

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SAUDI ARABIA: CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES, FUTURE POSSIBILITIES**

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*This paper provides a brief background of the education system in Saudi Arabia and current special education services and programs for students with disabilities. Additionally, this paper presents the findings of some studies that examined teachers' perspectives regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities. As Saudi Arabia continues its dramatic period of improvement, changes in special education services will occur rapidly. To improve special education services, educators, parents, policymakers, and other professionals should consider many suggestions regarding critical components of successful inclusive education. In addition, further research is needed on changing the attitudes of stakeholders toward inclusion so they can be supportive of these students in a general education setting.*

### **Overview of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) was established in the 1932, when Ibn Saud conquered the majority of the Arabian Peninsula after a bloody war that lasted three decades (World Factbook, 2010). It is located in the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula and is bordered on the north by Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait and on the east by Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and the Arabian Gulf Sea. On the south are Oman and Yemen and on the west is the Red Sea. KSA dominates the Arabian Peninsula in terms of land area, having over two million square kilometers of land. Over 22 million people live in Saudi Arabia, according to a census conducted in 2004. The geography of Saudi Arabia ranges includes mountains, plains, and desert. The temperature varies from over one hundred degrees Fahrenheit in daytime to well below 30 degrees on a cold desert night. Saudi Arabia's capital is Riyadh (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2010).

The KSA economy is driven by oil. The country has more oil than any other nation; some experts estimate that KSA has one fourth of the world's total reserves. Most of its economy is based on the collection and refining of oil products like kerosene or gasoline. Despite its oil wealth, Saudi Arabia is beginning to look to other natural resources to boost its income, such as natural gas, minerals, and precious metals (Royal Embassy, 2010).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a theocratic monarchy. It is ruled over by a royal family, which rules according to the Quran's teachings of Sharia based on Islamic religious law. By far the dominant religion in KSA is Islam. Under Sharia law, certain rights are applied to all people, such as life, dignity, and education (World Factbook, 2010).

### **The Saudi Education System**

According to the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia (2010), the education system of Saudi Arabia has evolved dramatically since its founding 78 years ago. In the beginning, education was the privilege only of children of elite, wealthy families. Currently there is a boom in education facility construction in Saudi Arabia, with over twenty-five thousand schools built and more constructed as time passes. Now education is given to all tiers of society, and all students have their schooling paid for by the government. The curricula are a mix of traditional Islamic religious education and lessons in many other fields, usually based on the curricula of schools in the United States of America or the United Kingdom. The schedule of these schools is usually modeled on the American system, with nine to 10 months of schooling broken by summer breaks and occasional time off for religious holidays (World Factbook, 2010).

The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia is responsible for providing a free and appropriate education for all students, including those with disabilities. It also is responsible for establishing new schools and maintaining old schools, providing and developing curricula, establishing training programs to in-service teachers, and offering adult education literacy (Ministry of Education, 2008). This ministry also is responsible for special education services to students with disabilities. There is where eligibilities for these services are established and special education services are provided in order to help students with disabilities be able to live independently and safely (Al-Mousa, Al-Sartawi, Al-Adbuljbbar, Al-Btal, & Al-Husain, 2006).

## **Overview of Special Education in Saudi Arabia**

### **The Development of Special Education**

People with disabilities in Saudi Arabia did not obtain any type of special education services prior to 1958. The parents of students with disabilities were responsible for providing any assistance to their children (Al-Ajmi, 2006). Special education services for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia began to emerge in 1958 when some students with blindness received their education in schools known as “scientific institutes” (Salloom, 1995). In 1962, the Ministry of Education established the Department of Special Learning to improve learning and rehabilitation services for three main categories of students with disabilities: those with blindness, deafness, and mental retardation (Afeafe, 2000). Following this initiative, in 1964 three institutes for students with blindness were set up in three cities: Mecca, Aneaza, and Alhofouf (Al-Mousa, 1999). The first institute for students with deafness as well as for those with mental retardation was established in 1972.

