Teachers' and Parents' perspectives towards including "slow learners" in mainstream schools in Kuwait

Nouf Alenezi

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University of Stirling

Abstract

This qualitative research inquiry explores the perspectives of a diverse range of participants, namely head teachers, teachers and mothers, towards inclusion of "slow learners" in two primary mainstream schools in the State of Kuwait. The concept of inclusion, through a review of major issues and limitations in the current practice of inclusion is highlighted by this case study. A multi-method data collection approach, using semi-structured interviews and critical discourse analysis of the policy document for inclusion in Kuwait, has led to identifying what has been done, so far in practice, for inclusion, as well as identifying the potential changes that need to be made.

Kuwait is a signatory to the UNESCO Salamanca Statement, set out in 1994, which requires states to move towards systems "enabling schools to serve all children". However, to date, "inclusion" in Kuwaiti mainstream schools is limited to two groups of children: those with Down's Syndrome and those referred to as "slow learners", a term used to describe certain children with low IQ. All other children with special educational needs are educated in segregated settings. This study examines policy and explores participants' perspectives towards the inclusion of children identified as "slow learners" in primary mainstream schools in Kuwait, in order to arrive at insights which might further the policy and practice of supporting inclusion of children with special educational needs. This study found that the dominant conceptual model underpinning policy and practice in Kuwait is the "medical model" of disability, as the current understanding and practice of inclusion, teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion and articulation of the inclusion policy in Kuwait is informed, conceptualized and affected by this model. This understanding lends itself to practices of integration rather than inclusion, However, "the term 'inclusion' replaced 'integration' and is often contrasted with 'exclusion' " (Topping & Maloney, 2005, p.42). Inclusion means equal access and increasing the participation of students with special needs in mainstream school as promoted by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO,1994), while integration means limited access and less participation of students with special needs in mainstream school, thus integration is "largely a 'disability' or SEN issue" (Topping & Maloney, 2005, p.42). This study also found that perspectives of inclusion are influenced by the social, cultural and religious context of the country.

Finally, this study concludes that in the context of Kuwait, there is a clear effect of the cultural understanding of disability on the way that the current policy of inclusive education is represented. Such cultural influence not only affects the policymakers of the region and the way inclusion is implemented, but also it effects "slow learners" in the light of how disability and inclusion are constructed by the head teachers, teachers and mothers in this study. Such cultural and social values and beliefs of Kuwaiti culture pose obstacles to the existence of inclusion in Kuwait, as promoted by the Salamanca Statement. As a signatory to the Salamanca Statement, this study suggests that in order to adequately accommodate "slow learners" and other students with disability in mainstream schools in Kuwait, policy needs to be reconceptualised.

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Context, Purpose and Significance of the Study

Introduction

By being a signatory to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the State of Kuwait has committed itself to the development of inclusive education for all children. Subsequent to signing, the Kuwaiti government has attempted to move towards educating children with disability in mainstream settings in line with the worldwide movement towards inclusive education. Thus, this study is a timely response to the current developments in the provision of educational services to students with disability in the Kuwaiti context.

Winter (2006) states that the recommendations of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) have pushed the movement towards inclusive education for children with special needs in many countries. Currently, the issue of whether, and how, to include disabled students from mainstream schools is highly controversial, confronting educational policy-makers worldwide. In this regard, Ainscow and Sandill (2010, p.401) state that, "Including all children in education is the major challenge facing educational systems around the world, in both developing and developed countries." Florian (2008) states that the global inclusion movement is generally understood as an aspect of human rights and a concept of fairness. The argument for inclusion in mainstream schools therefore involves the fundamental issue of human rights and hence the principle of inclusion reflects a complex educational ideology.

In Kuwait at present only two groups of students with disability are educated in mainstream schools. These are children with Down's Syndrome and students with moderate learning difficulties. All other disabled students are educated in special schools according to their particular diagnosed disability. This study investigates the current policy of inclusive education in Kuwait and examines head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives about the inclusion of children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). However, the term MLD will not be used in this

study, as it is not a term in use in Kuwait, thus in this study, in its place, I will use the term "slow learners" which, though a problematic term, more closely accords with the Arabic [batie al-taallom] to refer to such students. The current definition used in Kuwait considers that "slow learner" students are those who suffer from a lack of mental capacity, with an IQ range of 70-84, that results in difficulties in academic achievement. However, policy requires that IQ levels should not be used as the sole basis for diagnosis; it is necessary to strengthen the diagnosis through evaluating academic achievement and psychological, social and medical aspects (Kuwait Ministry of Education, 1996). (This is set out in more detail later in this chapter).

Researcher's personal values

When I started my Master's degree programme at the University of Exeter, in the field of special education, I expected that the programme would focus on the categorisation of students with disability and their characteristics. However, the whole programme was oriented towards inclusive education for students with disability in mainstream schools. This experience lead me to question myself about the reasons for the lack of interest and awareness in the State of Kuwait regarding inclusive education. This motivated me to explore this topic. In addition, my undergraduate studies of basic education in Kuwait in college, specifically at the department of special education needs, did not cover the field of inclusive education, as the whole programme was focused on the classification, categorisation and the characteristics of students with disability. Thus, I decided to continue my research journey with an ambition to develop my knowledge in the field of inclusive education, as research in this field in the Arabian Gulf countries, and especially in the State of Kuwait, is very rare.

Study aim and research questions

A key aim of this research was to understand the current state of inclusive education offered to "slow learners" in Kuwait. This was driven by a belief that considering the voices of head teachers, teachers and mothers is a vital foundation for developing clearer policies, which in turn can shape practice and in addition gain a deeper understanding of the complexities related to the perspectives of teachers and

parents towards inclusion. In order to address this aim, the following research questions were developed:

1. What is the policy context for inclusive education in Kuwait?
2. How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand disability?
3. How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand the concept of inclusion?
4. What are Kuwaiti female head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion?

The significance of the study

In most Arabian Gulf countries, including Kuwait, research around inclusion is lacking and there is little or no information about policy and head teachers, teachers' and parents' perspectives and understanding held, regarding disability and inclusion. Therefore, investigating the current policy of inclusion, as well as head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives about inclusion, will help in improving the process of including other disabled students who are still excluded in special schools, in Kuwait.

The movement towards inclusion of children with disability is in its early stages in Kuwait. The focus of this study is to investigate teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards the current process of including "slow learners" in mainstream schools. In the Kuwaiti context, only students with Down's Syndrome and "slow learners" are offered inclusive programmes. Moreover, "slow learners" and Down's Syndrome students are not educated in the same inclusive schools. I therefore chose to focus on perspectives relating to including "slow learners" in two primary mainstream schools.

The report on disability, presented by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2011, pp.224-225) indicates that, "Parents are frequently active in creating educational opportunities for their children, and they need to be brought on board to facilitate the process of inclusion". This study therefore highlights the perspectives of parents, specifically the mothers of "slow learners" who are included in mainstream schools, as well as the perspectives of mothers of non-disabled students. Teachers and head teachers perspectives are also explored in this study, as successful implementation of

inclusive education depends to a large extent on the views and attitudes of the teaching staff responsible for delivering it (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Thus, considering the perspectives of such key elements (head teachers, teachers, parents) will play a vital role in the development of inclusive education in Kuwait and, it is hoped, will inform similar processes in other countries in the Middle East and beyond.

Additionally, the insights gained from investigating and critically analysing the current policy document of inclusive education, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research tool, carries the potential of reviewing or reformulating the current policies of inclusive education in Kuwait. This also may help Kuwaiti policymakers to conceptualise and envision future change in a way which is suitable to the Kuwaiti cultural context. This is particularly important as there are no previous Kuwaiti studies which have investigated policymakers' understanding of inclusion and disability. Therefore, the current study aims to make a significant contribution to the field of inclusion.

In this research I 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 consider the complexity of such an approach within the Kuwaiti context. Further, using the constructivist approach in understanding teachers' and mothers' perspectives about inclusion and disability enables an exploration of the many different factors that might affect parents' and teachers' understanding of and perspectives about inclusion such as the socio-cultural context. However, it is worth mentioning here that, this research will not consider variables such as gender, age, etc. that have been identified in previous studies as affecting factors on the perspectives of teachers and parents towards inclusive education. The main aim of the current study is to gain a deep understanding of the complexities related to the perspectives of teachers and parents towards inclusion. Specifically, the current study is based on the premise that Kuwaiti teachers' and parents' understanding of and perspectives towards inclusion is set within a cultural context different from many other contexts, especially the western context. Inclusion in the Kuwaiti context is in its early stages and

implementation is very limited, therefore the current study seeks to highlight these issues. In doing so it may contribute to informing policy and implementation, taking into account that there are no previous qualitative Kuwaiti studies in this field.

This study sets an example for further studies in education, in terms of the potential and worth of using the interpretive-constructivist research framework in educational research in Kuwait. Thus, it can be seen as a significant contribution, since it explores teachers' and parents' perspectives through what they say and do, and not through what researchers and policymakers assume about them. Overall, the particular objective is that the perspectives collected in the current investigation, about the barriers of implementation, inclusion and the participants' perceptions about the changes required, is assumed to be a significant element for improving inclusive practices in the context of Kuwait.

The remainder of this chapter sets out the international and local policy context for inclusion in Kuwait, and considers the religious context for understanding disability.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) signed on November 20, 1989, pledged to protect and promote the rights of every child, the right to survive and thrive, to learn and grow, to make their voices heard and to reach their full potential. Accordingly, the Convention stated that all children have the equal right to education that offers equal opportunities and promotes the development of the child to the fullest extent possible (UNICEF, 2012). Additionally, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), introduced by the UN General Assembly in 2006, offers various incentives to promote the human rights of all children with disabilities through detailed provisions pertaining to the right to education, as listed in Article 24. This article specifies the rights of people with disabilities to inclusive education based on equal opportunities without discrimination. In this regard, it is important to develop inclusive education to support the rights of children with disability to be included in mainstream schools based on equal opportunity, as it is considered an essential element to achieve their wellbeing. Thus, one aim of the current study, in the context of Kuwait, is to investigate the situation of inclusion, as a right for students with disability. This

investigation included the individuals who have the first-hand experience with this issue, these are head teachers, teachers, and mothers.

The international context and the Salamanca Statement

> *We, the delegates of the World Conference on Special Needs Education representing ninety-two governments and twenty five international organizations, assembled here in Salamanca, Spain, from 7-10 June 1994, hereby reaffirm our commitment to Education for All, recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for children, youth and adults with special educational needs within the regular education system, and further hereby endorse the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, that governments and organizations may be guided by the spirit of its provisions and recommendations.* (UNESCO, 1994, p.vii)

The concept of inclusive education has been gaining ground since the 1990s (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) requires signatories to provide more effective educational responses for all children, regardless of their characteristics, within the context of general educational provision.

Currently, inclusive education refers to the education of all children, regardless of their disabilities, being educated together. As Thomas (2013, p.473) makes clear, the 'crystallisation' of social and political influences, seen in the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s, increased awareness of inclusion as a matter of diversity and social justice. Thomas (2013) states that educational factors being about mainstreaming and disability have been less significant in the development of inclusive education than social and political influences. In this regard, Norwich (2013, p.2) states that inclusion can be seen as representing, "a contemporary mix of the values of equal opportunity, social respect and solidarity." However, Barton (2003, p.2) suggests that that, "it is this mix of values that can lead to significant ambiguities in its meaning and use". Similarly, Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.2) state that it is important to recognise that, "the field of inclusive education is riddled with uncertainties, disputes and contradictions." Ainscow et al. (2006a, p.22) recognise tensions regarding the definition of inclusive education, indicating the necessity to keep an open mind about the meaning of inclusion. Ainscow and Cesar (2006, p.236) argue that even though educationalists do not agree on a single inclusive philosophy, they are all working towards "more effective educational responses for all children within the context of general educational provision". The tensions add to the complexities

and ambiguities surrounding the implementation of inclusion for the signatories of the Salamanca Statement.

Kuwaiti context

Kuwait was a British territory from 1899 to 1961 and is now an emirate state, speaking Arabic and having its law based on Islam. Kuwait is a small country in the north of the Arabian Gulf with an area of 17,818 square kilometres and a population of just over three million, but among this number there are only around one million with Kuwaiti nationality, according to the Central Statistical Office in Kuwait (Kuwait Government Online, 2011). The Kuwaiti economy previously relied upon trading via the sea, such as pearl harvesting, production of boats and also trading with other nearby states through sea routes (Gaad, 2011). However, the discovery of natural oil reserves caused a great boom in the economy making it one of the highest earning states per capita worldwide (Zanoyan, 1995). Kuwait, which heavily relied on the oil sector, was soon forced by the growing production of other nations to review its economy. As stated by Thabit (1991) the demand for oil in the global economy effectively controlled the expansion and maturity of the Kuwaiti economic system. Alriba'i (1991) explains this significant progress as a movement from the "culture of the pearl" towards the "culture of the oil". Soon Kuwaitis had access to the achievements, experiences and ways of life of other Arab and western societies, having moved from an underdeveloped society to a welfare community, this resulted in changes to the education system and created a policy desire to join the aspirations of the global West through such symbolic actions as signing the Salamanca Statement.

As an Islamic country it is important to highlight Islamic attitudes and positions towards disabled people as part of the state's cultural aspects.

Islamic perspective on disability

Currently, Islam is one of the most widespread religions worldwide, as well as being one of those growing most rapidly. In states that identify themselves as Islamic, statute is largely based upon religion (Morad et al., 2001; Hasnain et al., 2008) and this effectively represents compliance to the teaching of the Qur'an. The primary source used is the Qur'an itself, which is deemed by followers of Islam to be the immediate teachings of Allah. This Holy Book is believed to have been dictated to a

forty year old Mohammed by the Angel Gabriel, within the district of Makkah (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). Furthermore, a secondary source of Sharia Law can be identified as the Sunnah, the behaviour, sayings and proverbs (Hadith), morals, beliefs, instructions and leading example of the Prophet Mohammed.

Islamic sentiments favour "kind treatment" of those who are underprivileged and individuals with disabilities. This is demonstrated though both the Qur'an and the Hadith, which express the idea that disability is a commonplace occurrence within humanity. These sources exemplify the nurturing of such individuals, giving real advice on how an individual might do so (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). Aljazoli (2004) indicates that Muslims have since the birth of Islam, which was over fourteen centuries ago, strived to assist individuals in need. A prominent example to show this concerns the third Muslim leader, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, responding to a complaint from the father of a blind son incapable of reaching the mosque by donating a nearby house to him. In Damascus another commendable act was achieved by Walidi bn Abd al Malik, the Umayyad caliph, who opened the original care facility for those suffering from disabilities of mental impairment. Additionally, the same man facilitated the construction of the first hospital which catered for care for those who are mentally impaired and brought about the assignment of a caregiver to each of these individuals (Aljazoli, 2004). Such examples recognise that Islam is for everyone within society, including the individuals with disability, and it guides Muslims in providing comfort and support to the disabled over a long period.

Within the Qur'an there is no direct reference to the specific concept of "disability", instead referring to these individuals as "disadvantaged people" (Bazna & Hatab, 2005). Furthermore, as stated by Al-Aoufi et al. (2012) there is an onus placed on the community by the verses of the Qur'an, which requires them to enhance the circumstances and provide support for such individuals. As shown in the following Hadith, the Sunnah (32, 6258) also encourages concern for others:

> *The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, feeling, is that of one body; when any limb aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.*

A further statement of the Hadith, sourced from the Sunnah (8,109) explains that, "the person is not one of us who is not merciful to our youth nor respectful of our elders".

Islamic ideals, embodied by the Hadith shown above, include partnership, teamwork, benevolence and respect. All of these are sentiments that are necessary for the care of others within the community and respect the basic dignity of all people, whether disabled or not. Great emphasis is placed on the avoidance of undervaluing fellow human beings. As mentioned in the Qur'an, there is a notion of a responsibility placed upon Muslims to provide all with their inherent needs - nourishment, sanctuary and care (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). One of the requirements for Muslims, detailed in the Qur'an, is to donate a part of their own wages to charity (Zakat) bringing about a greater level of fairness within the Islamic world. Zakat is a permanent indication to Muslims that each and every individual, particularly those who are disabled, is entitled to at least a sufficient living and emphasises the underlying importance of help within the community (Miles, 1995). People with disability are still owed the privilege of learning; the capabilities of these individuals should not be ignored. This right is clearly evident in the Qur'an. A verse from the Qur'an (80, 1-3) reveals that even the prophet Mohammed was scolded by God due to his eagerness to pursue those regarded as nobility, as in this search he rejected teaching a blind person:

> *He [the Prophet] frowned and turned away because there came to him a blind man, But what would make you perceive,[Mohammed], that perhaps he might be purified, or be reminded and the remembrance would benefit him.*

Upon close investigation of this scenario, distinct lessons arise as indicated by Al-Aoufi et al. (2012, p.211):

- Individuals have a right to be treated equally: everyone is equally important, whether disabled or non-disabled.
- Individuals have a right to be educated regardless of disability.
- Individuals have a right not to be underestimated because of their ability.
- Individuals have a right to be included within society and to have an effective, valuable role within it.

The prophet Mohammed, after having been rebuked by Allah, was certain to embrace the blind man at any time when they met (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). Moreover, it is clarified by the Sunnah that people are not to be discriminated against on grounds of their race, appearance or age, each individual differing only on the strength of their belief. This is clear from the Hadith mentioned in Sahih Muslim (32, 6220) indicating that, "Verily Allah does not look at your bodies nor at your faces but He looks into your hearts" This idea is also highlighted in the Qur'an (49, 13), "Indeed the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous".

The policy intention, as evidenced by the signing of the Salamanca Statement, coupled with the particular religious and cultural context, will be further highlighted in Chapter Four (the analysis of policy documents of inclusion). The tenets of Islam underpin Kuwaiti policy towards people with disability in terms of providing them high standards of financial support. This is further explained in the following section.

Provisions and services for disabled people in Kuwait

Article (1) in the *Regulation of law* (2010/8) *"the law of people with disability"* defines disability as (the person who is) suffering from partial or total impairment that leads to a lack of mental, physical, and sensory ability, which may prevent him/her from taking over his/her daily and practical life requirements, as well as preventing him/her from participating equally and effectively with others in society. Kuwait started to recognise the rights of people with disability to an education in 1956. Since then, the Kuwaiti government has passed many laws to protect the rights of people with disability. Through legislation, public service agencies have been able to offer specific provisions and services, such as educational, medical, and financial support. These provisions and support are provided, not only for disabled individuals, but also for their families. For example the Kuwait government (Kuwait Government, 2011) highlights some important provision for disabled people as follows:

- Disabled individuals are able to obtain a marriage loan even when they marry a non-Kuwaiti citizen.
- The social allowance of siblings of the disabled child increases by 100%.

- The Public Authority pays a salary to the person with special needs above 18.
- The General Authority for the Disabled Affairs provides a monthly allowance for the mother and/or wife who cares for a disabled son/daughter or husband.
- The legal caregivers of the disabled with severe or medium disability receive a retirement pension at 100% of the salary if the period of the calculated service equals 20 years for males and 15 years for females.
- Disabled employees or employees caring for a disabled child or spouse work fewer hours per day.
- Disabled employees or employees caring for a disabled child or spouse are given priority in employment.
- A disabled employee is entitled to special leave with full salary that is not deducted from her/his other leave days, including pregnancy. The competent technical committee can grant a disabled employee in public, private, and oil sectors 70-day pregnancy leave with full salary and maternity leave for four months with full salary followed by six months with half salary.
- The competent technical committee can grant an employee who cares for a disabled child or spouse a full salary special leave that is not deducted from his/her other leave days if he/she is accompanying his/her disabled child or spouse to have treatment abroad or inside Kuwait.
- Disabled people are exempt from paying tuition for their education, starting from 4 years old until they finish university.
- Disabled individuals may apply for and obtain a scholarship through the Public Authority for Special Needs if they meet the required conditions.
- The special schools have various medical services available, employing medical experts, such as doctors, nurses, and natural therapists, to take care of children's health and deal with emergencies. At the end of the academic courses, the medical team provides a medical statement for each disabled student with some recommendations for teachers and parents. Moreover, the government sends special cases of disabled people abroad for treatment if a particular treatment is not available in Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti Laws 1965/11 and 1996/49 outline the legislation for individuals with disabilities, which is based on fundamental principles advocated by the United Nations and on humanitarian concepts of Islam as well as its moral/ethical heritage (Bazna, 2003). The Kuwaiti Constitution (Article 40) and the Mandatory Education Law 1965/11 (Article 4) contain these general principles, which include:

- The right to equal access and treatment by others in society, regardless of handicap.
- Special schools under the Compulsory Education Law (1965) are licensed by the Ministry of Education to accommodate children with physical and sensory difficulties or mental retardation.
- Recognition that the disabled are not responsible for their condition and should not be penalized for it. (Al Daihani, 2010, p.136)

Although special education in Kuwait now guarantees the right of disabled people to access education, rehabilitation, training, and employment, the government sector has not moved towards inclusive education for all categories of disability (Gaad, 2011).

