions of what it's like to be included in a group may help us get a greater understanding of what inclusion actually means, but this has not yet occurred in Saudi Arabia. This small-scale examination is designed to provide the groundwork for larger-scale studies and inquiries in the future.

REFERENCE

- Al-Dababneh, K. A., & Al-Zboon, E. K. (2022). Using assistive technologies in the curriculum of children with specific learning disabilities served in inclusion settings: teachers' beliefs and professionalism. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 17(1), 23-33.
- Aldabas, R. A. (2015). Special education in Saudi Arabia: History and areas for reform. *Creative Education*, 6(11), 1158.
- Alharbi, A., & Madhesh, A. (2018). Inclusive education and policy in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Education Research and Reviews*, 6(1), 946-956.
- Ali, L. (2018). The Design of Curriculum, Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education with Constructive Alignment. *Journal of Education and e-learning Research*, 5(1), 72-78.
- Almutairi, N. M., Round, P. N., & Casinader, N. R. (2021). Gifted Education through the Lens of Religion. *International Education Studies*, 14(4), 48-56.
- Alnahdi, G. (2020). Are we ready for inclusion? Teachers' perceived self-efficacy for inclusive education in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 67(2), 182-193.
- Alnahdi, G. H., & Schwab, S. (2021). Inclusive education in Saudi Arabia and Germany: Students' perception of school well-being, social inclusion, and academic self-concept. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(5), 773-786.
- Alquraini, T. (2011). Special Education in Saudi Arabia: Challenges, Perspectives, Future Possibilities. *International Journal of Special Education*, 26(2), 149-159.

- Ali, A. (2021). Volatility of oil prices and public spending in Saudi Arabia: sensitivity and trend analysis. *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*.
- Battal, Z. M. B. (2016). Special education in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education*, 5(2), 880-886.
- Bunbury, S. (2020). Disability in higher education—do reasonable adjustments contribute to an inclusive curriculum?. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(9), 964-979.
- Cook, T. D. (2002). Randomized experiments in educational policy research: A critical examination of the reasons the educational evaluation community has offered for not doing them. *Educational evaluation and policy analysis*, 24(3), 175-199.
- Forlin, C. I., Chambers, D. J., Loreman, T., Deppler, J., & Sharma, U. (2013). Inclusive education for students with disability: A review of the best evidence in relation to theory and practice.
- Haimour, A. I., & Obaidat, Y. F. (2013). School teachers' knowledge about autism in Saudi Arabia. *World Journal of Education*, 3(5), 45-56.
- Hamdan, A., & Hamdan, R. (2020). The mediating role of oil returns in the relationship between investment in higher education and economic growth: The evidence from Saudi Arabia. *Economics & Sociology*, 13(1), 116-131.
- Hashmi, S., Khan, I. K., & Khanum, N. (2017). Inclusive education in government primary schools: Teacher perceptions. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 4(1).
- Inckle, K. (2018). Unreasonable adjustments: The additional unpaid labour of academics with disabilities. *Disability & Society*, 33(8), 1372-1376.
- Kantavong, P. (2018). Understanding inclusive education practices in schools under local government jurisdiction: a study of Khon Kaen Municipality in Thailand. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(7), 767-786.
- Kim, S. Y., & Hamdan Alghamdi, A. K. (2020). Saudi Arabian secondary students' views of the nature of science within Islamic context. *International Journal of Science Education*, 42(13), 2266-2283.
- Meemar, S. S. (2018). Educational Decentralization Efforts in a Centralized Country: Saudi Tatweer Principals' Perceptions of Their New Authorities. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, 13(2), n2.
- Murray, J. J., Snoddon, K., De Meulder, M., & Underwood, K. (2020). Intersectional inclusion for deaf learners: moving beyond General Comment no. 4 on Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(7), 691-705.
- Pavan, A. (2013). A New Perspective on the Quest for Education: The Saudi Arabian Way to Knowledge Society. *Higher Education Studies*, 3(6), 25-34.
- Rajab, A., & Wright, N. (2020). The idea of autonomy and its interplay with culture in child-centered education: Evidence from practitioners in preschools in Saudi Arabia. *Early Years*, 40(2), 174-187.
- Saleh, M. A. (1986). Development of higher education in Saudi Arabia. *Higher Education*, 15(1-2), 17-23.
- Sandoval, M., Morgado, B., & Doménech, A. (2021). University students with disabilities in Spain: Faculty beliefs, practices and support in providing reasonable adjustments. *Disability & Society*, 36(5), 730-749.
- Willis, A. S. (2023). The need for dialogic reciprocal anti-discrimination practice and policy in faith-based schools. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 53(7), 1137-1151.

Received: 05-Feb-2024, Manuscript No. ASMJ-23-11942; **Editor assigned:** 08-Feb-2024, PreQC No. ASMJ-23-11942(PQ);
Reviewed: 22-Feb-2024, QC No. ASMJ-23-11942; **Revised:** 26-Feb-2024, Manuscript No. ASMJ-23-11942(R); **Published:** 30-Feb-2024