The early movement to improve special education services led to increases in these services by establishing regulations that guarantee rights for people with disabilities, increasing the quality of special education services, and educating professionals who are qualified to provide these services. Overall, the main purpose of this paper is to provide a brief description of the law supporting people with disabilities and current special education services provided, as well as perspectives of teachers regarding inclusive education for students with disabilities. Finally, this paper also discusses some suggestions that might contribute to improving the quality of special education services for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia.

### **Laws Regarding People with Disabilities**

*Legislation of Disability.* Legislation of Disability (LD) passed in 1987 as the first legislation for people with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. The LD includes important provisions that guarantee individuals with disabilities rights equal to those of other people in society. This legislation also contains many articles that define disabilities and describe programs for prevention and intervention and procedures of assessment and diagnosis to determine eligibility for special education services. Finally, LD requires that public agencies must provide rehabilitation services and training programs that support independent living (Ministry of Health Care, 2010).

*Disability Code.* This code was passed by the Saudi government in 2000 to guarantee that people with disabilities have access to free and appropriate medical, psychological, social, educational, and rehabilitation services through public agencies. This legislation further requires these agencies to assist eligible people in areas including welfare, habilitation, health, education, training and rehabilitation, employment, complementary services, and other areas (Prince Salman Center for Disability Research, 2004).

*Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI).* To further develop the policy of special education for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, a Ministry of Education representative from the Directorate General of Special Education in Saudi Arabia and some professionals from the Department of Special Education at King Saud University—who hold master’s and doctoral degrees from the United States in special education—reviewed the United States’ special education policies, including the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975 and Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. The Regulations of Special Education Programs and Institutes (RSEPI) were modeled after those U.S. policies and introduced in 2001. The first regulations for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, RESPI outlines rights and regulations for students having

disabilities in the Saudi Arabia and requiring special education services. The RSEPI defines the main categories of students with disabilities—mental retardation, learning disability, deafness, blindness, and multiple disabilities—as well as tasks for professionals who work with these students. It also describes an individual education program (IEP), elements of an IEP, and individuals who should participate in planning and providing an IEP. The RSEPI includes procedures of assessment and evaluation for students to determine if they are eligible for special education services. Under the RSEPI, all children with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education, individual education programs, early intervention programs, related services, and transition services. The RESPI also specifies how schools must provide these services to students with disabilities. Thus, RSEPI supports the quality of the special education services in Saudi Arabia.

In summary, these policies support the equal rights of individuals with disabilities in obtaining free and appropriate education. However, even though these laws were passed almost a decade ago, they are not practiced in the real world with students with disabilities. In fact, the lack of the effective implementation has created a gap between the framework of these laws and the provision of services, resulting in a lack of special education services for some students with disabilities. The following section discusses these weaknesses and suggests some improvements to actual special education services in Saudi Arabia.

### **Current Special Education Services**

In the last decade, the practice of special education services for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia has improved to assist them in obtaining high-quality education services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). In spite of this effort to improve services, more is needed to improve these services further. This section briefly describes many services available to students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia.

#### Education Settings

*Students with mild and moderate disabilities.* Students with mild learning disabilities receive their educations in typical classrooms with some support from special education services such as source rooms. These students also fully participate in the general education curriculum with some modifications and accommodations. Students with mild and moderate cognitive disabilities still receive their education in separate classrooms in public schools. They do share some time with their typically developing peers in noncurricular activities such as lunch or recess. The schools provide special education curriculum to these students, which is different than the general curriculum provided their typically developing peers. Students with mild to moderate disabilities attend elementary schools from ages 6 years to 13 or 14 years, followed by middle school until age 18. Unfortunately, after they complete their education in elementary and middle school, many of these students have no opportunity to attend any further education except at some vocational training centers (Al-Ajmi, 2006). The main purpose of these centers is to provide these students with vocational training and employment skills that support independent living (Ministry of Health Care, 2010). Thus, these settings have become challenged to educate students in general education settings.

*Students with severe disabilities.* According to the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia (2008), 96% of students with multiple and severe disabilities received their education in separate institutes in 2007–08. These students often are educated in segregated settings that do not allow them to interact with their typically developing peers in inclusion settings where they could improve social, communication, and academic skills. These institutes provide residence, food, financial aid, and assistance to students with moderate, severe, or profound intellectual disabilities, multiple impairments, and autism. The students remain at school all week and return home only on the weekends. Families often are not able to come to the institutes every day and accompany their children because of the distance between the schools and family homes.