Special education context in Kuwait

In 2011, there were 362,000 students in government mainstream schools in Kuwait, with 43,000 in kindergarten, 143,000 at primary level, 107,000 at intermediate level and around 59,000 in high school (Ministry of Education, 2011). New statistics about the numbers of students with special needs are not available, however *in 2002, a*ccording to a survey by the *Higher Council* for the *Disabled, there are more than 23,000 people identified as having special education needs in Kuwait (*Al-seed, 2003).

Within the geographical area of the Middle East, Kuwait is deemed to be one of the most advanced in terms of providing outstanding learning facilities to students with special needs. As early as 1956 Kuwait started to concede rights for disabled people in its educational system, however currently the education system in Kuwait still segregates students with disabilities. Learners with similar disabilities are educated and receive provisions in separate special schools managed by the special education department under the Ministry of Education. The system supports exclusion and

categorisation of disabled students depending on their disabling conditions, for example children with autism are schooled together and children with hearing impairment are schooled together (Gaad, 2011; Department of Special Education Needs, 2007). In these special education schools there is also segregation by age group and gender, as in mainstream schools. The exception to gender separation is in kindergarten where both boys and girls are educated together in the same classroom. In addition, there is gender segregation of teaching staff as well, with male adult teachers in charge of boys and female teachers in charge of girls because of Islamic principles (Al-Shammari, 2005).

Disabled students, who have completed a preliminary set of studies have the opportunity to join vocational schools. Such institutions prioritise assisting the pupil to use their abilities gained in previous education and if they are able to exhibit these abilities they will be awarded a diploma upon leaving the vocational institution, as stated by the Kuwait Ministry of Education (2002).

There are three stages used in judging how to introduce pupils into special education schools. Firstly, there is a medical analysis of the pupil's capabilities, confirming whether they actually suffer from a disability. These examinations, by the Ministry of Health, are used to "assess [student] abilities not just their disabilities" (Al-Shammari, 2005, p.14). Secondly, the next stage of examination is psycho-social with a series of tests being given to potential pupils, with a range of professionals making the decision. This group of professionals includes therapists, medics, teachers and social science experts who gather the findings from the first and second stages of testing. Only where these professionals approve the admission of a disabled student to the special school will the testing continue to the third stage. At this point, the pupil will be placed in the specified school and their interaction with other children, conduct towards adults in classes and concentration on work will be monitored. The information obtained from earlier tests will be added to the results and analysed concurrently with teachers and professional teams. Al-Shammari (2005) states that from this combination of analysis, a choice will be concluded as to whether or not this student is a suitable pupil for special education schools. Figure 1.1 shows how students with disability are classified.

Al-Shammari (2005) indicated that students with special education needs (SEN) are classified into nine main categories as presented below:

- ***Visual impairment***
- ***Hearing impairment***
- ***Physical impairment***
- ***Mental impairment***
- ***Autism***
- ***Down's Syndrome***
- ***Slow learner***
- ***Specific learning difficulties***
- ***Gifted and talent***

Figure 1.1: The classification of disabled students in Kuwait

It is worth mentioning here that students with specific learning difficulties, such as students with dyslexia, are located in separate mainstream schools, whereas gifted and talented students are located in specific classes in each mainstream school. Regarding slow learners, these students are included in special classes in mainstream schools. The current definition used in Kuwait considers that "slow learner" students are those who are considered to have a lack of mental capacity possessing and having an IQ range of 70-84, that results in difficulties in academic achievement (Kuwait Ministry of Education, 1996). Details about these special classes will be highlighted in the following sections.

There are more than 15 government special education schools in Kuwait. All these special schools are located in one location (Hawally city) and serve students with disability from all parts of the country. The categories in Figure 1.1 have their own special schools in order to serve students with specific needs. Moreover, each school has been designed to be suitable for each category of student and some of these schools are given a positive name in relation to the type of disability with the aim to avoid labelling. For example, schools for students with visual impairment are called in Arabic (Al-Noor schools) which means in English 'the light', schools for students with hearing impairments are called (Al-Amal schools) which means 'the hope', schools for students with physical impairment are called (Al-Raja schools) which means 'hopefulness schools', and for students with Down's Syndrome the schools

are called (Al-Wafaa schools) which means 'fulfilment schools'. Table 1.1 shows the classification of special education schools in Kuwait.

School name	Type of disability	Age of students
Al-Noor schools	Visual imparment	From 6 to 16 years
Al-Amal schools	Hearing impairment	From 6 to 16 years
Al-Raja schools	Physical impairment	From 6 to 18 years
Al-Tarbia alfekria (*Intellectual education schools*)	Intellectual impairment -severe slow learners	From 6 to 14 years
Al-Taaheel al mihani (Vocational rehabilitation schools)	Intellectual impairment -severe slow learners	From 14 to 17 years
Educational workshop schools	Intellectual impairment - severe slow learners - hearing impairment	From 17-20 years
Al-Wafaa school	Down's Syndrome	From 6 to 18 years
Autistic behavior schools	Autism	From 6 to 18 years

Table 1.1: Classification of the special education schools in Kuwait (Alamal group, 2016)

It is worth mentioning here that each of these schools have two separate locations, one for boy students and one for girl students, as as prescribed by Kuwaiti law on gender segregation.

Inclusive education in Kuwait

Recently, the Ministry of Education in Kuwait has adopted the concept of "aldamj", which means inclusion. However, the government considers only two categories of students with disabilities, Down's Syndrome and "slow learners", as capable of being included in mainstream school, and excludes other students with disabilities in special schools. It is worth mentioning that for most Arabic and Middle Eastern countries:

> *The term inclusion is preferred, but used not to reflect "all children regardless of their strength and weakness attending the neighborhood schools with same age peers"; instead it refers to any form of social inclusion, or having the child in special units in mainstream schools.* (Gaad, 2011, p.12)

In addition, the Ministry of Education has not as yet provided an official definition of inclusion. Even if they do not have an official definition, there is a particular understanding of inclusion. What the government has adopted, in this regard, reflects the integration ethos where achieving the placement of some students with disability in mainstream settings, rather than the concept of inclusion laid out in the UNESCO Salamanca Statement.

Inclusion for "slow learners" in Kuwait

In 1996, the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*, in relation to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) was formed in an attempt to practice inclusion in Kuwait. At that stage mainstream schools incorporated special classes to accommodate "slow learners". This project started in three schools and expanded to include 24 schools by 2008 (Al Daihani, 2010). Eligible students, with an IQ of 70-84 or above 85, if they experience severe academic difficulties, are transferred from mainstream classes to these special classes according to the following procedures:

- The children's parents should sign agreement forms before transfer to a special class.
- After entering the special class, teachers may recommend that the students should be able to return to general classes if social and psychological reports provide evidence of their ability.
- Student should not have severe behavioural or mental disabilities.
- The criteria for enrolling are based on IQ tests and academic achievement.

(Al Daihani, 2010, p.144)

The closest translation from the Arabic of what would in the UK be called "moderate learning difficulties" is "slow learner". The term "slow learner" is not now used by practitioners in UK education but is still to be found in literature in the USA (Mangal, 2007). For example, Carroll (1998) defines "slow learners" as

students whose brains are unable to function to such a high level and therefore are unable to keep up with normal school classes. Furthermore, other US academics and researchers have identified "slow learners" as being attributed with some of the following traits:

- Reduced capability for thought, observation and generalisation.
- Decreased reasoning capacity, understanding and comprehension.
- Lack motivation and interest in study.
- Lack of concentration and short attention.
- Uncomfortable with speaking and self expression ability.
- Low self-esteem.
- Lessened awareness of surrounding events.
- Disorganised and lacking characteristics of a leader. (Mangal, 2007)

In this thesis I use the term "slow learner" throughout as reflecting current policy and practice in Kuwait.

Thesis overview

Chapter Two considers the literature which has informed my thinking around inclusive education. In particular, I consider the literature on understanding disability from the perspectives of different models, as this is one of the fundamental issues that the current study seeks to explore in the socio-cultural context of Kuwait. Also, the concept of inclusion is highlighted and the debate about the concept of inclusion, from different perspectives is discussed, in order to show the complexity of such phenomena. In addition, the development of inclusive education from different aspects such as policy, and the international movement towards inclusion for all students to be educated together in mainstream schools is highlighted in this chapter. Teachers' and parents' perspectives in different contexts and their views, concerns and attitudes towards inclusion are also identified.

In *Chapter Three* I outline the theoretical and methodological framework which underpins this research. Qualitative research methods provide detailed and deep data considering the role of social context and the complexities of the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The qualitative methods to investigate head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives and understanding of

disability and inclusion are presented in this chapter. Such perspectives and understandings are considered more appropriate than purely quantitative measurements and as a result help to provide a clear picture about the phenomena under study, and fill the gap within the current literature of inclusion. This is specifically important for Kuwait, where inclusive education is in the early stages of implementation and where research on inclusive education is lacking.

Chapter Four highlights the current policy of inclusive education in Kuwait. In this chapter, critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusion is adopted as, "a valuable tool for researching policy and change" (Taylor, 2004, p.446). This could have fundamental implications, in the future, for the direction of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusion and the development of practice in the field, by reconsidering the content and the articulation of the policy. This chapter compares the current policy of inclusion in Kuwait with other international policies that promote inclusive education such as the Salamanca Statement framework (UNESCO, 1994) and *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2012). This process helped to identify the limitations in the current policy and the way that disability is understood through the articulation of the policy text. This chapter then shows how such analysis has contributed to forming a clear idea about the barriers of inclusion as well as the affect of the policy on the current practice of inclusive education in Kuwait.

Chapter Five and *Chapter Six* form the body of this work, as the data collected by interviews with head teachers, teachers and mothers is analysed, presented and discussed. In these chapters the analysed data identifies the ways that disability and inclusion are understood among the participants, in addition to presenting their voice regarding inclusion. The affects of such understanding and the socio-cultural context in forming the way of practicing inclusion in Kuwait are also considered.

Finally, in *Chapter Seven* I consider the implications and contribution of my findings towards the development of the practice of inclusive education in Kuwait. I also offer some recommendations in relation to developing the current policy and practice of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait. I hope however that my

findings offer hope and succour to those head teachers, teachers and mothers who want things to be different and who are looking to re-form their own practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in order to investigate the development of inclusive education in Kuwait it is necessary to take into account both the international context and the local cultural context. This chapter has provided a background to the context of Kuwait and its way of implementing inclusion for "slow learners". It also provides a brief overview of the provision and services that the Kuwaiti government offers for individuals with disability. Also, it highlights the principles of Islam towards individuals with disability as an important aspect of the culture of the region.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review provides a context for the research study. In this thesis I argue that inclusive education is based on a conceptualisation of disability, which differs from that which defines special provision. Thus, in this chapter, it is important to highlight models of disability as fundamental factors informing perspectives and practices of inclusion. Following this I examine inclusion as a process, considering concepts of inclusion, the influence of international policy on local policy, structures and systems, and key issues within practices of inclusion.

Models of disability

Arguably, the way disability is understood affects the provision provided to students with special needs. A dilemma in terms of understanding disability involves the conflict between several views of the causes of the disability. Three models, or ways of thinking about disability, the "medical model", the "social model" and the "capability model" reflect these views. It is essential to understand all these models because such models assist in analysing the current policy of inclusion in Kuwait, as well as underpinning perspectives of teachers and mothers towards inclusion.

The medical model

Norwich (2013, p.22) indicates that:

> *In the medical model, disabled people are seen as problems. They need to change and adapt to circumstances (if they can), and there is no suggestion that society needs to change.*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the medical model provided the main approach to understanding disability (Shakespeare et al., 1999). This model emphasises that the medical condition is the main cause and strong effect of the disability. Within this perspective, disability is construed as the direct consequence

of physical, sensory and/or mental impairment due to damage or disease (Oliver, 1996). Cole (2008, p.176) indicates that:

> *A medical model framework emerges from models used in medicine in which practitioners think in terms of 'conditions', 'treatment', 'cure' and 'rehabilitation', locating the 'problem' within the individual. A medical model assumes that the disabled adult or child is deficient but, it is hoped, alterable; whereas society is fixed, with limited capacity for, or willingness to, change.*

It is worth mentioning here that, by locating the "problem" within the individual, the medical model has been seen to reinforce the practice of segregated education and special education provisions for students with special needs (Skrtic, 1995), as the main emphasis will be placed on within-child factors over educational factors.

Some researchers argue that the medical model has advantages when thinking about disabled people, particularly in responding supportively to difference, meeting the individual's needs and practicing prevention (Kauffman, 2007). Waddell and Aylward (2010, p.9) assert that, "the medical model provides the framework for how most people, including health professionals and policy makers, think about disability". This model also judges success by its effective assistance, including assistance for as long as needed. In this model, the focus is on the treatment rather than adaptation of the environment, and such medical treatment may involve life-long assistance to maintain improved functionings (Kauffman, 2007).

Some disabled people however, consider the medical model of disability oppressive, as it perceives disability as something that should be cured and treats disabled people as victims and patients while using words such as "handicapped" and "wheelchair bound" (Tassoni, 2003). The Disability Rights Movement (DRM) argues that the medical model considers medical conditions as the underlying causes of disability, which is responsible for increasing the repression of disabled people (Smith, cited in Kristiansen et al., 2009). Dewsbury et al. (2004, p.147) suggest that the medical model of disability has been criticised for the way in which it views people with disability as somehow "lacking, unable to play a full role in society". Furthermore, this model has been criticised for the way in which it fails to consider the role of society in which disabled people live as it mainly holds individuals and their medical conditions as being essential factors in their disability (Hodkinson &

Vickerman, 2009). However, Shakespeare and Watson (2001), Bury (2000) and Williams (1999) all agree that critics of the medical model disregard the effects of impairments associated with disability on daily activity restrictions. Therefore, these authors argue, it is essential to consider the effect of the impairment on the daily social lives of disabled people. For example, some sort of support which is provided for children with special needs in inclusive education, such as speech therapy for children with autism, is focused on the deficit of the child - his/her impairment, however it plays an important role in helping him/her in their communication with society. Additionally, it is important to realise the child's needs through their impairment in order to provide him/her with the resources and equipment that would be appropriate for their disability. Proponents of this view argue that disability is both biologically and socially caused and this "gives rise to a conceptualisation of disability that focuses on the interaction between the individual and their social location" (Thomas, 2004, p.575).

The social model

The social model of disability reflects newer perspectives towards people with special needs, and it has been developed mainly by disabled people (Tassoni, 2003). This model of understanding disability makes the case that disability is a public issue rather than a personal problem (Barnes et al., 1999). Finkelstein is closely associated with the development of the social model of disability and indicates that, "It is society that disables us and disabled people are an oppressed social group" (Finkelstein, 2001b cited in Thomas, 2004, p.571). This position is also taken by the sociologist Mike Oliver, who is closely associated with the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS) (Thomas, 2004). Norwich (2013, p.25) indicates that:

> *The UPIAS position made a fundamental distinction between impairment and the social situation of people with impairments, called 'disability'. Where impairment was about a defective part or mechanism of the body, disability was the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by social organisation.*

Norwich goes on, "from this position, disability was imposed on top of impairment and so distinct and not interacting or affected by impairments". This suggests that society, rather than impairments themselves, disables people with special needs by

viewing them as imperfect and excluding them from several activities in society and by disabling them through the erection of barriers. As Thomas (2004, p.571) argues:

> *it is this problematic societal response that constitutes disability, meaning that disabled people's political struggle should be directed toward changing society and winning control over their own lives.*

Oliver and Finkelstein, as 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 barriers and responses 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 of the ability of such people within society. As Oliver (1996, p.43) indicates, "it was society and not people with impairment that should be the target for professional intervention and practice".

In contrast, Shakespeare and Watson (2001) disagree with the idea of isolating the impairment from the disability and that it is society, rather than the impairment itself, that disables people with special needs. They argue that impairment is the direct cause of disability and it is not possible to disregard it. "People are disabled both by social barriers and by their bodies" (Shakespeare & Watson, 2001, p.17). Terzi (2004, p.141) criticises the social model by identifying three limitations: (1) overemphasis on the social aspects of impairment and disability; (2) overlooking of effects of impairment; (3) rejection of the concept of normality in the sense of average human functioning. Moreover, Terzi (2004) argues that disabled people might find this concept difficult to accept. Crow (1992, cited in Allan, 2010) states that for disabled people, it is difficult to accept any idea that separates impairment from disability because it affects their lives strongly. One of the main criticisms of the social model, which emerged from disability studies, is that it ignores the realities of impairment (Shakespeare, 2006). Although Shakespeare credits the social model as having effective impact on the way of defining disability and pushing policy change, he argue that, "it needed to be developed because of its questionable, dangerous and unacceptable implications" (Shakespeare, 2006 cited in Norwich, 2013, p.26).

The capability model

A different approach to disability has been developed by Sen (e.g., Sen,1992). Sen proposes capability as a model to understand disability (Reindal, 2010). Toson et al. (2013, p.491) indicate that:

> *The capability approach is a philosophical theory that is concerned with the dignity of all people. It focuses on what people can actually do and how they seek to live their own life.*

This model focuses on a person's capability to function that is on what the individual can do. However, Sen's approach does not consider capability in terms of a physical or mental ability; instead, capability is perceived as a practical opportunity (Mitra, 2006). From the perspective of the capability model "human diversity is no secondary complication (to be ignored, or to be introduced 'later on'); it is a fundamental aspect of our interest in equality" (Sen, 1992, p. xi). Sen emphasises the kind or quality of life that people are able to live, reflecting their capability to achieve, accomplish, and succeed in being or doing. Overall, Sen believes in the importance of individuals' interests rather than their actions and behaviours (Mitra, 2006). Sen considers that equality needs to be perceived in terms of the ability of each individual to pursue and achieve well-being. Accordingly, individuals' well-being and their freedom to achieve optimal well-being could be used as measures of equality (Terzi, 2010).

It is worth mentioning that Sen (1992, p.39) differentiates between functionings, defined as:

> *beings and doings constitutive of a person's beings, such as being adequately nourished, being in a good health, being happy and having self-respect or taking part in the life of community.*

And capabilities, defined as "the substantive freedoms a person has, or the 'real alternatives' available to the person herself to achieve well-being" (Sen, 1992, p.40). Thus capabilities represent a person's freedom to achieve valuable functionings. Since functionings are constitutive of a person's being according to Sen, "an evaluation of a person's well-being has to take the form of an assessment of these constitutive elements" (Sen, 1992, p.39).

In contrast to the capability model, the medical and the social models of

understanding disability focus on the *causes* of disability and ignore other influences of such disability on well-being and the individual's quality of life. For instance, Crow (1996) indicates that some disability activists have been criticised for maintaining the social model of disability, which does not recognise the effects of impairment. Conversely, the medical model ignores the interaction between impairment and the environment. In this respect, the capability perspective can provide a more pragmatic framework compared to other models of understanding disability, as it "shifts the focus onto the 'impact' of disability, rather than its causes" (Terzi, 2010, p.99). For instance, Mitra (2006, p.246) states that the capability approach, "brings out the possibility that the economic resources of the person with impairment and his or her economic environment can be disabling". Based on this perspective, Terzi (2014, p.486) argues that one of the significant insights following from Sen's approach is that:

> *The centrality and comprehensive view of human diversity is particularly important for reconceptualising disability and difficulties in terms of capability limitations, as well as inherently relational, and as one among the many aspects of human diversity.*

Further, Terzi (2005) indicates that 'The capability approach goes beyond the dilemma of difference, leading to an understanding of difference as a *specific variable.*' (Terzi, 2005 cited in Reindal, 2010, p.3). The element of human difference is disregarded by other perspectives of justice, whereas the capability approach places it at the core of the 'comparative evaluation of people's well-being' (Terzi, 2014, p.486). Human difference is not only seen from a normality standard as in the medical model, or as just something to celebrate as in a social model of understanding disability, it is however human difference within a capabilities perspective which is considered as 'a specific variable within an objective reality, which can be evaluated in relation to an individual's functions and capabilities' (Terzi, 2005 cited in Reindal, 2010, p.3). In this regard, Sen (2009) claims that human differences within a capability approach are considered as 'encompassing physical, social, cultural and environmental differences, as well as a personal difference in terms of how each individual makes different use of resources' (Sen, 2009 cited in Terzi, 2014, p. 485). Based on this perspective, 'what is important in evaluating the relative position of individuals, their advantages or disadvantages, is

not the amount of goods at their disposal, but what individuals can do with the resources they have' (Terzi, 2014, p.485). Terzi (2008) indicates that Sen's capability approach allows the individual with disability, if their capability is limited, appropriate resources which should be provided in order to gain an equal chance to achieve functionings within an aim to achieve well-being, which is at the heart of the main assumptions of this approach, as a matter of justice. Therefore, the need to acknowledge and identify differences within the capability approach of understanding disability is within an aim to show that there are inequalities and this identification of such differences interrupts the matter of justice. Reindal (2009, p.163) states that:

> *The revision process of the WHO in 1980 abandoned the term 'handicap' and used 'disability' to cover all three perspectives: bodily, individualist, and social. Disability is thus conceived as the interaction of health characteristics and contextual factors.*

Such a revision process of understanding disability is closely related to the capability approach which analyses disability at the capability level and functioning level (Mitra, 2006). It provides an understanding of disability that fits with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) of the WHO which conceptualises disability as an interaction between the individual and social factors; ICF emphasising that the causes of disability can be both individual and social and that such disability can exist not only because of environmental barriers but also of individual restrictions (Reindal, 2009). According to the WHO (2007, p.255-256):

> *ICF can assist in identifying where the principal 'problem' of disability lies, whether it is in the environment by way of a barrier or the absence of a facilitator, the limited capacity of the individual himself, or herself, or some combination of factors.*

In this regard, the ICF framework is the closest to a definition of disability under the capability approach which considers different aspects, that could be a reason in the creation of a disability, including standard of living, quality of live, restriction of functioning and individual's well-being (Mitra, 2006).

Accordingly, this perspective promotes a conception of disability as an aspect of human diversity and individuals' interactions with their physical, economic, social, and cultural environment without directly referring to diversity as an abnormality,

with an aim to overcome the oppression that is built into the concepts of normality, abnormality, and diversity (Terzi, 2010).

Reindal (2010, p.8) reminds us that inclusion implies participation in something that is valuable, arguing that inclusive education has to address diversity and increase the participation of students with disability in inclusive schools stating that:

> *Inclusion is not just a structural issue about how we organise or change the different aspects of the school - with reference to personnel, pedagogical methods, material and cultural structures - to fit the diversity of the pupils; it is also an ethical concept because it is for the purpose of something - that is, inclusion is for participating in something that is valuable.*

Accordingly, the capability approach links justice and equality with opportunities to achieve well-being, suggesting that capability perspectives contribute to the understanding of disability both ethically and theoretically (Terzi, 2010). The capability approach does not try to determine the biological or social causes of disability, instead it focuses on a full set of capabilities that a person has and the role of impairment on them (Terzi, 2010). This can in turn promote inclusive education practices by increasing the opportunity of students with disability to participate in mainstream schools, as the role of education within the perspectives of this model is the expansion of the capabilities and promoting well-being (Terzi, 2010). Sen's belief is that capability reflects opportunities for functioning to achieve as well as to ensure people's rights to exercise choice within an aim to lead a meaningful life (Wolff, 2007). Clearly, the capability model offers a new and valuable perspective on disability and inclusive education, by considering the capability of individuals with special needs to achieve. Sen's capability approach aims to modify our current understanding, based on which impairment and disability are viewed as unilaterally biologically or socially determined, specifically because disability can be determined by personal and external factors (Terzi, 2010). However, this approach has been criticised for its inability to determine a fixed and complete list of capabilities that would be applicable in all cases and contexts (Terzi, 2010). Sen (2004, p.78) argues against such criticisms, claiming that such a list would deny the importance of "what the citizens come to understand and value through democratic discussion, and would be divorced from the particular reality of any society". Further, Sen (2004, p.78) also states that one cannot avoid ordering such

capabilities, but these cannot be determined a priori, rather they must be derived from the circumstances of each context, for example:

> *We may have to give priority to the ability to be well nourished when people are dying of hunger in their homes, whereas the freedom to be sheltered may rightly receive more weight when people are in general well fed, but lack shelter.*

Influences of the models of disability on educational practice

Corbett and Norwich (2005) suggest that applying the medical model to education is ineffective because it permits professionals to focus solely on what a child cannot do rather than on what he or she can learn. Oliver (1996) argues that by treating the "symptoms" of disability, rather than the needs, concerns and difficulties of the disabled child and their family, medical professionals perpetuate a form of social oppression by "medicalising" the disabled individual and their family.

The medical model of understanding disability can have a negative impact, in the educational context, because it can "refer to explanations of educational difficulties at the individual child level rather than at various social levels" (Norwich, 2013, p.21). From this perspective, success or failure at school is seen as being uninfluenced by complex social, cultural and intellectual interactions, but is rather determined by disability (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004). From the point of view of the medical model Booth and Ainscow (2011) argue that disabilities are seen as barriers to participation for individuals with impairments. The participation of disabled people, in various activities, is thereby restricted as a result of society focusing on their impairment, rather than on making their physical and social environment more accessible. As Barners et al. (2002, p.177) indicate, "The well-established standard of 'universal design' or an accessible environment for disabled people were never added to the 'medical model' ". Thus, this model could affect the level of participation by students with disability in mainstream schools if those around them see them as unable to participate due to their disability.

Barton (1997b), indicates that inclusive education has built its basis in the assumptions of the social model of understanding disability. In this regard, he argues, the social model of understanding disability can impact positively on inclusive educational practices and can help overcome the structural, environmental, or attitudinal, rather than individual barriers to inclusive education, which could

facilitate the process of participation and education of all students with disability. This is so as one of the key purposes of the social model is to redress oppression and injustice practices towards disabled individuals (Oliver, 1996; Norwich, 2013). Corbett (1999, p.57) highlights the issue of equal opportunities in inclusive schools, indicating that, "the framework of equality is about a genuine commitment to inclusion". This commitment, Corbett claims, might involve motivating an institution to respond to different ideas, accept change, as well as increase its sensitivity to language, imagery, and the presentation of ideas. In the forefront is the creation of an institutional culture that would acknowledge and respond to diverse needs accepting all people as they are. This understanding of inclusion is in sharp contrast with special provision that the child with special needs receives in special schooling (Florian, 2010). In this sense, Norwich (2013, p.93) argues that the promotion of the social model of disability plays an effective role in critique of special education practices as well as on:

> *refocused interest on how ordinary schools could be restructured or reformed to accommodate the diversity of learners. From this interest it is clear how the idea of an inclusive school would emerge.*

According to this perspective, it could be argue that promoting the views of the social model of understanding disability within the school culture that supports the view of accepting people as they are and making the environment of the school more accessible for all could develop inclusive practices and positively affect teachers attitudes towards students with special needs via responding to all learners' diversity within the school. Thus, teachers who hold the social model of understanding disability might increase the opportunities of the participation of the students with disability in their class room as well as responding better to each students needs and diversity rather than focusing on his or her individual deficits, and that in turn affects positively on their learning and wellbeing at inclusive schools.

In the educational context, the capability approach which conceptualises the understanding of impairment and disability beyond the divide between individual and social factors, that are reflected in both the medical and social models of understanding disability, promotes relational and multidimensional views towards understanding disability by considering the interaction between different factors. Terzi (2010, p.106) indicates that:

> *In capability terms, disability is seen as a specific aspect of human diversity emerging from the inter-locking of individual with social, environmental and circumstantial factors. It is therefore seen as a disadvantage interrelated both to impairment and to the design of social arrangements.*

The capability approach involves reframing the concept of impairment and disability in terms of functionings and capabilities. From this perspective, impairment is a personal feature that is likely to affect certain functionings leading to a disability. Thus, in essence, disability is a restriction of functionings that result from the interaction between personal and social circumstances (Terzi, 2010). Predetermined normality assumptions have no effect of the capability approach; thus, the existing concerns associated with understanding of disability and special educational needs seem to receive responses that are more positive within the perspective of capability approach (Terzi, 2010). Therefore, it could be argued that this model helps teachers in inclusive classes respond better and differently to the needs of children with disability by looking at the complexity of both individual and circumstantial dimensions. As Terzi (2010, p.111) indicates:

> *The Capability framework looks precisely at the relational aspect of how the individual child interacts with her schooling environment and how she converts resources into functionings while at the same time, considering the design of the environment.*

Reflections on the models of understanding disability

In terms of providing a theoretical conceptualisation to underpin inclusive educational practices it can be argued that no single model is adequate on its own. Analysis of the three models reveals certain limitations inherent in each. It seems that the medical model ignores, or at least marginalises, the difficulties that the environmental factors impose on disabled people. On the other hand, the social model disregards the impairment as a cause of disability, while the capability approach "goes beyond the dilemma of difference, leading to an understanding of difference as a specific variable" (Reindal, 2010, p.3). In this sense, according to Terzi (2004, cited in Reindal, 2010, p.3) the:

> *difference within a capability perspective is neither deviance from a normal standard, as in the medical model, nor is difference just something to celebrate as in postmodern views of the social model, but is a specific variable with an objective reality, which can be evaluated in relation to an individual's functions and capabilities*

Hence, in this regard, Reindal (2010, p.156) asserts that:

> *A proper understanding of disability theories requires the appreciation of both the distinction between individual and social approaches and the distinction between materialist and idealist explanations.*

Pfeiffer (2001) points out that many disability researchers agree that no single model can clarify disability entirely. Accordingly, the social model might help to understand the needs of the disabled child by looking at the environmental, structural, and attitudinal barriers that exclude children. On the other hand, the medical model focuses on the impairment and problems of children with special needs, while the capability model considers the dignity of all people and what children can do and achieve rather than what they cannot do (Toson et al., 2013). Reindal (2010, p.10) states that:

> *The capability approach allows a view of inclusion as an ethical concept in which the purpose is to adapt for the 'equality of what' for each pupil.*

Therefore, I argue that instead of adopting the view of a single model, attention must be given to the environmental and individual variables in addition to the capabilities, wellbeing and freedom to choose the way of life which is promoted by the capability perspectives. Considering different conceptualisations of this phenomenon might increase our understanding of disability in practice. As Mitra (2006, p.236) indicates, "each disability model may bring a useful perspective on disability in a given context".

Inclusion and integration

Models of disability have important implications for the development of policy related to meeting special educational needs. Arguably, adherence to the medical model which emphasises diagnosis, categorisation, and individual treatments, based on deficits, gives rise to the logic of segregated education (Barton, 1987), while the concept of inclusion is based on a social model of disability that considers barriers as arising from the student's educational environment. Between full segregation and full inclusion lies integration in which students with disability may be permitted to attend mainstream school if their disability is such that they may adjust to normal schooling. Integration is therefore less likely to be concerned with making additional arrangements for students with disability in schools, which therefore do not need to change overall (Ainscow, 1995). Instead, integration reflects a process of

assimilation; focusing on assimilating and changing individuals with special needs to make them fit in. On the contrary, inclusion involves more radical restructuring of school systems with an aim to embrace all children. Thus, inclusion involves the school in the process of accommodation by requiring the school to change as well as adapt new curricula, methods, resources, and procedures with an aim to becoming more responsive to the needs of students with special needs. However, confusion arises because the terms integration and inclusion are as Thomas et al. (1998) assert, often used interchangeably regardless of the conceptual distinction between them. Moreover, Pijl and Dyson (1998) argue that except in the USA and UK, where inclusion is the preferred term, integration appears to be preferred internationally. Despite the differences between integration and inclusion in Anglophone literature, integration and inclusion are translated by one Arabic word "Damg" which indicates educating all children together. In this thesis, I translate Damg as inclusion, but it is arguable that the lack of a conceptual distinction between inclusion and integration has implications for the development of educational practices to meet the needs of students with special needs in Kuwait.

Development of inclusive education

Ainscow and Miles (2009) developed a framework based on what international research suggests are features of education systems that are successful in moving in an inclusive direction. This framework was prepared for the UNESCO International Conference on Education, *Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*, held in Geneva in November 2008. Ainscow and Miles (2009) claim that it is important first to use evidence to address barriers to education that some learners experience. They stated that this 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. Ainscow and Miles (2009) suggest that the framework should be seen in terms of ideals (i.e., aspirations against which existing arrangements can be compared) to pinpoint areas for development. Such a framework involves four overlapping themes, identified in Figure 2.1.

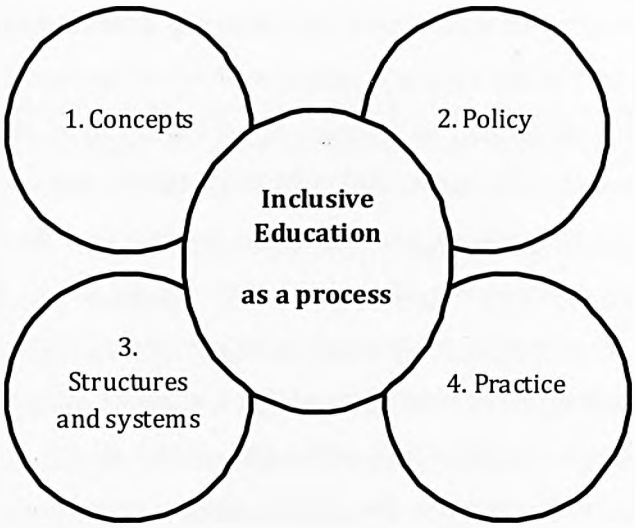

Figure 2.1: Ainscow and Miles' Framework (2009, p.5)

The structure of the following sections are based on the themes of Ainscow and Miles' Framework, as these themes are considered as fundamental elements for the development of inclusive education.

Concept of inclusion

Over the past few decades, in many parts of the world, the concept of educating disabled children has progressed from segregation to the ideology of inclusion via the process of integration (UNESCO, 2005; Dockrell & Lindsay, 2000). For example, The 1944 Education Act in the UK introduced 10 "categories of handicap" each with separate educational provision, which prevailed until the influential Warnock Report (DES, 1978) that recommended integration of pupils into mainstream schools (Armstrong, 2007). Such integration was described as being either "locational" or "functional", with only functional integration meaning "joint participation in educational activities" (DES, 1978, 7.9). How then, Norwich (2013) asks, did the term inclusion replace the term integration? Norwich (2013) answers this question by clarifying two main reasons. First, both terms are closely related to each other, the term integration refers to various aspects including locational integration, curricular integration and social integration, as elucidated in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978). However, there had been a focus on the locational integration aspect, while the social and the functional aspects of integration, which are highly related to the term inclusion, had tended to be overlooked (Norwich,

2013). Such a limited understanding of the concept of integration, to emphasise merely locational integration, may result in the misleading conclusion that integration means to place children under one roof without making any changes in the organisation (Norwich, 2013). However, the term inclusion involves organisational change. This understanding may also lead the supporters of the social model, who believe in social change, to adopt the term inclusion instead of integration, as integration is seen to be close to the medical model, which focuses on changing the individual (Norwich, 2013). In this regard, Norwich (2014, p.497) indicates that inclusive education denies the challenges and difficulties associated with disability, stating:

> *The move away from learner characteristics in definitions of inclusive education is partly about avoiding the definition of differences in terms of challenge or 'difficulties', what is often presented as the rejection of the 'deficit' model.*

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).

> *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)

Despite the clarity of this statement the meaning of the term inclusion is still confused. When the Salamanca World Conference called for inclusive education, the participating countries signed an agreement despite different understandings of the concept of inclusion (Miles & Singal, 2008). As Peters (2007, p.117) notes:

> *Inclusive education may also be implemented at different levels, embrace different goals, be based on different motives, reflect different classifications of special education needs, and provide service in different contexts.*

Subsequently, different ways of implementing inclusion of children with special needs, in practice, have been developed, such as, "radical integration (Italy),

gradualist approaches (Denmark, Sweden) or continuing segregation education with only limited access to the mainstream" (Bayliss, 1996, p.14). In addition, some countries understood the Salamanca Statement as a call to close all special schools and prevent any kind of segregated education; other countries viewed it as a call to increase the number of disabled pupils who access mainstream education (D'Alessio & Watkins, 2009). Many essential factors, for example cultural standards, traditions, or trends of the public regarding disabled people, might affect the implementation of inclusive education for disabled children. Mitchell (2005) states that such diverse perspectives towards inclusive education, among countries, occur because of cultural principles and thinking, economic standards, and history. It is clear that the different understandings of inclusion will affect the implementation and application of inclusion of children with disabilities.

Within the field of education, the principle of inclusion is complex, therefore a commonly agreed upon definition does not exist (Pearson, 2005). Various definitions addressing similar key issues have been proposed. For example, many researchers (Ainscow, 2007; Farrell, 2004; Thomas, 1997) regard inclusion as considering a disabled child as a valued member of the school community. Farrell (2004, p.7) states that inclusion is:

> *The extent to which a school or community welcomes pupils as full members of the group and values them for the contribution they make. This implies that for inclusion to be seen to be "effective" all pupils must actively belong to, be welcomed by and participate in a mainstream school and community, that is, they should be fully included.*

Other researchers (e.g., Frederickson & Cline, 2009; Smith & Green, 2004) focus on developing an inclusive curriculum through organisational arrangement, support, and school improvement. For instance, Frederickson and Cline (2009, p.66) point out that:

> *Inclusive education describes the process by which a school attempts to respond to all pupils as individuals by reconsidering and restructuring its curricular organization and provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity.*

In addition, Sebba (1996 cited in Florian et al., 1998) indicates that inclusion reflects the process through which a school reconsiders and advocates for its curricula and

provision, in order to respond to all pupils as individuals. Another perspective suggests that inclusion is the process of not only educating children with special needs but also removing the barriers to achievement, increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from mainstream settings (e.g., Ainscow, 2005; Barton, 1997a; Booth, 1996). For example, according to Ainscow (2005), a broader term for inclusion refers to a process that involves identification and removal of barriers and supports the presence, participation, and achievement of all students, particularly those at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement. Although definitions of inclusion vary, some researchers have provided rather illustrative ones, for example Ballard's (1997, pp.244-245) definition is more comprehensive, as it addresses most key issues included in the above mentioned definitions:

> *Inclusive education means education that is non-discriminatory in terms of disability, culture, gender, or other aspects of students or staff that are assigned significance by a society. It involves all students in a community, with no exceptions and irrespective of their intellectual, physical, sensory, or other differences, having equal rights to access the culturally valued curriculum of their society as full time valued members of age appropriate mainstream classrooms. Inclusion emphasises diversity over assimilation, striving to avoid the colonization of minority experiences by dominant modes of thought and action.*

It is clear that inclusion remains a disputed concept that is open to interpretation, which inevitably impacts on the practice of inclusion and the quality of support that teachers and parents offer because there is no specific reference that teachers can follow regarding the meaning of inclusion. Allan (2012, p.1) points out that, "there is much uncertainty among researchers and teachers about what it means to include". In this regard, Ainscow et al. (2006, p.23) argue that:

> *Without a clear view of what we mean by inclusion we had no way of knowing how to support it, or of forming a judgement about when the actions of ourselves or others increased or decreased it.*

The confusion regarding the concept of inclusion leads to differing views about whether children with special needs should be fully included, partially included, or remain excluded. Indeed, Smith (2006 cited in Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009) observes that the international debate on inclusion has focused on whether disabled children should receive their education in special or mainstream schools, rather than addressing the quality of education and support that they receive. Thus, Knight

(1999) asserts that simply placing students with disabilities in classrooms with other students, does not guarantee inclusion. Similarly, Mitchell (2005) argues that not all disabled students are able to access educational provision in terms of their level of disability and therefore fully inclusive education cannot be effective or even possible. Evans and Lunt's study (2002 cited in Smith & Thomas, 2006, p.72) concludes that:

> *The inclusion of all pupils with SEN and disabilities was idealistic and unrealistic and, more specifically, was particularly difficult for some pupils who have severe difficulties that are not easily accommodated in mainstream schools.*

Accordingly, many researchers indicate that if inclusion is not suitable for all categories of children with special needs, then what is important to consider are their rights to a good learning environment. For example, Warnock (2005, p.14) disagrees with the idea that inclusive education means "having all the children under the same roof" in favour of "including all children in the common educational enterprise of learning wherever they learn best". Warnock believes that the feeling of *belonging* is a fundamental aspect of her concept of inclusion. The question of rights is therefore of fundamental importance. However, Norwich (2002, p.70) claims that, "rights are defended without recognition of the need to balance some rights against others". These rights include the right to participate in ordinary school, the right to acceptance and respect, the right to individually tailored learning, the right to participate in common learning opportunities, the right to active contribution and choice in the matter (Lunt & Norwich, 1999). Clearly, many researchers identify that mainstream schools may not be appropriate for all children with special needs without exception, and that inclusive education is a conditional right and exercising such a right should be limited by circumstance. Sinclair (1998 cited in Cigman, 2007) demonstrates that in certain circumstances inclusion may not always be the best option for all children with various kinds of disability. Not only their rights must be considered, but also the extent to which these rights are met effectively in practice (Lindsay, 2003). In this sense, some researchers such as Armstrong et al. (2011) argue that practically inclusion is seen as not engaging with the realities of education.

It could be argued, that Warnock's position against understanding the concept of inclusion as "having all the children under the same roof" is logical because mainstream schools may fail to respond effectively to the diverse needs of all categories of children with special needs. In this regard, to reach targets for the education of disabled children through inclusion account must be taken of their needs. For example, Reid (2005) suggests that successful inclusion must take account of the needs and differences of all children. In addition, the right of disabled children to receive good quality learning should be considered. In this sense, Hornby (1999, p.153) offers a proposal to advocate for responsible inclusion, recommending, "a continuum of provision to meet a continuum of needs." He asks, "Is it more important for a child to be educated in the local school, or to be educated well?". Thus, it could be claimed that effective inclusion considers the ability of the child with special needs and encourages "a sense of belonging" and "receiving good learning".

Some researchers however, have offered opposing arguments saying that inclusive education should include *all* children without exception. Barton (1997a) indicates that preventing even some groups from gaining access to mainstream provision could also be understood as a form of exclusion. This perspective is based on a vision that excluding any categories of disabled children, from participating in mainstream school with other developing children, is considered exclusion and it does not reflect the aim of inclusive education, which is a part of human rights. As Barton (1997a, pp.233-234) argues:

> *Inclusive education is about responding to diversity, listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members, and celebrating differences in dignified ways, accordingly, the goal is to include rather than exclude, since inclusion experience is about learning to live with one another not about placing disabled student in classrooms with their non-disabled peers; it is not about throwing students into an unchanged system of provision and practice, instead, it is about how, where, why, and with what consequences we educate all pupils.*

In the UK, the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) has promoted this view pointing to evidence of the damage caused by segregation:

- *The existence of segregated special schools stifles creativity of mainstream schools about how to respond to diversity and weakens their responsibilities to include all learners. It undermines efforts to develop inclusive education*

by draining resources from mainstream, which in turn sets back the development of inclusive communities.