An additional essential issue is that students with disabilities in these institutes receive individual education programs (IEPs) that are modified from a special education curriculum and designed by the Ministry of Education for these students. The IEPs often do not meet their unique and individual needs; instead these students should receive IEPs based upon the general curriculum.

Lastly, private institutes lack related services such as occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech and language pathologists that could enabling these students to acquire more benefits from their IEPs and develop communication, physical, and other skills. Some public schools provide several related services for students with mild and moderate disabilities. The way that some students with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities receive their educations in segregated settings does not recognize their rights and needs to be included like other students. Segregating students with disabilities from other students does not allow those students to properly acquire social skills, particularly for those with cognitive disabilities who lack such skills. There are many reasons why student with disabilities still receive their educations in segregation settings, including:

*lacking of weariness and training among public school teachers about students with disabilities, the fear that students with disabilities may endanger students in the population, the notion of educators that the equal but separate theory is the best way teach students with and without disabilities (Al-Faiz, 2006, p. 21).*

### **Perspectives of Teachers Regarding General Education Setting for Students With Disabilities in Saudi Arabia**

Teachers are influential in determining students' inclusion in general classrooms. Therefore, numerous studies emphasize the role teachers can play in promoting successful inclusion for students with disabilities (Kozub & Lienert, 2003). When educators are supportive of inclusion decisions, they are more likely to demonstrate their support of their practices (Cook, 2004). Research shows that teachers' perceptions are important to the successful implementation of inclusive education for students with disabilities (Auramidis & Norwich, 2002). Furthermore, Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, and Shelton (2004) pointed out that one of the important conditions needed for the successful inclusion of students with severe disabilities is the positive perspective of school staff members who work with these children.

On the other hand, the negative perspective of these professionals could be the main factor that impedes the process of inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education programs. There are many factors, such as the level of the student's disability, that affect the perspective of teachers. Kozub and Lienert (2003) mentioned that physical educators prefer to work with students with moderate disabilities rather than students with severe disabilities. Additionally, Cook (2001) investigated teachers' attitudes toward including students with mild and severe disabilities in general education classes. He concluded that teachers hold different attitudes (e.g., indifference and rejection nomination) toward their students with disabilities based on the levels of disability (e.g., obvious and hidden disabilities). In addition, students with severe disabilities are more likely to be rejected by teachers than students with mild and moderate disabilities.

Although these studies stress the importance of investigating educators' perceptions, few studies have explored educators' perspectives in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if these perspectives will be the same in a country where few studies have been done and where there are significant religious and cultural differences from Western contexts. It is important to consider the values of society and how they affect public perceptions of students with disabilities.

Saudi society is based on the Islamic faith and follows the Qur'an and the Sunnah as stated by the Prophet Muhammad. Saudi cultural values deal with disabilities according to the policies included in the Quran and Sunnah. This means that a disability may be perceived as a punishment for someone because he or she was disrespectful toward a family with a child with a disability. It also may be a test, and the patience of those who are tested will not go unrewarded by Allah, who has prepared a place for the patient in Paradise (Al-Mousa, 1999). These values often lead people in Saudi Arabia to treat individuals with disabilities negatively; for example, these individuals are not able to live independently. Additionally, Saudi society sometimes discriminates against these individuals, such as ignoring them in public and preventing them from practicing their rights as other individuals do.

A few studies indicate that teachers in Saudi Arabia might have negative perceptions toward people with disabilities. Al-Ahmadi (2009) examined the perspectives of male and female teachers, special education teachers, and general education teachers working in public schools in Saudi Arabia. The researcher

analyzed teachers' perspectives on the respondent's demographic and independent variables (e.g., gender, age, degree held, years of teaching experiences, having family member with disability, and previous training in special education or inclusive education). This study found that male teachers had more positive attitudes toward integration education for students with learning disabilities than female teachers. This study also found that the type of degree held affected teachers' attitudes regarding the integration for students with learning disabilities. Those holding master's degrees were more likely to have positive attitudes toward this practice.

Al-Faiz (2006) examined attitudes of 240 teachers working in elementary schools in Saudi Arabia toward inclusive education for students with autism. The author investigated the attitudes of elementary school teachers based on 11 independent variables: gender, citizenship, age, marital status, level of education, education area, teaching field, teaching experience, training program, family/relative with autism, and exposure to students with disabilities. This study found that most teachers have positive attitudes toward inclusive education. This research also pointed out that teaching experience and family/relative with disability most affected the attitudes of these teachers.

Another study conducted by Al-Abduljabber (1994) investigated attitudes of 221 teachers and administrators working in public schools in Saudi Arabia toward inclusive education for students with disabilities. The investigator examined their attitudes based on gender, age, type of degree, years of experience, job position, and school level. This study concluded that female teachers and administrators had more positive attitudes than male teachers and administrators regarding inclusive education. This study also mentioned that administrators who had more experience had more positive attitudes regarding inclusive education. Finally, Dubis (1987) surveyed 373 special education teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward mainstreaming for students with deafness, blindness, and mental retardation in Saudi Arabia. The researcher examined their attitudes in relation to age, gender, grade level, and contact with children with disabilities. The study indicated that special education teachers and administrators had positive attitudes regarding the mainstreaming for these students.

Although a few researchers have investigated the attitudes of teachers and other school staff regarding inclusive education for students with disabilities, they concluded that most of the teachers have positive attitudes toward educating students in general education settings. These findings suggest potential stakeholders in the schools who are willing to support students with disabilities in gaining their education in general education settings.

#### Future Possibilities of General Educating Setting

There are many suggestions to assist students with disabilities in receiving an education with their typically developing peers in regular education settings in Saudi Arabia. One interesting solution to this issue is teaching future teachers or pre-service teachers about the capabilities of these students, or preparing the students themselves to be able to discuss their strengths and needs, otherwise known as self-advocacy. Colleges also should educate both general teachers and special education teachers about the importance of having children with disabilities in regular classes and the importance of their collaboration as the key to successful inclusion. This can be done by creating courses that discuss how these teachers can collaborate and explore models of collaboration that can be practiced in schools. For instance, teachers can use a collaborative or co-teaching model, where more than one teacher shares the responsibility in providing academic, social, and communicative activities for diverse students in the general education setting.

Teachers also should recognize important skills that might facilitate their collaboration in terms of using appropriate communication skills and working as a team. Additionally, school principals should make sure these professionals have enough time to collaborate. School districts and professional associations such as the Saudi Association of Students with Autism, the Saudi Association of Students with Deafness, and others might work to develop skills and training for in-service teachers as well as for the families of students with disabilities about the important elements of successful inclusion through conferences and workshops. This kind of training might address these elements in terms of collaboration

among professionals (e.g., special education teachers, general education teachers, service providers, and others) and adaptation and accommodation of schoolwork.

Other elements that can be considered in these conferences and workshops are effective instruction practices that improve access to core general curriculum, peer support for students with disabilities, assistive technology, and administrative support, professional development training for educators, and effective involvement and support of parents or families in inclusive settings. Moreover, teachers and service providers should work as a team to assist students with disabilities to access and progress in the general curriculum education through strategies of accommodation and modification.

Accommodations might include using specific teaching techniques, such as audio or other formats as an alternative to print, technology, graphic organizers, and pictorial representation, or changing the amount of input, time-frame for learning, and levels of support for individual students' needs. Another example of an accommodation is changing the requirements so that only half of the problems on a math assignment need to be completed, or allowing a student to take an oral exam instead of a traditional pen and paper test. Curriculum adaptations can be used to change the level of standards expected of the student, the way the course is taught, and the tools used to teach the course. Lastly, schools should adapt the physical environment to help students with disabilities access their regular classes; for example, installing elevators in the schools makes it easy for students with physical disabilities and other students to move between floors.

The Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia should consider providing teachers with assistance to improve the quality of education programs. At minimum, the Ministry should employ people who have at least high school diplomas and who pass a specific test that determines their qualifications for this job.