- *Segregated schooling perpetuates discrimination, devaluation, stigmatisation, stereotyping, prejudice, and isolation - the very conditions which disabled adults identify as among the biggest barriers to respect, participation and a full life.* (CSIE, 2003 cited in Thomas & Vaughan, 2004, p.111)

Further, Miles and Singal (2008) state that education is a much broader concept than merely the acquisition of skills; it should encourage participation of children in teaching and learning. The concept of inclusive education is designed to promote democratic principles, values and beliefs that underpin equality and social justice. However, regarding the dilemmas and the debate around the issue of participation in mainstream school, Norwich (2013, p.106) indicates that academic and social participation is questionable, by posing the question:

> *Are part-time placements in off-site settings for appropriate and time-limited learning compatible with inclusive education, if the children are still members of ordinary schools and classes?*

Norwich (2013) further states that the CSIE proposed and accepted that some SEN children can spend part of their time outside the mainstream classroom. This specific CSIE position could be seen as a step towards justifying some separate groupings and settings, and shows an interconnection between included and separate settings and provision (Norwich, 2013). In this regard, it is clear that the debate around inclusion and its unspecific definition creates contradictions in the practices of inclusive schools, as the concept of inclusion is still elusive (Armstrong et al., 2010).

Policy

Šiška and Habib (2013, p.393) indicate that:

> *For many years, people have been labelled as being 'normal', 'disabled' and 'handicapped' around the world. The theoretical developments around understanding disability have influenced professional knowledge and policy-making. During the twentieth century, social sciences show that disability is a socially created phenomenon rather than the individual's fault.*

It is worth mentioning here that the development of inclusive education resulted from reactions against the inequality, ideology and discrimination of the 1960s and 1970s which were founded on gender, race and sexuality. In this regard, the

development was not principally about targeting children with special educational needs (Armstrong, 2007). Two fundamental views developed globally; the need for people to accept and acknowledge difference and the development of politics, these views lead to the consideration of the term "social inclusion" to be the opposite of "social exclusion" (Norwich, 2013). The important factor of the political aspect is to challenge the social and educational context, so as to encourage inclusion and "eliminate oppressive hierarchies, which solely define disabled people as requiring need and care" (Terzi, 2010). Thus, this perspective reflects a political standpoint that opposes exclusionary policies and practices.

Today, global policy efforts, such as UNESCO, support the development of inclusive societies. Nind (2014, p.528) indicates that, "Inclusive research and inclusive education share an ideological basis as political concepts based on moral or ethical superiority." Children with disabilities are now being included in regular classrooms, and this worldwide trend has gained popularity in the last three decades. Oliver (1996, p.87) states that, "Inclusive education is about a change in the ethos informing educational polices and therefore, the school's culture". Accordingly, Sharma et al. (2012b) indicate that in many developed countries (e.g., USA, UK, Canada, Australia) legislation or policies have evolved to support an inclusive model of teaching students with diverse needs in regular classrooms. Similarly, several developing countries (e.g., Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain) have introduced policies to propose the broader principles of inclusive education (Gaad, 2011).

In this sense, Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.5) consider policy as a key aspect in the process of inclusion, indicating that:

> *In an education system that is becoming inclusive:*
> *2.1 The promotion of inclusive education is strongly featured in important policy documents.*
> *2.2 Senior staff provide clear leadership on inclusive education.*
> *2.3 Leaders at all levels articulate consistent policy aspirations for the development of inclusive practices in schools.*
> *2.4 Leaders at all levels challenge non-inclusive practices in schools.*

According to this view "policy has to be given meaning by school communities, and because it embodies particular understanding of the education task" (Ainscow et al., 2006a, p.171). Leadership in mainstream schools can play a fundamental role in

leading the process of implementing the policy. In this regard, Ainscow et al. (2006a, pp.170-171) argue that the development of inclusive practices, promoted by policy, is essentially based on the development of an inclusive culture in the school context. For instance:

> *Particular leadership styles, an open attitude towards enquiry, a supportive and collaborative set of an open attitudes towards enquiry, a supportive and collaborative set of relations ships among staff.*

These key aspects could effectively promote the practice of inclusion, with head teachers being able to lead staff, students and parents of the school to believe and engage with an explicit set of inclusion principles, encouraged by policy (Ainscow et al., 2006a).

Ainscow et al. (2006a, p.21) indicate that, "The issue of inclusion is increasingly evident within international debates" and the impact of policy on practice cannot be underestimated. However, the role of policy in supporting the development of practice and the influence of transnational policy on local contexts gives rise to contradictions and ambiguities as global policy comes up against national circumstances (Watson & Michael, 2015). The differences within the cultural context and perspectives towards disability and inclusion of individuals with special needs could be considered as one of the key barriers in the development of inclusive schooling as envisaged in the Salamanca Statement. In this regard, Watson and Michael (2015, p.2) indicate that:

> *Global policy is, however, a fairly abstract concept and always undergoes what Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p.6) refer to as 'translation' a process which, they say, is 'fundamental to understanding how policies play a role in producing and shaping change' as a collaborative performance in which transnational regulation comes up against domestic circumstance. In this way, policy is set out in a series of moves or removes, more or less messy and contested, at international, national and local levels where its enactment, broadly speaking, is intended to bring about some kind of 'desired or imagined future'.* (Rizvi & Lingard 2010, p.6)

Therefore, the current study, and other studies worldwide seeks to investigate how multiple global discourses and policy are shaping the actual development of inclusive education, (e.g., Hardy & Woodcock, 2015; Liasidou, 2008; Selvaraj, 2015; Thomas & Johnstone, 2015; Zalizan et al., 2014; Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2006).

For example, Alur's (1998) research focuses on policymakers and the community in India with the aim to examine socio-cultural attitudes towards disability. Alur's research examines the significance of embedded cultural and ideological influences on policy and people, indicating that culture and ideologies have persistent effects on marginalisation of children with disabilities. In addition, Liasidou's (2008) critical analysis of the policy of inclusive education in Cyprus, using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach as a research tool, focuses on the ways through which power expresses itself through language. The findings reveal that such policy in Cyprus is contradictory and fragmented, as the law and regulations do not hold the mainstream schools responsible for ensuring equal treatment of all children as valued members of the school community. Thomas & Johnstone (2015) emphasise that inclusive education should be perceived through the interaction of global policies or global discourses with local cultural perceptions of inclusion. They investigated the ways in which multiple global discourses (e.g., the Salamanca Statement regarding inclusive education and the US-inspired accountability-focused inclusive education) affect the development of inclusive education in Denmark, utilising various global discourses on inclusive education and cultural fit. Thomas & Johnstone's study (2015, p.484) proposes a new way of examining policy influence in inclusive education, arguing that:

> *Because inclusive education is a global phenomenon and because policy transference is not drawn from one source alone, we contend that inclusive education scholars can create deeper and more nuanced understandings of inclusive policies if they:*
> *(1) Analyse external policies that may be influencing internal dialogue;*
> *(2) Analyse the rights, political, efficacy and pragmatic discourses of both external and internal policies; and*
> *(3) Analyse internal cultural for explanatory aspects of the interaction betweenexternal influence and internal policy narrative.*

In the context of Kuwait, my study uses CDA to analyse internal policy. In addition, the limitation of the internal policy of inclusive education in Kuwait and the problem of cultural fit will be identified, by comparing it with other external policy documents that promote inclusion, specifically the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012). Such a process will build on the existing literature on inclusive education, as I found shortcomings in the way that policy transfer was analysed in comparative education literature, particularly inclusive education policy in the Middle East. Thus, this study seeks to build on the

existing literature of inclusive education and to provide scholars and practitioners insights on future directions.

Structures and systems of inclusive schools

In recent years research has shifted towards identifying the characteristics of effective inclusion as schools have become responsible for ensuring that all students have access to equal educational opportunities, regardless of their backgrounds and conditions (Ainscow et al., 2006a; Peters et al., 2005; Slee, 2001; UNESCO, 1994).

Within the aim to achieve effective inclusion, increasing the participation of students with special needs in mainstream schools and overcoming the deficit view of disability and diversity in the inclusive school, some researchers (e.g., Allan, 2005; Liasidou, 2007; Slee, 2007) argue for change in perspectives towards special needs and inclusion. For instance, Slee (2007) calls for changing epistemological perceptions of children with disability; to move away from focusing on individual defective pathologies and to addressing more pervasive and complex pathologies of schools, through abandoning faulty views of "difference" that define some students as "lacking something" (Trent et al., 1998). In this sense, inclusion is seen as "a process of putting values into action; it results in the educational practices and provisions, systems and structures which embody those values" (Ainscow et al., 2006a, p. 27). Accordingly, the values of day-to-day schooling practice are important for effective inclusion. In this sense, school leaders can play an essential role in enhancing inclusive values and practices in school communities, as indicated by Riehl (2000 cited in Ainscow et al., 2006a, p.183):

> *School leaders need to attend to three broad types of task: fostering new meanings about diversity; promoting inclusive practices within schools; and building connections between schools and communities.*

Similarly, Ainscow (1994) discusses "organisational conditions" - distributed leadership, involvement of high levels of staff, joint planning and a commitment to enquiry among others; that is, the factors that facilitate collaboration and problem solving among staff, which therefore produce more inclusive responses to diversity. Ainscow (1994, p.26) argues that such conditions:

> *Create a culture within mainstream schools that will enable them to be more flexible in responding to all children in the community. Such a culture would*

> *encourage teachers to see pupils experiencing difficulties not as a problem, but as a source of understanding as to how their practice could be developed.*

In this regard, international literature on the effectiveness of school actions in promoting inclusion, as reviewed by Dyson et al. (2002), suggests that effective schools have an "inclusive culture". Teachers and administrators in these schools generally agree on, and respect, differences and commitment to inclusion by facilitating access to learning for all students. Schools with inclusive cultures are more likely to have leaders who are committed to inclusive values and encourage other individuals to hold leadership positions. Such schools are also likely to maintain good relationships with parents and their communities. Accordingly, Ainscow et al. (2006a) argue that inclusive schools should promote inclusive cultures and inclusive values within school communities. Head teachers and other school leaders should be selected and trained based on their commitment to inclusive values and ability to teach and communicate in a participatory manner.

Another key aspect of effective inclusion is social participation, which is considered as one of the key aspects of inclusive schools and is clearly defined in the *Index for Inclusion*, in terms of "The participation in the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools" (Booth et al., 2000, p.3). In Kuwait, the government emphasises only physical inclusion, in other words moving children with special needs from special schools to mainstream schools. However, it is important to keep in mind that inclusion embodies a range of assumptions about the meaning and the purpose of schools, it is not only about "going" to the mainstream school, instead it is about "participating" in the mainstream school (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). The student's experiences of learning and quality of life in the school, rather than placement in the mainstream school, are important considerations. O'Brien (2001, p.48) indicates that, "inclusive schools must offer more than inclusive placement 'being there' and focus upon the provision of inclusive learning 'learning there' ". As such, inclusion does not refer simply to educating and engaging disabled children effectively; it also addresses the challenges that emerge when developing inclusive schools for all learners.

Availability of resources, which benefit learners with disability in mainstream school, is one of the main aspects of structuring schools to becoming inclusive

(Ainscow & Miles, 2009). Facilities, equipment, and the availability of resources at the school could also contribute to teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) suggest a connection between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the existence of school factors such as teaching aids, computers, assistance for teachers including the provision of speech therapists, and the support of head teachers. Furthermore, evidence from the literature suggests that teachers are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards inclusion when they have access to adequate and appropriate resources and materials, when they are able to provide physical environments conducive to students with physical disabilities, and when the class size is smaller (Clough & Lindsay, 1991; LeRoy & Simpson, 1996; Koutrouba et al., 2006; Mushoriwa, 2001). For example, Mushoriwa (2001) identified that the majority of primary teachers in mainstream schools in Harare, Zimbabwe have negative attitudes towards inclusion of blind children in mainstream classes, and that both male and female teachers rejected the idea of inclusion. Mushoriwa's (2001, p.142) study showed that, "it is difficult to promote inclusive practices in situations where mainstream classes are large and resources including aids, equipment and support staff are rare".

Practice

This section address several aspects which are considered as fundamental issues in developing inclusion practices such as: preparation, training and knowledge of teachers about inclusion and special needs; teachers self-efficacy; as well as head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives and attitudes towards inclusive education. These aspects have significant influence on the inclusion practices and the participation of students with disability in mainstream schools. Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.6) indicate that, "In an education system that is becoming inclusive: schools have strategies for encouraging the presence, participation and achievement of all learners from their local communities". Inclusion takes into consideration that all students are different in a number of ways (not only disability); therefore, schools have to modify their practices to meet the learning needs of various students (Kinsella & Senior, 2008). In this sense, Sharma et al. (2012b, p.12) claim that:

> *Under an inclusive philosophy, schools exist to meet the needs of all students; therefore, if a student is experiencing difficulties, the problem is with the schooling practices not with the student.*

Teachers' preparation for dealing with student diversity, in inclusive schools, is one of the main aspects of becoming inclusive (Ainscow & Miles, 2009). Within an aim to enable teachers to deal with learners' diversity in mainstream schools, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994, p.x) argues for governments to consider developing teachers' knowledge to:

> *Ensure that, in the context of a systemic change, teacher education programmes, both pre - service and in-service, address the provision of special needs education in inclusive schools.*

In this regard, teachers' knowledge is considered as an important factor in the development of inclusive education. Teachers' knowledge and training in the field of inclusion and special needs and its affect on teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusion is reported in other studies (e.g., Romi & Leyser, 2006; Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007; Gaad & Khan, 2007; Sharma et al., 2009). For instance, the results of a study by Gaad and Khan (2007), conducted in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates among primary mainstream teachers, explored their attitudes towards teaching disabled children and their ability to work in inclusive learning environments as well as to adapt to the inclusion requirement. The study found that primary mainstream teachers felt that teaching in inclusive classes presented difficulties in meeting all students' needs. Without appropriate resources and training, for example knowledge about the Individual Education Plan (IEP), characteristics of disabled students, differentiation and strategies of behaviour management, the majority of the teachers interviewed rejected the idea of including children with special needs. In addition, the teachers presented negative perspectives towards educating children with hearing disabilities, communication disorders, intellectual disabilities, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. An Australian study by Subban and Sharma (2006) identified that, in general, teachers held positive attitudes towards the inclusion of disabled students in mainstream schools, however teachers who had undertaken training courses in special education were found to have more positive attitudes and fewer concerns about the implementation of inclusive education. In addition, Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) note that teachers with university preparation have a more positive attitude towards inclusion and greater self-esteem when covering the educational needs of children with special needs.

Time appears to be one of the challenges to the implementation of inclusion. This includes the lack of time to consult with specialists, apply effective lesson plans, and teach disabled students in regular classrooms (Santoli et al., 2008). Obviously, the barriers associated with managing time relate to a lack of preparation, which causes difficulties for non-trained teachers when it comes to coping with inclusive settings. Therefore, lack of preparation might have a negative effect on their attitudes towards inclusion. According to a survey of the attitudes of Greek teachers towards inclusion, conducted by Avramidis & Kalyva (2007, p.385):

> *Teachers with further training in special education needs and inclusion matters hold significantly more positive attitudes than those with little or no training concerning inclusion.*

Thus, implementing inclusive education is not an easy task as it requires improvement in a teacher's knowledge in order to facilitate their role in the inclusive classroom (Sharma et al., 2012a). However, the issue remains that teacher education has only recently started to address inclusion in general teacher training programmes in some countries, despite a rapidly growing interest in inclusion and policies that are being implemented widely in school districts worldwide (Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014). Some western-style countries (e.g., Australia - specifically New South Wales and Queensland) have made it a mandatory requirement for all teachers to complete a subject course in special or inclusive education (Subban & Sharma, 2006). It could be argued that without this change in teacher educational training programmes, teachers may not be able meet the diverse needs of students in mainstream classes and such issues could affect their attitudes towards inclusive education. In this regard, teacher efficacy has also been found to positively influence attitudes towards teaching in inclusive classrooms. In a study that examined teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, Soodak et al. (1998) found teaching efficacy strongly predicted teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Furthermore, teachers who scored low on efficacy were more likely to report anxiety and to reject the inclusion of students with special needs in their classrooms. Similarly, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) reported a positive association among teachers' self-efficacy, their success in the classroom, and the achievement levels of students. Additional research has shown that teachers who score high on self-efficacy are more likely to have positive attitudes towards inclusion (Malinen et al., 2012).

Thus, effective training programmes and positive experiences of inclusion could increase positive attitudes and self-efficacy. Swain et al. (2012) examined the change in pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes about inclusive practices, following an introductory special education course. The results suggest that a special education course, paired with field experience working with students with disabilities, can significantly impact on pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

Oliver (1995, cited in Thomas & Vaughan, 2004, p.113) states that, "Central to moving from integration to inclusion is a deconstruction of school and teacher responses to special children". In this regard, it has been found that the nature and severity of a disability influences the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion (e.g., Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010; Arab & Lyte, 2005; Morley et al., 2005; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Croll & Moses, 2000; Forlin, 1995). Broadly, most of these studies suggest that teachers are more willing to accept or support the inclusion of children with physical and sensory impairments, than those with intellectual disabilities and behavioural-emotional difficulties. Also, most teachers advocate the inclusion of children with mild/moderate disabilities rather than children with severe disabilities. For example, Alghazo (2002), in exploring Jordanian teachers' and administrators' perspectives towards inclusion, found that teachers and administrators had different perspectives on inclusion, depending on the type of disability. They supported the inclusion of students with specific learning disabilities, but had some reservations about the inclusion of students with mental retardation. Such perspectives towards inclusion, that focus on the ability of an individual with a disability as a condition to be in mainstream school, could influence the level of participation of such students in mainstream schools. It could also present limitations for students with disability who are less capable of being included.

Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion have a significant relationship with actual classroom practice. Forlin et al. (2009) examined the relationship between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards inclusion with variables such as contact with people with disabilities, and confidence level. The researchers found that confidence in teaching in inclusive classrooms was the single best predictor of participants' attitudes. Thus, in order to successfully teach in inclusive classrooms, teachers need

to have skills in designing classrooms where the needs of all students can be met (Nougaret et al., 2005). In this regard, Rose (2008 cited in Florian, 2008, p.205) suggests that there is a relationship between three elements, as shown in Figure 2.2.

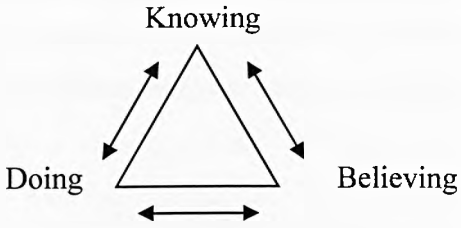

Figure 2.2: Rose's model of professional development (2008)

> *In this model, any two of the three elements of knowing, believing and doing are thought to influence the third, this means, some teachers may know about inclusive practice but still be unsure about whether they believe in it, but by working in a school that has an inclusive ethos "doing", they come to see that the practice can be effective, These examples show that one does not have to wait for all the elements to be in place.*

It has been argued that the "hallmark of inclusive education" is teachers' positive attitudes, beliefs and willingness to accept students with special needs (Forlin et al., 2008; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Hassanein, 2010). Based on such arguments, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion have been studied in many parts of the world, commencing as early as the 1950s (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). As would be expected, such studies provide a mixed picture dependent on issues such as policy and culture. Moreover, such studies provide a snapshot of a particular era. Several researchers report that regular teachers do not hold supportive attitudes towards inclusion (Kalyva et al., 2007; Vaughn et al., 1996), while others report more favourable attitudes (Avramidis et al., 2000; Dupoux et al., 2005; Hassanein, 2010; Subban & Sharma, 2006) and a few report neutral or uncertain attitudes (Bennett et al., 1997; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Padeliadu & Lampropoulou, 1997; Yuen & Westwood, 2001; Galović et al., 2014).