Assistive technology should be considered to support these students' engagement in regular class and access the general curriculum. Types of assistive technology that can be used with these students are both low technology (highlight tape, manila file folders, and photo albums) and high technology (adaptive communication devices, switches, and others). However, the main issue of applying high assistive technology with students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia is that most of these devices use only the English or Spanish languages. The companies that produce these devices should consider models in the Arabic language so that these devices might be available to Saudi students. Low technology that can be made at a lower cost should be an important consideration of the teachers.

More research is needed to examine the attitudes of teachers and other stakeholders regarding inclusive education and the factors that affect these attitudes. Public agencies (e.g., school districts, colleges, media, etc.) also should sensitize the community and families to the importance of including children with disabilities in regular classes through the media, workshops, and conferences. This might contribute to changing the attitudes of teachers, families, and other members of society to be supportive of inclusion. These suggestions cannot be achieved without the combined effort of all parties.

### **Procedures to Determine Eligibility for Special Education Services**

Unfortunately, in Saudi Arabia diagnosis and assessment processes to determine the eligibility of students for special education and related services are still not free of shortcomings. The assessment process for children does not begin early enough to successfully determine disabilities. This process usually starts when the child goes to school, so the schools and other agencies cannot provide early intervention for children with disabilities and their families. Additionally, most of the special education institutes as well as public schools lack a multidisciplinary team, IQ tests, adaptive behavior scales, and academic scales that appropriate to cultural standards of Saudi Arabia (Al-Nahdi, 2007).

Therefore, in most cases, the schools' psychologists define the student's eligibility for special education service based on the student's IQ score and observations from their teachers. Assessment procedures for children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia are not team-based. Overall, the assessment and diagnostic procedures should be reassessed and recognized to achieve best practice.

### Possible Procedures to Determine Eligibility for Special Education Services

Many important suggestions should be considered in improving the actual assessment and diagnosis process for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. One is to start the assessment process at an early stage for at-risk students at birth or in preschools to help these students and their families utilize early interventions. The schools might provide some intervention instructions to the student with disability—what is known as Response to Intervention (RTI)—before they refer the student to assessment procedures. RTI is the *practice of providing high quality instructions and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions* (Batsche et al., 2006, p. 3). The schools also should assess the child based on a variety of sources, including formal assessment through IQ tests, adaptive behavior scales, and academic scales, as well as the child's physical condition and his or her social or cultural background.

Teachers and other school staff might consider informal assessment, including observations, interviews, and other tools. Professionals also should work to establish tests and scales that use Saudi Arabia cultural standards and language to be appropriate for use in Saudi Arabia. The determination that a student needs special education services should be made by a multidisciplinary team including special education teachers, general education teachers, psychologists, the student's parents, and any others needed for the assessment process. All of these suggestions will play a significant role in improving the assessment procedures for students with disabilities.

### **Related Services for Students with Disabilities**

There are many related services for students with disabilities in the schools in Saudi Arabia, since most of these students have communication, fine motor skills, or gross motor skills problems. According to the RSEPI, all students with disabilities either in special education institutes or public schools should obtain related services in order to acquire more benefits from their IEPs (Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia, 2002). Many Saudi studies have examined the feasibility of related services and their importance for students with disabilities in special education institutes or public schools. Al-Wabli (1996) examined the feasibility of related services and their importance in special institutes for students with cognitive disabilities in Saudi Arabia. This study found out speech-language pathologists, school counselors, psychologists, and social workers were available in these institutes. However, occupational therapy and physical therapy services were less available. Following this line of investigation, Al-Quraini (2007) examined the feasibility and effectiveness of related services for students with mental retardation in public schools. According to this study, the most readily available related services were transportation, speech and language therapy, psychological services, school counseling, and school health services. On the other hand, social work service, occupational therapy, and physical therapy were less available for these students in public schools. Another study conducted by Hanafi (2008) examined the viability of related services for students with hearing disabilities in public schools. This study indicated that health and medical services were more available for these students; however, social workers and rehabilitation service were not available. Finally, Al-Otaibi and Al-Sartawi (2009) investigated the feasibility of related services for students with multiple disabilities. The researchers concluded that special education centers and institutes for students with multiple disabilities in Saudi Arabia lack health, medical, and physical therapy services.

Overall, it is clear from these studies that some schools provide related services for students with disabilities such as transportation, psychological services, and counseling. At the same time, they lack related services in terms of speech and language pathology, physical therapy, and occupational therapy services. Possible causes are a lack of professionals who specialize in these fields or the fact that those professionals with that focus often are employed by hospitals instead of schools.

### Future Possibilities of Related Services

There are many suggestions to improve related services for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. For example, RSEPI should identify procedures to ensure that school districts completely understand the requirements to adequately provide each service for students with disabilities. Specifically, they should consider the cost of related services, parties responsible for financial support, and procedures to be taken when the school district does not have enough funds to supply these services for students.

Another way to support related services is collaboration between school officials and schools of physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, nursing, and others to promote procedures to provide these services for students with disabilities in different ways. Collaboration helps the school districts to clearly understand the policy of related services and their obligation to those children who need these services. The professional schools benefit by taking the time necessary to review their policies and their ability to provide the level of care needed for students with heightened physical, health, and speech, and motor skills needs—which in turn will help their students to become more proficient and capable professionals in their field. As a temporary solution, pre-service therapists can do their internships with students with disabilities in the schools to improve their skills in different areas. The school administrators could make a circuit for specialists to travel to help with the general lack of service providers in schools. This is only a short-term solution, but would help by making sure students with disabilities get these services on a day-to-day basis.

### **Providing Individual Education Programs**

The RSEPI requires schools to provide an individual educational program (IEP) for each student with a disability. Therefore, that IEP has become one of the most important educational services provided for each child. However, little research has examined IEPs for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. Research by Al-Herz (2008) examined achievement of goals of the IEP and related difficulties in programs and special education institutes in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This study found that special education teachers successfully determine the important elements of IEPs in terms of the student's weaknesses and strengths, annual goals and short-term objectives, and needs requiring specially designed instruction. However, this study concluded that some obstacles impede the provision of effective and appropriate IEPs, such as the lack of efficient multidisciplinary teams (including the special education teacher, the child's previous teachers, the parents of the child, and other members as needed), and IEPs that are determined by the situation of the child. This study also pointed out that families do not participate effectively with other school staff in determining the needs of the students and in the preparation and implementation of IEPs.

Although there are a few studies that examine IEPs for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, this study pointed out significant issues regarding providing individual education programs. In fact, identification of the weakness and strengths of children with disabilities and the setting of annual goals in the IEP usually are done by special education teachers without participation of the parents and other service providers. The special education teacher also is solely responsible for IEPs for up to 15 students with disabilities in the class, making individual attention to student needs difficult.

### **Future Possibilities of Providing Individual Education Programs**

Overall, there are many ways to help Saudi students with disabilities acquire more benefits from their IEPs. For instance, the members of the IEP team should define the child's needs when planning an IEP for the student. This team should include many professionals to form a multidisciplinary team including special education teachers, speech pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, other professionals, and parents. Furthermore, the IEP team should present levels of academic and functional performance. The parents should play an essential role in defining their child's needs; the student also should play a part if possible. Schools should educate families about their rights and emphasize that their participation will contribute significantly to the formulation of the IEP. Thus, providing IEPs in schools should be understood as not only the responsibility of the special education teacher, but also the responsibility of other school staff as well as families of students with disabilities.

### **Conclusion**

As Saudi Arabia continues its dramatic period of improvement, changes in special education services will occur rapidly. Therefore, the suggestions set forth in this paper might contribute to improving special education services to students with disabilities. First, policymakers should evaluate existing legislation related students with disabilities and those laws' relevance to current trends in providing special education services, taking into consideration successful policy experiences such as the Individual



with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in United States. The Ministry of Education should engage in a professional team annually to evaluate the quality of special education services and present a report that explains these services to public agencies. This report might assist these agencies in providing services, helping them improve their special education services to students with disabilities. Another suggestion is to address critical elements of successful inclusion, such as accommodation and modification of general curriculum and collaborations. Further, the stakeholders' perspectives toward inclusion should be examined through more research to determine the best ways to change their perspectives to be more supportive of these students in a general education setting. Procedures to determine eligibility for special education services should be based on the findings of a multidisciplinary team as well as the other issues discussed above. Finally, schools should consider providing related services in support of their IEPs, particularly occupational, physical, and speech-language therapy.

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