Head teachers perspectives towards inclusion have been identified in previous research. Several studies, such as those of Khochen and Radford (2012), Abbott (2006), Wehbi (2006) and Croll and Moses (2000) have focused on head teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. For instance, Abbott's (2006) qualitative study, in Northern Ireland, towards the development of inclusion found that most head

teachers appeared satisfied that their staff worked collaboratively in promoting inclusion. They understood the concept of inclusion in terms of treating all students equally regardless of their disability. They also indicated that all staff in the school were "very conscious of not making a child feel *excluded"* (Abbott, 2006, p.635). In addition, they felt that they could offer an effective education to all children in their schools, however, they also noted that there are multiple barriers to inclusion in their schools that need to be overcome. These barriers include lack of resources and the physical design of some school buildings, that do not enable access for all. Some Head teachers in Abbott's study go beyond the structural barriers. For instance, the importance of leadership was emphasized to be a fundamental factor for successful inclusion, and most of the interviewed head teachers were aware that their role is to promote the culture of inclusion in the whole school .There was also the view that some mainstream teachers have lack of knowledge and skills with regard to special needs, as Initial Teacher Education does not fully prepare student teachers for inclusive classrooms. Abbots' participant head teachers also emphasised the importance of the role of colleagues in the special sector sharing their expertise with mainstream teachers. In addition, some mainstream teachers' attitudes reflect the medical model of understanding disability, which is considered by these head teachers to present barriers to inclusion, which could inhibit the potential of every child in mainstream schools. Abbott's (2006, p.639) interpretation of these findings is that it is to be expected that:

> *the head teachers wanted to portray their schools as promoting and developing inclusion, but it was also clear that they recognized how far this was being achieved as well as the challenges of putting it into practice.*

Another study conducted by Khochen and Radford (2012) in Lebanon, explored the attitudes of teachers and head teachers towards inclusion of students with a disability in mainstream primary schools. Khochen and Radford used a mixed method approach to collect data. They found in general, the interviewed head teachers had positive attitudes towards having students with disabilities enrolled in their schools. There was however, a common belief that not all students, with a disability, can be successfully included, as the head teachers found it most difficult to include students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and students that they describe as having mental disability. It was also clear that the head teachers wanted better

support in terms of financial support and staffing training. These attitudes were based on the belief that inclusion can be successful if implemented appropriately.

Based on these perspectives, 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 achieve 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 is not only seen and worked upon as making additional provision for children with special needs. However, central in this 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 children regardless of their conditions.

The success of inclusive education practice depends not only on teachers', head teachers' perspectives but also parents' perspectives play a central role in developing effective inclusive practice (UNESCO, 1994). Abu-Hamour and Muhaidat (2014) indicate that, "Parents of children with special needs have been described as one of the main factors behind the push towards inclusive education in many countries". Thus, parents' perspectives towards inclusion of students with special needs are important factors relating to inclusive education because their views, feelings, and beliefs are likely to have a strong effect on the practice of inclusion, as such views could either encourage or reject inclusion. As Martin (2002) indicates, the outcome of inclusive education depends largely on the attitudes and beliefs of parents of children with or without special needs. In consideration of this view, several studies have examined parents' perspectives towards inclusion (Gasteiger-Klicpera et al., 2013; Abu-Hamour & Muhaidat, 2014; O'Connor, 2007; Shipley, 1995).

Parents' attitudes towards inclusive education have been explored in a systematic literature review conducted by de Boer et al. (2010). A review of the literature resulted in 10 studies showing that parents are divided in their attitudes towards inclusion. The review showed that overall, 5 of the 10 studies were positive and the others were neutral, with the studies using parents of typically developing and disabled children. However, the researchers further reported that parents of children

with disabilities were not clearly positive and found that parents of children with severe disabilities were least positive. However, parents of children with special needs reported various concerns, including the availability of services in regular schools and individualised instruction. Several variables were found which related to parents' attitudes, such as socio-economic status, education level, experience with inclusion, and type of disability. Another study by Narumanchi and Bhargava (2011) identified that parents of typically developing students expressed the view that teachers in an inclusive school need to be trained and develop a positive attitude towards children with special needs. These parents felt that inclusion would be beneficial for subjects such as art, music, singing, and sports but separate education would be more appropriate for academic subjects. Furthermore, Narumanchi and Bhargava pointed out that parents were apprehensive, particularly about the effect of full inclusive education on typically developing children, as they tend to get disturbed by disabled children, while children with special needs are often not able to meet the standards set for typically developing children. Thus, although parents might have positive attitudes towards inclusion of disabled children, they appear to prefer separate classes for academic subjects. Nevertheless, some parents of children without disability believe that their children can benefit both socially and academically from inclusion because of the increase of the available supportive teaching resources inside the classroom (Elzein, 2009; Tichenor et al., 2000).

Tensions within parents' perspectives were also been found by Westling-Allodi (2007), who conducted a small-scale study of Swedish parents with children with intellectual disabilities who were placed in separate units in mainstream schools. The study found that the parents reflected different attitudes about the suitability of these units for their children. Some were positive about such units, however others were critical, indicating that learning is better in mainstream classes. Other parents were unsure and critical of the low expectations held by the staff towards their children, stating that they might get the resources and their preferred setting, but they felt that if the staff were not supportive nothing could be achieved.

Furthermore, parents' understanding of disability could affect their attitudes towards inclusion. In this regard Cole (2008) linked preference to disability models, and found that parents' perspectives fell into three groups. Parents' responses in group

one appeared to prefer a social model approach, suggesting that they choose inclusive schooling for their children with the aim of removing organisational and pedagogical barriers to their children's learning and increasing their children's acceptance within mainstream settings. These parents, Cole claims, did not seem too concerned with within-child factors and did not mention their children's impairment labels; instead, they were skeptical about professional judgments about their children. In the second group the parents initially committed to mainstream schools, but changed to special schools. These parents felt that their children were being excluded, consequently, they began to search for a more welcoming environment, such as that offered by special schools (Cole, 2008, p.178). Accordingly:

> *A social model approach might suggest that parents are looking for environments where there are fewer barriers to their children's inclusion. For some children and parents, in the current context, they are stuck between a rock and a hard place, and, ironically perhaps, it is special school, which becomes the only place where parents feel their children can be included.*

Considering the above mentioned concerns, parents' motives to place their disabled child in a regular school vary, as it is clear that not all parents prefer a mainstream school for their child. Parents responses in the third group, in Cole's study, preferred their children to be educated in special schools without ever considering a mainstream school. Accordingly, these parents did not focus as much on the barriers to their children's learning and tended to concentrate on medicalised discourses and within-child factors; that is, these parents seemed more interested in the medical understanding of their children's disabilities (Cole, 2008). However, in Landsman's (2005) US study of mothers of children with disabilities from a range of social backgrounds, it was not easy to link such mothers' perspectives to a specific model of disability. Landsman (2005) found that these mothers' concepts of disabilities did not comply simply with either medical or social assumptions. However, their concepts tended to correspond with a medical model, in seeking to improve opportunities for enhancing their child's functionings, but complied with a social model in rejecting aspects of a problem-based view of impairment. Landsman concluded that neither the medical nor the social models fully accounted for the parents' perspectives, as they drew on aspects of both.

Various socio-economic and cultural factors have been considered in the social construction of disability. For example, Priestley (2009) mentions religious and cultural values, industrial development, geographical mobility, capitalist wage economy, literacy and numeracy, surveillance and incarceration, among others. Šiška and Habib (2013) indicate that strongly religious societies tend to have negative attitudes towards disability. For example, in Bangladesh society blames mothers who give birth to a disabled child, as it is believed that Allah is punishing them for their wrong doing. These different perspectives, regarding disability, could lead to different attitudes towards inclusion. In this regard, Finkelstein (2001) argues that the medical understanding of disability has hampered the progress of inclusive education reform because the model proposes that a child who has difficulties in learning means that something is wrong with the child and so the child should be separated and taught in special settings. This indicates that parental engagement with various models of disability influences their perspectives towards mainstream and special schooling.

There is a gap in the literature that considers the social construction of disability and its influence on parents' and teachers' perspectives towards inclusion, as studies in this area are few. Therefore, one aim of the current study is to investigate head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion from the viewpoint of different models of disability. This research investigation will contribute to filling such gaps in the literature.

Research literature indicates that there is a wide range of perspectives amongst parents related to the placement of disabled children in educational settings. These divergent results, evident in the literature, will be further explored and most importantly, in the current study, parents' perspectives will be explored within a different cultural context, as the different cultural context may give rise to different assumptions about disability. It is supposed that such cultural assumptions towards disability may affect teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion, as cultural and contextual factors appear to play an important role in teachers' and parents' understanding of and attitudes towards inclusion (Hassanein, 2010). For instance, Šiška and Habib (2013, pp.402-403) indicate in their study, towards

disability and inclusion in Bangladesh, that understanding the causes of disability opens doors for understanding the inclusion process, arguing that:

> *The notion of disability has been changing to focus on social and environmental factors rather than on individual fault. Growing understanding about disability leads to a higher acceptance of disability; that it is not a personal tragedy but rather a flawed social response. Disability thinking has shifted from the medical model to the social model. The paradigm of the social model of disability is not only evolving in its way of thinking but also in the activities of the disability movement from charity to rights.*

It is worth mentioning here that several studies on parents' perspectives towards inclusion, (e.g., Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014; Abu-Hamour & Muhaidat, 2014; de Boer et al., 2010; Elkins et al., 2003) have used traditional quantitative, positivist research methods (questionnaire), which as Avramidis and Norwich (2002) indicate are less likely to consider the role of the social and contextual aspects and the complexities of understanding inclusion and disability. To add to the limited qualitative literature available, I will use multiple qualitative methods, such as interview and CDA to identify the affect of the current policy of inclusion in Kuwait on its practices and perspectives. What are the rights of teachers and parents in the policy position - to be supported and have their voices considered in such a policy? These issues are significantly important for effective inclusive education practices, as indicated by O'Connor (2007, p.539):

> *The emergence of increasingly cooperative practice and understanding between parents and professionals is of particular significance as inclusion has assumed greater visibility in governmental, educational and social policy.*

The current study will focus on parents, as well as head teachers and teachers, to explore their perspectives and understanding of disability and inclusion and how all these affect the practice of inclusion in Kuwait. No study regarding the views of parents of non-disabled and "slow learner" students, who have experience with inclusion practice, has been conducted in Kuwait. This qualitative research study will draw out the views, perceptions and attitudes of the participants in order to establish a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education and how it functions within existing Kuwaiti policy.

Inclusive education in the Middle East

Developing and introducing inclusion in an education system requires positive attitudes from the community's members and strong educational foundations to improve inputs, processes, environments, and learning of students, educators, and other stakeholders to achieve meaningful outcomes from educational experiences (UNESCO, 2009). In this regard, researchers (e.g., Sakız and Woods ,2015; Gaad, 2004) in Middle East countries have investigated the situation of inclusive education and the challenges that could stifle achieving inclusion in their own country's context.

In Turkey, for example Sakız and Woods (2015) discuss the progress of including students with disabilities within mainstream schools, and the legislative attempts to achieve inclusive education. Sakız and Woods 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. They highlight some main issues which are stifling inclusion in Turkey, such as the lack of understanding of, and support for, inclusion of students with disabilities in Turkish society at large. They argue that inclusion is perceived as a type of integration of special education into mainstream schools by means of a separate form of provision. Further, the identification and placement of students with disabilities depends on medical and educational diagnoses and such a process reflects the medical model which is in contrast with the principles of inclusion which are based on a social model of understanding disability. Accordingly, inclusion is not seen in its holistic concept, principles and philosophy; it is still perceived under the umbrella of special education in the Turkish context. Such a situation can lead to confusion in the process of implementing inclusive education.

Gaad (2004) highlights traditional cultural issues and values that shape attitudes towards individuals with intellectual disabilities. Three countries were identified in Gaad's study with two being from the Middle East, Egypt in North Africa and the United Arab Emirates in Asia. Gaad's cultural knowledge, as a Muslim and Arabic native speaker was helpful in assessing cultural understandings towards individuals with disabilities in these countries as well as helping in assuring the validity of data selection, collection and analysis. Gaad (2004) indicates that Egypt, although a North African country has Arabic and mainly Islamic cultural foundations.

The aim of Gaad's study was to consider cultural affects on the provision of inclusion of these children in mainstream schools. Interviews with parents and teachers were conducted. Further, a review of the literature on the movements for inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in these countries was considered by the researcher. A study the author undertook in 1998 examined educational options for children with Down's Syndrome. The findings indicated that in Egypt, negative attitudes towards families of children with intellectual disabilities, particularly with Down's Syndrome, was reported and as stated by parents, children with such a disability were kept in their houses. The reason for this finding is that these children were facing rejection by non-disabled individuals in their society, especially children, because of their intellectual disability and because they shared distinctive facial and physical characteristics. Consequently, such children have to put up with labelling and bullying from other non-disabled children. In the United Arab Emirates, children with intellectual disabilities are still a long way from inclusion. Parents in Gaad's study did not know about inclusion, and had limited knowledge about the concept of inclusion. The common understanding among the parents interviewed was that inclusion meant being in the neighbourhood school, but in a separate class. Teachers on the other hand accepted the idea of inclusion in general, but not for those with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion for some and exclusion for others makes the concept of inclusion worthless. Gaad (2004) argues that there is a sense of anti-inclusion found in the these countries in their own cultural contexts. This is caused because of cultural beliefs about disabled students, particularly children with intellectual disabilities who are considered as different individuals with limited ability. Gaad (2004, p.312) concludes that:

> *It is very difficult to discuss educational services offered to children with intellectual disabilities or any form of disabilities without reflecting on the tenets of each society's traditional life and attitudes.*

Although not in the Middle East, the findings from a survey study conducted by Sukumaran et al. (2015) in Malaysian integrated preschools coincide with the findings of this current study's analysis of Kuwait's current policy and practice towards inclusive practice, which is described as 'excluding the included'. Sukumaran et al's. study was conducted with both regular and special education teachers and asked them about the level and nature of inclusion taking place in their

preschools. The findings show little evidence that practices of inclusion were taking place in the preschools that were surveyed, and the situation might be described more as segregation practices, as there were not many opportunities for interaction between non-disabled and students with special needs. Further, such opportunities were very limited and occurred only in non-academic activities such as at lunch times or on the playground. Consequently, opportunities for interaction mostly took place by chance without much planning on the part of the teachers. Furthermore, Sukumaran et al. (2015) argue that in Malaysia there is legislation in place to support the rights of persons with special needs to an education on an equal basis to those without special needs. However, there is no legislation with regard to inclusion that reflects the concept of inclusion, as presented specifically in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). The authors concluded that in the Malaysian context:

> *government support and legislations alone cannot guarantee inclusion; instead successful inclusion must be supported with positive attitudes, significant processes and research evidence on how inclusive education can effectively meet the individual needs of children with special needs.* (Sukumaran et al., 2015, p.837)

From these studies, conclusions can be drawn in relation to developing countries in the Middle East, in that they face context specific challenges that could hinder the development of inclusive education. Such challenges include negative cultural perceptions about disability. In this regard, Motala (2000) states that developing countries are said to face challenges when it comes to effective inclusion of children with disability into mainstream schools. Thus, it could be argued that for most of these countries the challenges to inclusion are determined by negative cultural understandings of disability, limited policy, lack of governmental support and ideologies around disability, rather than the actual needs of special needs learners.

Summary

To summarise, this chapter has discussed the concept of inclusion and how disability is understood via the three models of understanding disability, namely the medical, social and capability models. Understanding disability is one of the key issues that the current study highlights, as the way of understanding disability could play its role in affecting the participants' perspectives towards inclusion and the way of

implementing and practicing inclusive education. Then, Ainscow and Miles' Framework (2009), which includes four important and fundamental elements of the development of inclusive education is described and adopted. This framework includes key themes and issues, that the current study seeks to highlight, being policy, concepts, the practice of inclusion, and structures and systems. These four elements are considered to be important in the development of inclusive education and which the research questions of this study aim to explore. The significance of this literature review is to establish a wider consideration of the factors that could affect head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion and its practice. In addition, this literature review provides the researcher an overview of, and background to, other issues related to inclusion within different contexts. It has assisted the researcher to be attentive to and aware of these issues during the planning and implementation of the research process.

Chapter Three
Methodology and Design of the Study

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology, design and framework of the study. The chapter starts with a description of the different research paradigms, followed by the rationale for using the interpretive paradigm in the current study and highlighting the research design. Then, data collection procedures, including design and administration of instruments through the fieldwork process are described. Finally, the sampling framework, data analysis approach, and the ethical considerations are addressed.

Introducing the research paradigms

Henning et al. (2004) define a paradigm as a theory or belief system that guides the researcher in studying an educational phenomenon. It reflects the researcher's perceptions of the world and understanding of how things are connected (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The paradigm is a significant theoretical framework that illuminates essential philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions associated with the proposed research (Cohen et al., 2007; Patton, 1990; Creswell, 1994). Therefore, researchers should consider the definitions to articulate such assumptions related to the research to be undertaken. According to Guba (1990, p.18) these questions are formulated as:

> *(1) Ontological: what is the nature of the "knowable"? Or, what is the nature of "reality"? (2) Epistemological: what is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)? (3) Methodological: how should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?.*

Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that there are three main paradigms: positivist, interpretive and critical in the social and human sciences, and they vary in terms of their basic theoretical assumptions. It was crucial to understand the assumptions of each paradigm in order to determine the suitable paradigm for the current study.

The first paradigm is positivist, scientific/empirical, quantitative, and predictive (Creswell, 2003). Positivists examine causes that influence outcomes, which reflect the traditional scientific approach to problem solving. Thus, this approach assumes a single reality that can be broken down into variables, which when correctly identified and isolated can be used to establish cause and affect relationships. Positivist research provides knowledge based on careful observation and objective assessment of reality. Consequently, positivists support the use of the scientific method in research, particularly the use of experimental and quantitative methods to test and verify hypotheses (Creswell, 2003; Cohen et al., 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Although the scientific paradigm emphasises quantitative data, qualitative data can also be utilised when appropriate (Ernest, 1994). Quantitative research can produce findings that could be generalised to other situations (Creswell, 2003).

Secondly, the critical paradigm emerged from critical theory and the conviction that research is conducted for "the emancipation of individuals and groups in an egalitarian society" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 26). This paradigm emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, arguing that the post structural laws and theories enforced by positivist assumptions do not consider social justice issues and are not appropriate for marginalised individuals or groups (Creswell, 2003). The critical paradigm contradicts the perspective of positivism, which disregards the social context (Cohen et al., 2000; Creswell, 1998). The intention of critical educational research is to emphasise equality and democracy for all its members. However, simply providing an account of society and its behaviours does not achieve this; the purpose should be to facilitate change, rather than simply understand the situations and phenomena (Cohen et al., 2000). Accordingly, studies need to incorporate an action agenda to influence the lives of the participants as well as the functioning of various institutions and consider specific social issues, such as "empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation" (Creswell, 2003, p.10).

The third paradigm is the interpretive paradigm, with its philosophical assumptions that guide the researcher, can also be called the "anti positivist" paradigm, as it developed as a reaction to positivism. It emphasises the ability of individuals to construct meaning; some scholars have perceived this paradigm as constructivist (Cohen et al., 2000). Constructivism describes the specific contexts in which people

live and work, with an aim to explore the historical and cultural background of the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The current study is designed within the interpretive paradigm because I believe that the situation of inclusive education in Kuwait and the way of understanding disability and the concept of inclusion needs to be understood in depth, particularly as research in the field of inclusive education in Kuwait is rare. Thomas and Vaughan (2004, p.112) indicate that, "We would do well to remember the words of Chairman Mao when he said that 'the longest journey begins with the first step' ". In my view, the first step in the journey of inclusive education in Kuwait is the deep investigation of the way that disability and inclusion is understood. Thus, I chose the interpretive paradigm instead of other paradigms as I believed that this paradigm would effectively help to understand this specific study phenomena and the affect of social and cultural contexts on the development and practice of inclusive education in Kuwait. In this regard, it was considered essential to establish an overview of the basic assumptions of the interpretive paradigm before outlining its adoption in this study.

Paradigm followed in this study

The current study adopted the interpretive paradigm. Schwandt (2000) explains that interpretive research is concerned mainly with meaning and seeks to understand social members' definitions of a situation. In addition, interpretivists aim to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the perspective of those who live it. Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that interpretive researchers seek comprehensive understanding of how participants in a given investigation view their world that surrounds them, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed.

I found this paradigm to be most suitable for the purpose of my study, as I believe that exploring the understanding of inclusion, in this early stage of inclusive education in Kuwait, is relevant for illuminating the concept and enhancing practice. The interpretive approach helps to understand the complexities of inclusion, particularly because inclusion can mean different things to different people within the same context (Clarke et al., 1998). Moreover, exploring the head teachers', teachers' and parents' understanding of inclusion can guide the development of interventions and the strategies which could improve the implementation of

inclusion in Kuwait. Since the current study is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm, it was important to review the crucial assumptions of this approach.

From the perspective of the interpretive paradigm, the ontological assumptions relate to the existence of multi-realities rather than pure facts, suggesting that reality is seen as complex, subjective, and relative rather than an objective entity. Reality is created rather than given (Cohen et al., 2007; Crotty, 2003). According to Guba (1990), social constructivists believe that various constructions of the social actors produce different realities because of individual differences and differences in individuals' lived experiences, these constructions are likely to differ and diverge.

The supporters of the interpretive paradigm hold a constructivist epistemology which assumes that participants construct their own knowledge of the situation or the event. This means that participants have their own unique interpretation of events and the world cannot be known with any certainty (Ernest, 1994). Radnor (1994) suggests that when we are trying to understand what others mean, we rely on our interpretations, and through language, we are able to reconstruct experiences.

In order to gain better understanding of the epistemological assumptions that guide researchers in educational and social research, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) mention that two main issues, surrounding the debate of epistemology, should be addressed. The first is associated with the relationship between the researcher and the researched world. While the positivist or scientific adherents view this relationship as isolated or "value free", the proponents of the interpretive paradigm believe that this process is an interactive process; knowledge is either mediated through the researcher (value-mediated) or is a result of negotiation and agreement between researchers and participants. The second issue is related to the way in which knowledge is acquired. A scientific approach is often seen as a deductive approach, whereby propositions or hypotheses are reached theoretically through logical processes.

Crotty (2003, p.3; p.8) considers the epistemology of the interpretive paradigm as that which rejects the idea of objective truth waiting for us to discover it. He claims that, "meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world". Crotty says that meaning is not lying there (objectivism) and nor created by subjects (subjectivism) but constructed and generated within the

partnership of subject and object. "Constructivism describes the individual human subject engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them" (Crotty, 1998, p.79). From this perspective, all knowledge, hence all meaningful reality, is contingent upon human practices that are developed and transmitted within an essentially social context based on interaction between human beings and their world (Crotty, 2003). Therefore, meaning cannot be described simply as objective or subjective. According to constructivism, we do not create meaning; rather, we construct meaning as we work with people and objects in the world (Crotty, 2003).

Robson (2002) claims that constructivists struggle with the idea of objective reality, which is typically known. They suppose that researchers need to understand multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. Hence, they tend to conduct interviews and observations to gain multiple perspectives. Furthermore, they consider research participants as part of the research process, helping them construct their reality. In this understanding, different people may construct different meanings in different ways about the same phenomenon. According to constructivists, individuals are constantly trying to understand the world in which they live and work. Humans are persistently interacting and engaging with the world around them, and make sense of it based on their historical and social experiences. They develop multiple subjective meanings of their experiences; thus, researchers are able to look for the complexity of views rather than simply categorise various meanings. As such, the goal of research is to rely on the participant' views of the situation under investigation. Open-ended investigation allows the researcher to listen carefully to individual experiences and views with the aim of making sense of (or interpreting) the meanings that others develop about the world (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2000).

Consequently, the epistemological stance underpinning this research is a constructivist epistemology using interpretivism, as it is a socio-cultural base where multiple interactions, among different social realities in the world, are taking place. In this research I investigated the meanings held by teachers and parents about the inclusion of slow "slow learners" in mainstream schools in Kuwait. In this regard:

> *Social reality is regarded as the product of processes by which social actors together negotiate the meanings for actions and situations.* (Blaikie, 1993, p.96, cited in Crotty, 2003, p.11)

The constructivist paradigm seeks to understand the phenomenon according to the explanations and perceptions of those who are involved. In this, the reality constructed in the current study was negotiated between the researcher and the participants. The purpose of the study was to construct knowledge by describing and interpreting the phenomena in an attempt to get shared meanings with others. It may offer possibilities, but not certainties of the outcomes of future events (Merriam, 1998).

This study focuses on exploring head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards the idea of including "slow learners" in mainstream classrooms in Kuwait. The study's main aim is to explain and show the participants' concerns and perspectives towards inclusive education in the context of Kuwait, rather than only showing acceptance or rejection of it. This study adopted the interpretive approach because the concept of educational inclusion is relatively new in Kuwait and it is therefore important to uncover the range of meanings assigned to it by participants. This is supported by Creswell's (2003) argument that the interpretive paradigm could be very helpful in new areas of research, consequently this approach is better used in researching new topics, such as inclusion, as this may help in illuminating the concepts and developing the practice. Although inclusive education is not new in Europe, it is still in an early stage in the context of Kuwait and needs further research to better understand it. According to Brown (2005, p.256):

> *The concept of inclusion as a professional ideology is relatively new in the Middle East region, which is dominated by the values and beliefs of a traditional culture.*

Consequently, I can only attempt to understand the social realities and the subjective knowledge of the participants about inclusion through the world in which they live and work. The current study aims to describe a situation rather than to generalise or form a law (which characterises the scientific paradigm). In particular, this study aims to understand head teachers', teachers' and parents' subjective attitudes towards inclusion, different factors underlying these perspectives, perceived barriers to inclusion and their perspectives about the changes required to practice, to enact

effective inclusion. Hence, in the context of this study, the interpretivist view points towards the participants, as White and Gunstone (1992, p.101) state being, "Meaning-making organisms, theory builders who develop hypotheses, notice patterns, and construct theories of action from their life experience". Finally, the purpose of this interpretive study is to create knowledge by understanding and interpreting the studied phenomena. The generalisability of findings is not the aim of an interpretive study. Nevertheless, the in-depth nature of the inquiry assures that the findings provide insightful explanations of the phenomenon, which could be helpful to other people in similar contexts (Lichtman, 2006).

Theoretical framework adopted in this study

This study draws on the three models of disability as a theoretical framework for analysing the perspectives of participants in relation to disability and inclusive education in the current study. This means that these models offer a framework for understanding the different perspectives, in relation to disability and inclusive education, as it can help explain or understand the participants' perspectives, related to inclusive education. These perspectives are understood within the three models of understanding disability: medical model, social model, capability model. This approach allowed me to gain some understanding about the concept of inclusion in the context of Kuwait and how disability is understood. Using the interpretive paradigm helps the researcher examine the insider's point of view regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). However, I did not limit the process of analysing to the three models only, but the three models helped to explain the data. Furthermore, caution was taken not to impose my expectations on the data. This was achieved through examining the data several times and letting the categories or the themes emerge from the data as is explained further, below.

Research methodology

According to Wellington (2000), methodology aims to describe, evaluate and to justify the use of particular methods. For Crotty (2003) it provides a rationale for the choice of a particular method and links it to the desired outcomes. This can lead to different kinds of research approaches needing different kinds of methodologies, in order to reach the desired outcomes and answer the research questions. The methodological approach followed in this study is case study as one of the

qualitative approaches where different qualitative techniques are used for data collection in order to strengthen the validity of the findings.

Case studies have been frequently adopted to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political, and other phenomena. Overall, case studies have been utilised to investigate complex social phenomena. Stake (1995) indicates that case study can involve a single individual or a group at a single site or multiple sites, and it can focus on a single issue or multiple issues. The current study includes several cases, thus it is a collective case study. According to Stake (2000, p.437), collective case study investigates more than one case to assess "a phenomenon, population, or general condition". This approach is based on the assumption that focusing on a number of cases increases comprehension and theorising (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Similarly, Yin (2009) recommends using a multiple-case study design because it allows drawing analytic conclusions that are more precise. Furthermore, case study helps the researcher develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Thus, studying multiple cases (head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion of "slow learners") allowed me to collect, analyse, and develop more powerful descriptions and explanations. The data were collected at specific sites, as the teachers and head teachers were interviewed at their schools as well as parents in their child's school, and the focus was on the issue of inclusion, rather than on the case.

Research design

The current study employed a qualitative research methodology to gain insights into the nature of head teachers', teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusive education in Kuwait. Qualitative research is likely to yield detailed information about participants, including their experiences and the meanings of these experiences (Creswell, 2008). 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. To understand the complex perspectives and beliefs of the participants towards inclusive education, exploratory methods were used to capture and deeply understand the phenomena. As Creswell (2012, p.103) indicates, "the qualitative researcher seeks to explore and understand one single phenomenon".

In the present study, the data were collected using two qualitative techniques: semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

The research methods

Interview

Kvale (2007, p.5) states that the interview is a specific form of interaction between an interviewer and interviewee that produces knowledge, indicating that, "Conversations are an old way of obtaining systematic knowledge". Social science studies have used qualitative interviewing extensively, particularly in the field of education (Kvale, 2007; Silverman, 2006). Individuals talk with each other, they interact, pose questions and answer questions, and based on these conversations they learn about their experiences, feelings and hopes, as well as the world in which they live. In an interview conversation, the researcher enquires about participants' perceptions of the world, their dreams, fears and hopes in addition to their school situation, work situation, family, and social life. The research interview helps researchers construct knowledge based on their interaction with interviewees and captures the experiences and lived meaning of the individuals' world allowing the subject to explain their situation in their own words (Kvale, 2007).

Social and educational research commonly uses interviews, which can be structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Flick, 2006; Robson, 2002). The structured interview comprises pre-arranged questions with fixed wording prepared in advance, thus the interviewer is not free to make modifications. In contrast, the unstructured interview is conducted without a predetermined schedule, allowing the conversation to develop throughout the interview. The semi-structured interview combines the two previous types. It is more flexible and less structured. The interviewer leads the interview and although the questions are formulated prior to the interview, their ordering varies and supporting questions emerge as the interview unfolds (Radnor, 1994). These questions guide the interview that aims to investigate issues or topics of interest (Merriam, 1998). Silverman (2006) states that effective qualitative interviewing achieves depth and complexity that other approaches may not achieve. Thus, in this study using "interviewing can be an exciting way of doing strong and valuable research" (Kvale, 2007, p.8).

Interviews allow researchers to gather information about participants' interpretations of the world and their perceptions of different situations that they encounter. As Cohen et al. (2007, p. 267) indicate, "the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life it is part of life itself". It is considered one of the most important methods of qualitative research. Mertens (2010) indicates that most qualitative researchers decide to employ interview methods because they can gather significant information. 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, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Wellington (2000) claims that one-to-one dialogue is an excellent tool for investigating the interviewee's feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions.

Interviews utilise a flexible approach to achieve the desired aims. Furthermore, interviews can provide rich data because the researcher can ask additional questions to elaborate or clarify the responses and they can provide a detailed explanation of a particular context (Drever, 1995). In addition, Cohen et al. (2007, p.349) state that, "the interviewer can press not only for complete answers, but also for responses about complex and deep issues". Finally, interviews allow participants to express their thoughts, and they allow researchers to collect a wide range of data on people's points of view, feelings, experiences, motivation, and reasoning (Drever, 1995). Through interviews, researchers are able to assess people's knowledge as well as their likes, thoughts, attitudes and beliefs (Tuckman, 1972; Drever, 1995). Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather comprehensive information regarding the participants' perspectives and understanding of inclusive education, their views of what needs to be changed or adjusted, and the reasons underlying their judgments. This was because the participants were able to express their views openly and clearly. In addition, the conversations not only gathered the participants' ideas, but also helped to evaluate and clarify their responses (Burns, 2000).

However, it is worth mentioning that interview has some limitations. The use of interview has been criticised on the grounds that the findings from qualitative interviews are not generalizable (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Bryman, 2001). However, it has been suggested that in general "it is the quality of the theoretical

inferences that are made out of qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalization" (Bryman, 2001, p.283). The thought, planning and preparation, undertaken before the interviews are conducted, provide a solid foundation for the quality of these theoretical inferences. However, overall interview methods are particularly labour intensive (Seidman, 2013). Interview, as a method has been criticised in terms of the challenges that it presents to the individual qualitative researcher as the process of interviewing can be time consuming and costly. First, the researcher has to conceptualise the project, then establish access by contacting potential participants and scheduling interviews with them. Subsequently, the interview data has to the transcribed and the analysis begun, at which point the researcher identifies the theoretical inferences and is able to finally share the learned knowledge (Bourdieu et al., 1999). The next section describes how semi-structured interview was used in this study.

Using semi-structured interview in the current study

This study used semi-structured interview "to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale, 2007, p.8) (see Appendix 11, semi-structured interview schedule). Further, according to Drever (1995, p.1):

> *Semi-structured means that the interviewer sets up a general structure by deciding in advance what grounds to be covered and what main questions are to be asked.*

At the same time, the semi-structured interview allows researchers to change the sequence and form of questions to obtain specific answers (Kvale, 2007). Similarly, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) state that the semi-structured interview permits the interviewer to discuss topics that have not been considered before, but emerge during the interview. Thus, semi-structured interviews have the flexibility to provide first-hand perspectives of the interviewees, help generate hypotheses based on these perspectives, and provide understanding of what the respondents perceive as important (Randor, 1994). An interviewee should not be regarded as a 'vessel of answers' as indicated by Holsten and Gubrium (1995, p.30 cited in Watson, 2006, p.369):

> *The 'vessel of answers' model, referring instead to the 'stock of knowledge' that the respondent draws on in the interview situation. This knowledge is*

> *'simultaneously substantive, reflexive and emergent'. The authors suggest that, as the interview proceeds, the respondent selectively accesses, reflects on and constructs this knowledge in a way that is dependent on the self-assigned role adopted by the narrator in response to the questions asked, i.e. in response to the self invoked by the interviewer at that point.*

From this perspective, the aim of the interviewer is to activate these different ways of knowing during the interview and interacting with the interviewee as:

> *a collaborative construction in which the meaning and the way they are constructed depend on both the interviewer and the interviewee as 'active agents' in the interview'.* (Watson, 2006, p.369)

The researcher is always implicated within the research and hence the data is never entirely 'objective'. The interviewer should have some skills to reflect on the interviewee's answers by engaging with the emerged ideas and answers to make sure that a high level of understanding can be reached. In the current study, using semi-structured interview allowed me to become aware of the participants' views and knowledge without imposing my own views on the research situation. To do so, I used the semi-structured interview concept, as a method of preparation for the interviews, to prepare main questions about certain themes as well as sub-questions within the topics. The interview, as a method, is not simply a direct question and answer process but rather it requires profound reflection and engagement with the information which may be generated during the interview (Kvale, 2007). During the semi-structured interviews, my intention was that the participants should be able to freely discuss the significant issues, within the semi-structured interview framework. Subsequently, a high level of understanding was reached in the interviews, which helped me later to engage with the answers and reflect on them during the analysis process.

In the current study, interviews with female head teachers, teachers and mothers were used to collect the qualitative data. I used various procedures to ensure the success of the interviews: all interviews were conducted in the Arabic language and in convenient settings; all interviews were recorded with a portable digital recorder; I selected quiet locations in which participants felt comfortable to express their ideas and expand upon their own answers; I introduced the purpose and significance of the study at the beginning of each interview and obtained each participant's consent prior

to beginning the interview.

Documents

Documents can be a valuable source of information in qualitative research. Documents can be public and private records, including newspapers, minutes of meetings, personal journals, and letters, about a site or study participants. These sources provide valuable information about studied phenomena in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2012). Public documents can include minutes from meetings, official memos, records in the public domain, and archival material in libraries. Private documents consist of personal journals and diaries, letters, personal notes, and individual jottings. Documents are a good source for text (word) data, as they are in the language and words that the participants can understand. They can also be analysed without the transcription that is required with observation or interview data. On the other hand, documents are sometimes difficult to locate and obtain, as some information may not be available to the public. Information may be available only in selected archives, which may require the researcher to travel. Further, the documents may be incomplete, inauthentic, or inaccurate (Creswell, 2012; Forster, 1994).

In the present study, I collected official documents on inclusive education, from the Ministry of Education in Kuwait, with an aim to understand inclusion practices by investigating the strategies, polices, and laws adopted by the Kuwaiti government. After obtaining permission to use the documents, I critically analysed their content, examined their accuracy, completeness, and usefulness in answering the research questions (Creswell, 2012). Critical discourse analysis was used to analyse the policy document of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait. Therefore, it was important to consider the meaning of CDA, its main assumptions, and its use in the current study. An overview of this approach is highlighted in the following section.

Concept and main assumptions of discourse analysis

Generally speaking, according to Jaworski and Coupland (2006, p.3):

> *discourse is language use relative to social, political and cultural formations - it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individuals' interaction with society.*

Therefore, discourse analysis searches for patterns of language in texts while bearing in mind the relationship of language within its social and cultural context, thus it shapes social order. In sum, texts can change or contribute to change in people's beliefs, attitudes, actions, or social relations, as well as in the material world (Fairclough, 2003). Discourse analysis also examines the ways through which language presents different worldviews and different understandings as well as the ways in which the discourse constructs the views of the world and identities (Paltridge, 2012). Discourse analysis evaluates both spoken and written interactions (Paltridge, 2012), although Chimombo and Roseberry (1998) claim that its primary purpose is to be meaningful to the user and to provide a deeper comprehension of texts. Thus, this approach helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Critical discourse analysis is concerned with the relationship of "discourse with social and cultural issues, such as race, politics, gender, and identity, and inquires about the implications of its use" (Paltridge, 2012, p.186). That is, it aims to compare what people say and do with how they view the world themselves and their relationships. Critical discourse analysis suggests that the relationship between language and meaning is not random and is generally selected and used to achieve a particular purpose. In particular, language and meaning is influenced by what is intended to be achieved; the meanings, the beliefs and intentions affect the choice of a particular type or style of approach (Kress, 1990). As Eggins (1994, p.10) argues:

> *Whatever genre we are involved in, and whatever the register of the situation, our use of language will also be influenced by our ideological positions: the values we hold (consciously or unconsciously), the biases and perspectives we adopt.*

"Critical discourse analysis has been defined in many ways, so it is difficult to present a complete, unified picture of the concept" (Paltridge, 2012, p.187). However, Fairclough (1999, p.97) provides a clear definition which provided the rational for its use in this study:

> *CDA sets out to make visible through analysis, and to criticize, connections between properties of texts and social processes and relations (ideologies, power relations) which are generally not obvious to people who produce and interpret those texts.*

This approach further aims to reveal some of the underlying values, positions, and perspectives that are often concealed. Rogers (2004, p.6) states that discourses, "are always socially, politically, racially, and economically loaded". Critical discourse analysis assumes that language use is always social and that discourse "reflects and constructs the social world" (Rogers, 2011, p.1). This study is situated within the worldview identified by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the influences are Kuwaiti society, culture and Islam. Van Dijk (1993, p. 252) suggests that it is important to adopt a particular view point when adopting CDA:

> *Unlike other discourse analysis, (should) take an explicit socio-political stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large. Their perspective if possible is that of those who suffer most from dominance and inequality.*

How CDA is used in the current study

Kress (1990, p.85) states that:

> *Critical discourse analysts hope to bring about change not only to the discursive practices, but also to the socio-political practices and structures supporting the discursive practices.*

In order to present a reliable analysis of the current assumptions which underpin inclusion in Kuwait, either in the policy document or through the participants' views, it is important to understand the cultural context of the studied phenomenon as Martin (2001, cited in Fairclough, 2003, p.151) argues, "If you don't know what the people involved in a text are doing and don't understand their culture then you can't make sense of their text".

Therefore, to understand the meaning of the text or speech, it is necessary to know something about the situational and cultural context in which the writer or speaker is located. This position supports the argument of several researchers, for example, Armstrong et al. (2000, p.7) state that, "policies do not exist in a vacuum; they reflect underlying ideologies and assumptions in a society". Further, Firth (1935, p.37) suggests that, "the complete meaning of a word is always contextual". However, these meanings can change over time according to particular contexts and reflect changes in social, cultural, and ideological circumstances (Paltridge, 2012). Additionally, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) emphasise that to improve the understanding of the text, it is important to consider its socio-cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, discourses, particularly discourses on social life, may use different vocabularies that are however likely to overlap substantially. Different discourses may use the same words differently; therefore, it is important to examine semantic relations in order to identify these differences (Fairclough, 2003). This point helped to clarify the definitions of inclusion adopted by the Kuwaiti policy document to understand the overlapping of terms, such as inclusion and integration. To sum up, CDA is used to explore the ideological, cultural and social issues of understanding disability and inclusive education, religion and the power relationships. I sought to answer the following questions: How have local cultural contexts shaped the discourse of the Kuwaiti policy text of inclusion? How have global policy contexts shaped Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education? What are the discourses around inclusion that have shaped policy? In what way are the rights and voices of "slow learners" and their parents silenced? Moreover, the social effects of the texts could increase understanding of the current inclusive educational practices in Kuwait.

Fairclough (2003) argues that texts, as elements of social events, could have causal effects and produce change. At the minimum, texts can change given knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Disability and inclusion in the context of Kuwait could be understood from the language used in the policy document; hence, I tried to see the role of the social and cultural concepts in shaping the language of the documents and investigated the effects of such language on the practice of inclusive education.

It has been argued that in many countries, policy makers perceive education as a major factor in determining and sustaining national identity; hence, education systems in these countries use education to cultivate desired images of the nation and its citizens (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). By analysing the policy document, it was possible to enquire about the purpose of implementing inclusion in Kuwait. Is it to foster the desired image of the state? Does the implementation of inclusion depend on a clear vision and reliable strategies?

Overall, it should be emphasised that it is not simple and straightforward to analyse policy texts because of considerable room for interpretation, even if policies are laid out explicitly; therefore, it is just as important to identify issues that are not stated as well as those that are articulated clearly and openly (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

Sampling procedures

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, I adopted purposive sampling, which helped in the current study to select individuals with different perspectives on inclusive education. According to Wellington (2000, p.59), "purposive sampling, as its name implies, involves using or making a contact with a specific purpose in mind". Therefore, the participants, comprising head teachers, teachers and mothers, were selected purposively to gain rich data about inclusive education in Kuwait. Two primary schools were selected as the study sites. In Kuwait there is gender separation of teachers, so teachers in one school are either females or males. The chosen schools in this research had only female teachers schools. As a female researcher, it was easy for me to access female teachers' schools. Conducting interviews with male teachers would have been less comfortable than female teachers, specifically within the culture of the religion. It is worth mentioning that there are no significant differences regarding the educational services, structures and systems between the schools implementing inclusion in Kuwait. All the inclusive schools followed the same procedures, that is, special classes in mainstream school, and this was confirmed by the public authority when I was seeking permission to access these schools for the purpose of this research. In addition, the Ministry of Education provides all the schools in Kuwait with equal educational services and support. Thus, the schools in this study have been chosen as two representative inclusive schools which have special classes for “slow learners”. These inclusive schools in Kuwait, are called in Arabic as 'Madarice Aldamj'. Each of these inclusive schools had five primary special classes for "slow learners". The number of students in each class was between 7-15 students. The participants included mothers of "slow learners" as well as mothers of non-disabled students. In addition, the researcher selected mainstream female teachers and special teachers who are teaching in the special classes in these two inclusive schools in Kuwait. The head teachers of both schools were also interviewed.

Patton (1990, p.169) indicates that the researcher can select "information rich" participants or sites through purposive sampling. Patton explains that information rich cases could provide an immense amount of information in relation to the purpose of the study. Thus, purposive sampling provides deeper and richer data of the phenomena under investigation. When conducting a qualitative study, the researcher may study a single site (e.g., one college campus), several sites, an individual or groups, or some combination (e.g., one or multiple schools with several students in them) (Creswell, 2012). The present study utilised purposive sampling of the sites and individuals, as summarised in Table 3.1.

Variables	**Respondent subgroups**	**No**
Type of school (Sites)	Inclusive schools	2
Phase taught	Primary	-
Gender	Female teachers Mothers	
Participants Of both schools	Mothers of "slow learners" Mothers of non-disabled students Special teachers Mainstream teachers Head teachers	4 4 4 4 2

Table 3.1 Demographics of the study participants and sites

Data analysis

Cohen et al. (2007, p. 461) claim that:

> *Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants definitions of the situation.*

The qualitative data analysis offered detailed and rich information on teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards including "slow learners" in mainstream schools in

Kuwait. All the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Arabic and then I translated the codes (I describe this process fully below), which I used to identify the participants points of view, into English. Following Creswell's (2012, p.239) definition of transcription as "the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data" I used audiotape recordings in order to enable me to start and stop the recordings or to play them at an appropriate speed so that I could accurately transcribe and follow what the participants said. Lapadat (2000, p.206) points out that there is no standard set of rules or criteria for the transcription process, however:

> *The researcher makes transcription decisions depending on purpose, theoretical stance, and analytic intent. In turn, these transcription decisions influence the analysis, interpretations, and implications for theory and practice.*

Furthermore, Green et al. (1997) view transcription as a constructive and interpretive act in which the researcher positions him/herself. It could be argued that transcription is a fundamental process for analysing qualitative data. Thus, clarity of purpose in the transcription process is very useful, just as it is for other aspects of qualitative analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following the guidelines of Lapadat (2000, p.216):

> *One useful strategy is to keep an audit trail of decision points while transcribing. What has the transcriber chosen to transcribe or not transcribe, and why? How is he or she choosing to represent particular elements?.*

Before starting the transcription process, I wrote down some key points as notes to remind me of key issues to consider during the transcription process, such as the way of understanding disability, understanding inclusion, barriers of inclusion and other main aspects in the research questions. However, I transcribed points or issues that emerged because emerging issues, during the transcription process, were a very important aspect to me so I was making sure to consider them. In this regards, I transcribed all the participants' views and perspectives about the studied phenomena and found surprising and unexpected issues during this process. My main aim was to highlight the voices of teachers and mothers as clearly as possible, and to clarify the situation and the understanding of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait, via interpretations and the construction of participants' views. During the transcribing process I only omitted the segments of talk which did not relate to the research topic.

For example one of the participants talked about the medical condition of her husband and others talked about some personal problems in their lives.

The process of transcription was labour intensive, as each interview took approximately between three to seven hours to transcribe, thus I allowed one month for conducting the process. However, the process of transcription was extremely helpful and promoted intense familiarity with the data (Lapadat, 2000). Once the interviews were transcribed, they were classified into individual file folders for each participant, with the first page of the file consisting of information about the participant, such as jobs, qualifications, teaching experience for the teachers, in addition to the identification numbers and letters given for each participant for the purpose of easy reference and access to each transcript (see Appendix 1). These files assisted me in sorting and reducing the data into a manageable size and provided me with an important starting point for analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, I read all the interviews to immerse myself in order to get a broader sense of the nature of them. Then, using paper and pencil, I tagged hard copies of the interviews for aspects that appeared at this stage to be relevant and interesting and to identify the major aspects that I was paying attention to and to ensure that they were being identified across all the interview transcripts. As recommended by Kvale (2007, p.8), "reading the transcribed interviews may inspire the researcher to new interpretations of well-known phenomena". Thus, I continuously re-examined the data in an effort to deepen my understanding and interpretation of it.

It is worth mentioning here that although there are many qualitative data analysis software programs available today, the decision to use a qualitative data analysis program might be based on several factors including whether "you are adequately trained in using the program and are comfortable using computers" (Creswell, 2012, p.241). Although I had attended a two day Nvivo course (at introductory level), at the University of Stirling, to have an idea about the computer software program for qualitative data analysis, I found that it was not enough to learn how to use the program in a short period of time as I felt I would need an intensive course to learn about it and there was not enough time to do so. Furthermore, Patton (1990) suggests that qualitative data contains direct quotations of the participants' views, feelings and knowledge which computer data analysis programs are not fully able to fully deduce.

As my data emerged from the interviews that were translated from Arabic to English, the original interview data contained particular words and phrases which do not translate word-for-word to English (see Appendix 2, example of some translated text). I believe that computer analysis of data becomes less meaningful compared to a manual analysis by the researcher, as the latter provides the opportunity for the researcher to interact directly with the data. Creswell (2012, p.240) indicates that manual analysis of qualitative data may be preferred when researchers:

- Are analysing a small database (e.g., fewer than 500 pages of transcripts or field notes) and can easily keep track of files and locate text passages.
- Are not comfortable using computers or have not learned a qualitative computer software program.
- Want to be close to the data and have a hands-on feel for it without the intrusion of the machine.

After the completion of the management and organisation of the qualitative data the next step was the coding process. In the current study I followed a visual model of the coding process in qualitative research, as proposed by Creswell (2012) see Figure 3.1.

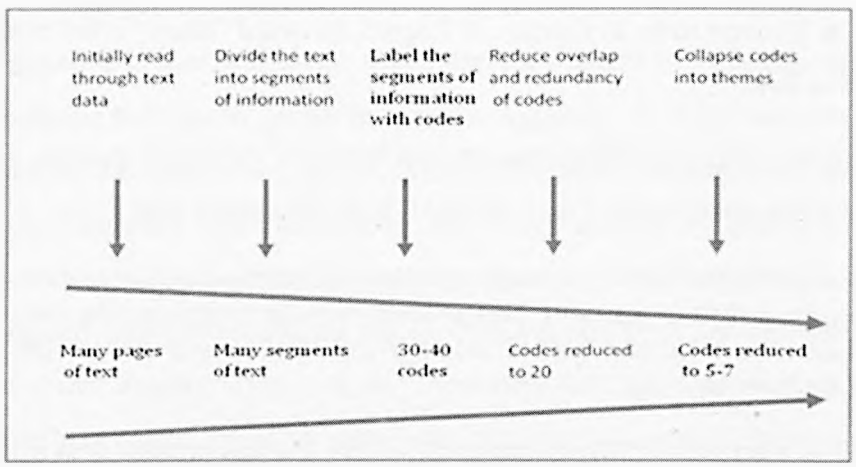

Figure 3.1 A visual model of the coding process in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012, p. 244)

Coding is an analytical process that requires the researcher to review, select, interpret, and summarise information (Walliman, 2011). Creswell (2012) describes this process as identifying text segments, bracketing them and assigning codes or phrases that accurately describes their meaning. After reading all the transcriptions carefully and jotting down some ideas as they came to mind, I began coding each interview separately. The coding process was undertaken on the Arabic copies of the transcribed interviews (see Appendix 3 (A and B) for examples of the coding process). Then I translated the codes and the quotations, related to each code, into English. The translation was checked and verified by a professor of English at the University of Kuwait. It is worth mentioning that some terms in Arabic have different meanings in English, for instance, in the current study, participants used the word "crazy" as describing somebody who is mentally not stable, lacking in mental capacity, mad and stupid etc. For example, Mother (E) stated that, *"The current school is not equipped and prepared for inclusion, I prefer, separate buildings for students who are slow learners because of the problems that they face from other, non-disabled students who call them "crazy" and hit them some times".* Thus, in the context of Kuwait the word "crazy" is seen as a negative term. In contrast, on most occasions when the word "crazy" is used in conversation in English it refers to wild or excited behaviour. It does not mean mentally unstable or deficient, as it seems to be in Kuwait. In English the word "crazy" is not really seen as a negative term.

In the current study, the coding process was based on two main aspects. The first was the research questions as Creswell (2012, p.247) 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.*

According to Merriam (1998), the main aim of the analysis process is to understand the research situation and to find what theory accounts for it. The second aspect, that the coding process was based on, is the theoretical framework of the current study: the medical model, social model and capability model (see Chapter Two, p.25) for more details about the theoretical framework). During the analysis process I was mindful to let the categories or themes emerge from the data, attentive to possible new and emerging codes, and I was open to surprising and unexpected themes that

would reflect the participants' views and perspectives as well as their understanding of the studied phenomena that could be inferred from the interviews (this is exemplified further below).

Following Creswell's (2012, p.244) suggestion that, "you can state codes in the participant's actual words". I 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 (see Appendix 4 for an example of the list of coding). The next step was to identify and group similar codes and look for redundant codes, as suggested by Creswell (2012, p.245), 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.*

The process of identifying the themes was:

> *By examining codes that the participants discuss most frequently, are unique or surprising, have most evidence to support them* (Creswell, 2012, p.245).

I designed a colour and shape guide for the process of reducing the codes and categorising them under broad themes (see Appendix 5). 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 needed a continuous process of modification, including adding emerging themes, relevant categories, and deleting non-related ones and combining others. Direct quotes from participants were used as some of the category titles, such as "The school does not implement inclusion in the practice", as one of the study aims is to, as clearly as possible, bring out the voices and perspectives of mothers and teachers.

It was challenging to combine all these data under specific themes and categories. I started reading the lists of codes and writing down each idea I came across. Different colours and shapes, available in Microsoft Word, were used to distinguish the variety of themes generated. Then I attached text segments that related to each

colour code in order to easily identify the themes that each code related to. In this way I reduced a number of codes to broad themes rather than working with an unwieldy set of codes (see Appendix 6 as an example of highlighting the list of codes to categories them under specific themes). Microsoft Word was used to cut and paste the codes from the lists of codes and categorise under specific themes. (see Appendix 7 as an example of grouping the codes). As Creswell (2012, pp.248-249) indicates there are several types of themes which authors identify:

- **Ordinary themes**: themes that a researcher might expect to find (for example: medical model of understanding disability).
- **Unexpected themes**: themes that are surprises and not expected to surface during a study (for example: the cultural beliefs such as "shame" and "the image of wholeness").
- **Hard-to-classify themes**: themes that contain ideas that do not easily fit into one theme or that overlap with several themes (for example: special teacher (3) stated that: *'there is lack of resources and lack of equipped classes and insufficient space'*, this code could fit into two themes such as barriers to inclusion, and school contexts have not changed for inclusion)
- **Major and minor themes**: themes that represent the major ideas and the minor, secondary ideas in a database (for example: understanding inclusion).

Whilst, I was assigning the themes, confusingly I found that some pieces of data fitted into more than one category or theme. A further challenge was when some categories were impossible to classify under specific themes. Thus some data or codes were classified under more than one theme. For example head teacher (A) indicated that the, "*Current name (special classes) should be changed because of the negative implications of using such a name".* This statement was appropriate to three themes: *barriers of inclusion*; *teachers' and parents' perspectives* and *the school does not implement inclusion in the practice.* As the statement covered more than one theme of the studied phenomena, I considered that this implies that the view expressed is highly significant.

Pilot study

A pilot study with a teacher and a mother 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 survey. In addition, it allows the researcher to determine the time needed to complete the interviews. Furthermore, it 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).

Ethical issues

Since educational research is conducted with human participants, ethical issues must be considered (Wellington, 2000). Creswell (2012) indicates that ethical issues are likely to arise because qualitative research involves going to the research sites and interacting with the participants. Thus, this study followed several steps to address ethical issues. An official request was sent to the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to obtain consent for the head teacher or principal to participate in the study (Cohen et al., 2007). In other words, I requested official permission before visiting the schools and conducting any interviews or distributing questionnaires to teachers (see Appendix 8). In addition, I sought general consent from the head teacher of each school. I distributed a leaflet summarising the aims and reasons for conducting this study to all participants, since they had the right to be informed about the study's goals and procedures (British Educational Research Association, 2004) (see Appendix 9). Participants were interviewed at a time convenient for them (Creswell, 2012). All participants were informed that the purpose of the study is to explore their perspectives towards including "slow learners" in mainstream classrooms. Additionally, I obtained official consent from the person in charge of any organisation that would be in any way connected to this study (see Appendix 10 (A) and (B)). In addition, as Creswell (2012) recommends, I provided a detailed description of the study procedures to the institutional review board, because the study involved human participants and the researcher could spend time in peoples' homes, workplace, or sites to gather the data.

I assured the participants of confidentiality and that their identities would be protected through the anonymising of data concerning them. The permission of all participants, to record the interviews, was sought and they were advised that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Finally, the researcher had to assure that personal information of the participants would never become public and would be stored safely in a secure location (Wellington, 2000). Accordingly, participants were assured that their data would remain anonymous and their names would be coded to hide their identities. Regarding the documentary analysis, after locating the documents related to inclusive education in Kuwait, I sought permission to use them by contacting the appropriate individuals.

Procedures

Once the proposed research had been ethically approved by the School of Education at the University of Stirling, I went to the Ministry of Education in Kuwait to receive approval to distribute the consent form to the selected participants that would allow me access to the schools. Following that, I chose two inclusive schools, which have special classes for "slow learners". I made an appointment with the head teacher in each school to discuss the aim of my study and to obtain her permission to access the school. The secretary at each school was acting as a gatekeeper, therefore they may have has biases when selecting the participants. I provided each participant with a consent form and an information leaflet about the aim of my research, indicating that their participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Subsequently, after conducting the interviews with teachers and head teachers I then had to get permission from the head teachers to conduct interviews with the mothers in the schools. I also asked the head teachers to help me to arrange appointments with the mothers of "slow learners" and mothers of non-disabled students, in order to conduct the interviews with them. The head teachers provided me with mothers' contact numbers and I contacted them and explained to them the aim of my study, asking them if they would be happy to participate in my study. When they accepted to partake in the interviews, I arranged with them the time and the day which suited them to attend the school and take part in the interview. On the same day of each interview, and before starting conducting the interview, I provided each mother with a consent form and an information leaflet about the aim of my research,

indicating that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Trustworthiness of the current research

Lincoln and Guba (1985) create several concepts and processes to assess the quality of interpretive research, namely the trustworthiness of qualitative research, which consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This criterion reflects issues traditionally discussed as validity and reliability in quantitative research (Seale, 1999). The issue of trustworthiness can enhance confidence in a particular study, as qualitative researchers have suggested several factors to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings in qualitative studies. These factors include careful attention to the study's conceptualisation and the ways in which the data are collected, analysed, and interpreted (e.g., Creswell, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, several strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and the findings of this study.

Credibility

Credibility is an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid, then it is worthless (Cohen et al., 2007). Thus, credibility is to ensure that the instruments used in an enquiry measure what they claim to measure. Hammersley (1990, p.57) affirms that, "by validity, I mean the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers". The interview schedule was piloted. Furthermore, I had some training about carrying out an interview during my Master's degree, in addition to reading resources (e.g., Kvale, 2007) about the processes and recommendations for conducting successful interviews before doing the interviews, as recommended by my supervisor. Understanding the phenomena of interest, through the participants' eyes and avoiding putting answers in their mouths, is considered as the most important features of the interview process (Cohen et al., 2007; Kvale, 2007). Furthermore, the richness of the data collected by different methods, in the current study, provided opportunities to examine the data from different aspects. This was a consequence of adopting strategies, such as triangulation and peer review, with an aim to ensure credibility criteria.

Triangulation

Qualitative researchers triangulate different data sources to enhance the accuracy of a study. Triangulation is the most widely utilised validation strategy in educational research literature (Denzin, 1988; Creswell, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Silverman, 2006). For example, Creswell, (2012, p.259) indicates that triangulation is:

> *The process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data, (e.g., observational field notes and interviews), or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. The inquirer examines each information source and finds evidence to support a theme.*

Moreover, Stake (1995) urges the utilisation of the triangulation method to validate interpretive research because it provides precise results and alternative explanations. In this study, triangulation was used to enhance the validity of the findings that emerged, based on the data collected from three different groups of participants: head teachers, teachers and mothers. In addition, data was collected through two different methods, namely CDA of policy documents and interviews. This helped to investigate the phenomena under study from different aspects, subsequently achieving greater validity because the information, which was presented in an accurate and systematic manner, drew on multiple sources of information and individuals. Such a strategy can improve the trustworthiness of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

I tried to meet the assumption of transferability by providing a deep description of my data and context. Merriam (1998, p.211) claims that transferability could be achieved with, "rich and nuanced explanations and descriptions of data". Such descriptions allow readers, "to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred". Similarly, Schofield (1993) suggests that the extent to which findings from one study are generalisable to other situations, in terms of comparability and translatability, is much clearer when qualitative research provides a clear, detailed, and in-depth description of the phenomenon under investigation. Indeed, generalisability reflects the applicability of research findings to various other settings (Cohen et al., 2007).

Therefore, in this thesis I explain the background and provide details about the cultural understanding towards disability, in which this study took place. Quoting verbatim data from a number of participants ensures that the reader has access to a part of the original data and is able to develop a picture of the socio-cultural context of the study. Thus, the findings of this study can be transferable to similar socio-cultural contexts and enabling comparisons to be made.

Dependability

The concept of dependability parallels reliability (Flick, 2006). Within the context of qualitative research, reliability has been defined as an important issue to be addressed through methodological processes. For example, Neuman (2003, p.184) believes that for qualitative researchers, "reliability means dependability of consistency, arguing that qualitative researchers use various techniques (interviews, participation, documents) to record their observations consistently". Therefore, a qualitative study can be evaluated or regarded as reliable based on the extent to which consistent methods and procedures are used. In the current study, using different methods of data collection helped to confirm that the results of the study were independent from any bias; for example, from the articulation of the policy as well as the participants' understanding of disability. In this study, it was evident that the medical model of understanding disability affects the development of inclusive education, this was clearly explicit in the articulation of the policy as well as among most of the participants' understanding of disability. Thus, the research process and justification of the findings from different resources have been provided to increase the dependability of this study. In addition, the interview questions excluded any misleading questions, as determined in the pilot study, and I made sure that during the interviews I did not indicate or point to any answer or exert any kind of influence over the interviewee, towards specific answers.

Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise the importance of minimising the researcher's influence on the individuals participating in a study, that is the research findings should be based on facts rather than the researchers' subjective interpretation. To verify the study's findings, integrating data from various sources to reach a conclusion requires that the qualitative data should be traceable to its source and the

logic used to interpret the findings should be clearly explained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this regard, the aim of the analysis was to understand the research situation, explore the theory that could explain the phenomenon under investigation, and make sense of the data, as suggested by Merriam (1998). In addition, care was taken not to impose my expectations on the data, but to allow the themes to emerge from the data. 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.

Summary

This chapter has presented the methodological approach adopted in the current study. Research paradigms were discussed with a detailed review of the interpretive paradigm followed by a rationale for using it in the current study. The research design of this research was discussed and justified. A description of the research procedures; data collection methods, sampling and data analysis was presented. Finally, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the current research were presented.

Chapter Four
Critical Discourse Analysis of the Policy Document of Inclusive Education in the Context of Kuwait

Introduction

This chapter examines the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education, *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*. In doing so it relates Kuwaiti policy to the global policy as represented by the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). In examining Kuwaiti policy, CDA was used to explore the ways in which "slow learner" students and their families are positioned by policy and to explore the effects of the religious, social and cultural contexts in the articulation of such policy. Bell and Stevenson (2006, p.29) state that, "it is important to recognise the crucial role played by societal culture in shaping state policy". This allows deeper questioning about the purposes and potential effects of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education in a more holistic way.

The chapter also draws comparisons with Scottish policy as set out in GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012). The aim of this is to illustrate how national policies are shaped by global policy but are also influenced by local contexts. In doing so this study seeks to identify ways in which GIRFEC has implemented most of the important principles and values that the Salamanca Statement moved forward, and to compare this with the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education.

It has been argued that 'disability and inclusion are culturally constructed' (Hassanein, 2015, p.1) as well as that inclusive education should be perceived through the interaction of global policies or global discourses with local cultural perceptions of inclusion and disability (Thomas & Johnstone, 2015). In this regard I chose CDA as an approach to analyse the relevant Kuwaiti policy because such an approach can take apart and challenge texts with the intention of identifying the beliefs and views that the texts are based on and subject them to different worldviews, experiences, and beliefs (Clark, 1995). Furthermore, using CDA attempts to link the texts with the discourse and socio-cultural practices that are

reflected, reinforced, and produced in the text (Fairclough, 1999). Thus, this approach is not purely descriptive. It provides a deeper understanding of texts and explains their aims; it investigates, describes, interprets, and explains the relationship between discourse and society (Rogers, 2011). In summary, CDA can identify socio-cultural influences by considering texts in the light of a different worldview and influences. Therefore, I found that CDA was relevant to the aim of this study as it was helpful in identifying the affect of the cultural context in forming the policy and practice of inclusive education in Kuwait.

Inclusion from an international perspective

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994)

To expand the aim of "Education for All", over 300 participants from 92 governments and 25 international organisations met in Salamanca, Spain, from 7 to 10 June 1994 to discuss the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, especially the policies that are designed to enable schools to serve all children, including SEN children. This meeting was organised by the Government of Spain in co-operation with UNESCO and the outcome was the development of a framework. This framework is guided by the following principle:

> *Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.* (UNESCO,1994, p.6)

Within this framework, the term special educational needs refers to the needs that arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. Many school-aged children experience learning difficulties and thus have special educational needs. Schools have to find ways to successfully educate all children, including those with severe disabilities who are seriously disadvantaged. The concept of the inclusive school emerged based on the general belief that children and young with special educational needs need to have access to the same educational arrangements as the majority of children (UNESCO, 1994).

Getting it right for every child (2012)

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2012) is a Scottish Government led approach which aims to provide services for children and young people to better meet the needs of those they support. All main public organisations in Scotland are required to follow the GIRFEC principles, which provide common ground for all stakeholders from childcare providers, teachers, and health visitors to the voluntary sector, police, and social workers. GIRFEC is a national programme aiming to improve the outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland by coordinating existing policies, practices, strategies and legislations affecting children, young people, and families. The GIRFEC structure is intended to provide "joined up solutions" to social problems by coordinating the activities of a range of agencies while fully involving parents and carers in the life of the child. As such it has a focus on the child and their family to focus on good aspects in a child's life as well as those that need to be improved (Scottish Government, 2012). The GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012, p.7) approach considers the wellbeing of children and young people and indicates that, "It is based on understanding how children and young people develop in their families and communities and addressing their needs at the earliest possible time".

Wellbeing is at the heart of the GIRFEC principles. In this regard, it is worth mentioning here that such principles, reflected by GIRFEC, are in line with one of the main perspectives of the capability approach, that is it also "places the well-being and the agency of all children, and children with disability and difficulties in particular, at the center of the educational process" (Terzi, 2014, p.479). Terzi, (2014, p.479) argues that:

> *rethinking questions of inclusive education in the light of the value of educational equality – specifically conceived as capability equality, or genuine opportunities to achieve educational functionings – adds some important insights to the current debate on inclusive education.*

Thus, it could be claimed that both GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) and the capability approach could provide a unified value framework for developing inclusive practices in mainstream schools.

Policy document of inclusive education in Kuwait

Kuwait is a signatory of the Salamanca Statement and in response to this has produced *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* as the policy document outlining inclusive education in Kuwait. It involves ten articles providing general instructions to schools about the process of inclusion. Unlike GIRFEC it does not include an introduction and more significantly any clarifications about its aims, values and principles. This policy is not available to public authorities, and what are termed inclusive schools as a published guide for the teachers, parents and the public; it is also not available electronically. The administrator of the special education departments, at the public authorities, is the only person who has access to the policy document. I obtained a copy of the policy after seeking permission from the Ministry of Education. It is worth mentioning that none of the participants (head teachers, teachers, parents) were aware of the contents of such a policy and all claimed that they have never even heard about it.

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Education communicates with schools to inform them about policy by sending a summary of *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*. Implementing the policy is the role of the administrators of the special education departments at the education authorities, who inform schools by holding a meeting with the head teachers of the inclusive schools and explaining the policy to them. The head teachers who were interviewed in this study however, indicated that this process has only happened once, when the law was established in 1996 and after that had not heard or received any updates in relation to the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*. Consequently, successive administrations at these schools, such as new head teachers, are not aware of the system of inclusion. These schools included those where I conducted interviews with their head teachers, all they know is that the special classes are for "slow learners" as they are called in Kuwait. These students are transferred from mainstream classes to the special classes as a result of repeated failure in most school subjects. The following diagram shows the relationship of the Ministry of Education with schools in terms of how the new information, laws and rules flow down to schools.

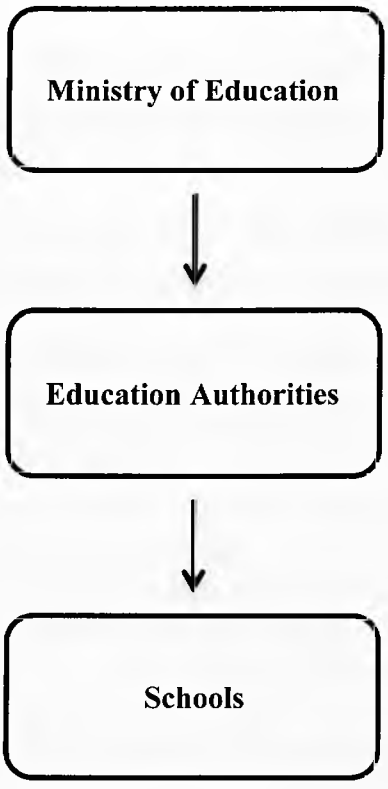

Figure: 4:1 The lack of autonomy of schools

Inclusive schools do not have any plans or awareness about the policy of inclusion to be adopted and clarification of the process of inclusion. This point will be explained further in the next chapter in order to show the gap between the policy of inclusive education and the actual practice in the schools in Kuwait. The main changes that the schools have made regarding inclusive education is allocating some special classes in the mainstream schools, and if the mainstream teacher identifies "slow learners" in the class, she/he informs the parents directly or asks the school administrator to inform the parent about the situation of their child. The school then asks the parents to do the rest of the transfer process at the public authority, which will explain to them the steps they have to adopt, such as IQ tests, before transferring their child to the special classes. However, if the parents refuse to transfer their "slow learner" child to the special classes, their child will remain in the mainstream classes without any kind of additional support. The current policy document of inclusive education has not been amended from the date of its

establishment in 1996. In the current study, the analysis of the Kuwaiti policy document was in its original Arabic form and then translated to English.

Articles under the Regulation of law 4 of 1996

In this section CDA is applied to the government legislative document *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* that proclaims the rights of "slow learners" to be educated in mainstream schools alongside their peers by creation of special classes in mainstream schools. Articles (1), (3), (4) and (5) are highlighted.

Article (1) provides a definition of "slow learners" as follows, *"Slow learners are those with an IQ of 70–85".* It also explains the diagnostic process indicating that it means to:

> *Make sure that academic difficulties of the student is due mainly to the decrease in the level of mental abilities. It should not only be based on the IQ test, but academic performance, psychological, social and medical factors should be also considered.*

The document starts with the definition of "slow learners", however interestingly, a definition of inclusive education and it is principles are not found in *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*. Further, it can be clearly seen that Article (1) defines "slow learners" in terms of low limited abilities by mentioning the IQ level of "slow learners". It also emphasises and encourages focusing, during the diagnostic process, on the decrease in the level of mental abilities as a main factor of the academic difficulties of "slow learners". Such discourses are overloaded with terms that reflect the assumptions in the medical model because it considers academic performance, psychological and medical factors as causes of disability, specifically with "slow learners". Vlachou (2004, p.6) claims that:

> *One of the major problems of policy design and implementation in the area of inclusion is its traditional, dominant and persistent focus on an individualistic deficits approach to needs.*

It could be argued that the medical model of understanding, which the policy reflects, could lead to contradictions in embracing the practice of inclusion in mainstream schools because adoption of the medical model by the current policy could lead to exclusive practices, where children are separated in order to "fix their

deficits". However, inclusion calls for removing the barriers and accommodating the environment according to the child's needs (Ainscow & Miles, 2009). Liasidou (2008, p.493) argues that:

> *Inclusive education policy cannot be achieved through binary educational policymaking trajectories referring to different categories of children, which thereby reinforce catastrophic special education discourses.*

The social factors, as one possible factor of academic difficulties, are only mentioned twice in *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* in Article (1). However, the document does not clarify, for the schools, which social factors for example, school environment, attitudes or family problems should be considered and how they can be improved, if they do exist. Whereas, deficit diagnosis, categorisation and individual treatments are stressed throughout the whole policy text. In contrast, the Salamanca Statement contends that the merit of inclusive schools is:

> *Not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, in creating welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society. A change in social perspective is imperative. For far too long, the problems of people with disabilities have been compounded by a disabling society that has focused upon their impairments rather than their potential.* (UNESCO, 1994, p.6-7).

Article (3) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states that:

> *Special classes should not be separate from the mainstream classes and should not carry any names or labels that would distinguish them from the regular classroom.*

This article emphasises that any labelling that would distinguish special classes from the regular classrooms in the school should be avoided. However, in the title of this regulation is the *'creation of special classes in mainstream schools'*, this clearly labels such classes. The policy adopts a label and asks the schools not to use the label and does not offer any alternatives. The language of the policy is therefore contradictory. The aims of the Ministry of Education are unclear because the policy claims to support inclusion on the one hand, while on the other hand it supports exclusion. It could be argued that if special classes are different from the mainstream classes, then by definition in Article (3) they must necessarily be "separate".

The word "separate" in this article is a complex word as it denotes different

meanings because it does not clearly indicate where such classes should be; in the same building or in the same corridor or where. This exemplifies the contradictory language used in the document. This contradiction, within the legislation itself, actually reinforces labelling and categorisation. In fact, in the mainstream schools where the current study is conducted, the special classes are inside the school building, but are separate from the mainstream classes, in a separate corridor. The policy does not state clearly where such classes should be located and how they should look and what are the arrangements and facilities that are available there. The contradictory articulation of the discourse in Kuwaiti policy could lead to negative practices for inclusive, mainstream education. Brown (2005) notes that the shaky basis for inclusion encourages exclusion practices and the formation of negative attitudes towards inclusion as a utopian concept.

Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states:

> *The number of students in special classes should be based on their abilities and behavioural and psychological characteristics; however, there should be no more than 10 students in each special class.*

And **Article (5)** addresses some important issues relating to curriculum amendments and flexibility:

> *Changes in the concepts or activities need to be based on evaluating the performance of these students as well as their mental characteristics and ability to understand the material.*

Such discourses reflect the medical model of understanding disability, which has been criticised for the way in which it views disabled people as unable to play a meaningful role in society (Dewsbury et al., 2004). Within the policy discourse, in the context of Kuwait, the medical model of understanding disability is explicitly clear as it focuses on the ability, as well as behavioural and psychological and mental characteristics of "slow learners" as indicated in Articles (3) and (5). Such articles are overloaded with terms that reflect assumptions of the medical model and attributes the difficulties that these children face to their limited mental abilities and to their behavioural and psychological conditions. There is no consideration of the other factors that may cause challenges for these children, such as the school context, attitudes, pedagogy, wellbeing etc. Liasidou (2008, p.485) argues that:

The power of language and its multifarious configurations constitute an immense, albeit an opaque, discursive impediment that, unless deconstructed, will continue to undermine and subvert any attempts towards inclusion.

The dominance of the medical model discourse of understanding disability throughout the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*, sees the problem within the child rather than the barriers of the surrounding society and the education provided. This delays and makes the movement towards a more inclusive policy and practice, in the context of Kuwait, impossible and complicated because this is in contrast to a model of inclusion which is based on a social model of understanding disability that considers the conditions of oppression of SEN students (Slee, 1997).

The absence of inclusive thinking, that requires accepting learners' diversity, is apparent in the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education, and can also be found in the way in which those with physical disabilities are excluded in special schools, whereas they may require no special support in their academic performance. Oliver (1996, p.32) asserts that the social model of disability, "does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society as central in formulating a political understanding of disability".

Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states that:
"Parents have the right to accept or refuse transfer of their child to special classes".
While the Salamanca Statement emphasises the importance of parental involvement which "should be developed and parents regarded as active partners in decision making" (UNESCO, 1994, p.38). Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* pressurises parents to transfer their "slow learner" children to special classes because if they refuse to transfer their child from mainstream classes to the special classes, additional support will not be available for them in mainstream classes, as the policy does not involve this. This means the choice is no choice in effect; the parents' voices are silenced. Additionally, Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* disregards parents' rights to change their minds and decide later to transfer their child to special classes, by indicating that a written agreement form will be taken from them not to obligate the Ministry of Education to accept "slow learner" children in special classes in the future.

Article (4) coerces parents to accept transfer of their child to the special classes in the first place, because it diminishes the parents' rights to a place for their child should they change their mind, or there is a change of circumstance at a later date. It could be argued that the language of the policy gives the right of acceptance or rejection to parents, while at the same time it denies such a right by asking them to undertake a written agreement not to obligate the Ministry of Education to accept "slow learner" children in special classes in the future. This article shows the contradictory language of the text in the articulation of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996.*

The recommendations of the Salamanca Statement emphasise the role of parents in the success of inclusive education, as presented in the following paragraph:

> *Governments should take a lead in promoting parental partnership, through both statements of policy and legislation concerning parental rights. The development of parents' associations should be promoted and their representatives involved in the design and implementation of programmes intended to enhance the education of their children.* (UNESCO, 1994, p.38)

Despite the differences in meaning between integration and inclusion in English literature (see Chapter Two, p.35), in Arabic they are translated into one word "Damg" which indicates educating all children together. Therefore, there is uncertainty in the assumptions raised in the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* policy. While the policy claims that these are inclusion assumptions, I argue that these are integration assumptions.

The current policy document in Kuwait gives only vague indications of its response to inclusion, as it does not explain to schools, head teachers or teachers how to improve parental partnership, as an important factor of successful inclusion. In contrast, the GIRFEC approach ensures that, "anyone providing that support puts the child or young person and their family at the centre" (Scottish Government, 2012, p.3). (The effects of this gap in the Kuwaiti policy, on practice as well as the perspectives of parents towards inclusion, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six).

it could be argued that the international documents and policy imperatives (e.g., Salamanca Statement, (UNESCO, 1994)), proclaiming the rights of disabled children to be educated with their peers in mainstream settings, have influenced the

existence of the Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education. However, policy language and the actual practice in schools does not reflect the ethos of inclusive education, because *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* has failed to cover and promote the basic requirements, such as well-being, for all children. It could be argued that a successful policy of inclusive education is one which allocates the well-being of all children as a top priority. As Liasidou (2008, p.493) states, "the essence of an inclusive policy is concerned with the education and well-being of all students", by contrast GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012, p.10) emphasises that:

> *All agencies in touch with children and young people must play their part in making sure that young people are healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included and above all, safe.*

The subsequent inclusion attempts and the legislative shifts towards inclusive education in Kuwait are disjointed, which could be a result merely from the necessity to align Kuwait with international inclusive education policy-making trends. Armstrong et al. (2010, p.46) state that:

> *It could be argued that it is very easy for member countries of the United Nations to verbally express commitment to the concept of Education for All as a worthwhile and noble endeavor. Yet it is altogether another matter for the ideal of Education for all to be transformed into a realistic and achievable goal for countries.*

Analysis of the policy document *Regulation of law 4 of 1996,* relating to inclusive education in Kuwait, suggests that it supports segregation/integration rather than inclusion through creating special classes in mainstream schools, in an attempt to implement inclusion. The Kuwaiti policy of inclusive education considers inclusion as the transfer of "slow learners" from mainstream classes to special classes. Arguably, the policy of inclusion increases its opposite by promoting exclusionary practices.

The current Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education does not reflect the concept of inclusion, as understood in the Salamanca Statement, because it emphasises the physical location of "slow learners" in special classes in mainstream schools, while the key values and principles of inclusion are misrepresented. This is also in contrast with other policies that support inclusion, such as GIRFEC (Scottish

Government, 2012, p.7), where "Promoting the same values across all working relationships" is one of the key values and principles that is encouraged indicating that "Recognising respect, patience, honesty, reliability, resilience and integrity are qualities valued by children, young people, their families and colleagues". Thus, it could be claimed that the silencing of the inclusive education discourse is noticeable because the main focus of the Kuwaiti policy is only on the process of transferring "slow learners" from mainstream classes to special classes. The policy simply explains the assessment of and diagnostic process for "slow learners", special classes' conditions, and qualifications of teaching staff of these special classes. Article (8) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* states that, "the recruitment priority is for the person to have postgraduate qualifications in the field of special education needs". It does not involve any discourse concerning the social aspects of inclusion, whereas, "Maximizing the interaction between pupils with and without special needs is generally considered an important aspect of inclusion" (Koster et al., 2009, p.117). It could be argued that this process is translated into an expansion of special education provision. This is consistent with Armstrong et al. (2010, p.35) who argue that, "Not everything that is called and presented as "inclusive" may actually be experienced as inclusive, precisely because different understandings of inclusion are employed".

Regulation of law 4 of 1996, creation of special classes in mainstream schools, does not meet such a definition of a policy of inclusion. Farrell and Ainscow (2002, p.3) indicate that for inclusion to be effective, all students, "must actively belong to, be welcomed by, and participate in a mainstream school and community". The special classes in Kuwait do not meet these criteria and are more consistent with integration, as understood by Ainscow (1995); integration is about making a limited number of additional arrangements for disabled students in schools which remain largely unchanged. The Kuwaiti policy still adopts the integration ethos rather than the inclusion ethos. Brown (2005, p.263) states that in Kuwait inclusive education has:

> *Occurred through the addition of special education classes for children officially categorized as slow learners and for certain other categories (e.g. Down's Syndrome). They are located in separate units of regular government schools, and are described as inclusive because they are not located in special centres.*

However, the aim of inclusion is not only the attendance of disabled students in mainstream schools, alongside their peers. Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.1) state that the aim of inclusive education is also to:

> *Eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability. As such, it starts from the belief that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just society.*

Social culture in the context of Kuwait

Armstrong et al. (2010, p.48) indicate that:

> *In any society, cultural differences, social and historical experiences, and political pragmatism and principles are each likely to impact upon both policy and practice of inclusion.*

A Qur'anic perspective suggests that Muslims form an inclusive community with members providing support and kindness accordingly, consequently education should embrace individuals with various disabilities and remove any stigma and obstacles to full inclusion of disabled people (Aldaihani, 2010) (this collectivist nature of Islamic society is discussed in more detail in Chapter Six). In this sense, the Qur'an aims to remove any sort of discrimination, whether physical, mental, or social, against disabled or disadvantaged people stating that, "O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them" (Al-Hujurat:11). Islam emphasises that all people, regardless of their abilities, have equal rights, stating that the needs of disabled people need to be met and respected. However, such Islamic perspectives do not shape the policy of inclusive education in Kuwait. Bazna and Hatab (2005, p.1) indicate that:

> *The concept of disability, in the conventional sense, is not found in the Qur'an. Rather, the Qur'an concentrates on the notion of disadvantage that is created by society and imposed on those individuals who might not possess the social, economic, or physical attributes that people happen to value at a certain time and place. The Qur'an places the responsibility of rectifying this inequity on the shoulder of society by its constant exhortation to Muslims to recognize the plight of the disadvantaged and to improve their condition and status.*

It is worth mentioning that although international discourse on inclusion encourages principles that are similar to those promoted by Islam in articulating the policy of inclusive education, emphasising the rights of children with disability in inclusive schools, such as celebrating diversity, cooperation and team work (see Table 4.1) are neglected in the Kuwaiti policy document. There are important and vital differences between the ways in which international policy is implemented at national levels. For example, the very first paragraph of GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012, p.3) emphasises the importance of protecting the rights of children and families in Scotland, stating that:

> *We want all our children and young people to be fully supported as they grow and develop into successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. We believe they should be safe healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included. As children and young people progress on their journey through life, some may have temporary difficulties, some may live with challenges and some may experience more complex issues. Sometimes they – and their families – are going to need help and support. No matter where they live or whatever their needs, children, young people and their families should always know where they can find help, what support might be available and whether that help is right for them.*

These issues are not mentioned in Kuwaiti policy, which is concerned only about the placement of those children in special classes in mainstream schools. Brown (2005) argues that a culture that is motivated to assist individuals with a disability rather than forcing them to engage in activities directed towards achieving independence does not quite understand or accept the concept of independent mobility; this reflects the way in which traditional thinking contradicts the spirit and intent of human rights legislation in these countries. The "rights discourse" of inclusion, adopted in several international documents, such as the ones mentioned above, is not adopted in the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education. (The absence of equal rights discourse and its effects on the practice of inclusion in Kuwait will be discussed in Chapter Six)

Furthermore, Aldaihani (2010) argues that in Kuwait, the lack of knowledge of the Islamic perspective on disability has led to the adoption of exclusion as a modern concept, which has benefited individuals with disability by providing them every kind of "special" care without thinking of its negative aspects. This has been

enhanced by the collectivist culture, which creates a charitable and overprotective environment that emphasises dependency but embraces the adoption of the medical model of disability (Aldaihani, 2010; Brown, 2005). However, Islam does not support the medical model of understanding disability, as indicated in Hadith mentioned in Sahih Muslim, that "Verily Allah does not look at your bodies nor at your faces but He looks into your hearts" (32, 6220). Such Hadith clearly encourages avoiding focusing on the deficit and the impairment of other people and considers them simply as part of the human condition.

Categorisation, as another consequence of the medical model and its associated practices and language, acts as a barrier to the development of a broader view of inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006); a situation which is particularly true within the socio-cultural context of Kuwait. However, inclusion in Kuwait is implemented on a very limited basis and for only some categories of students with disability, i.e. "slow learners" and those with Down's Syndrome. Brown (2005, p.255) states that in the Arabian Gulf region:

> *Practices associated with the concept of educational inclusion are only beginning to emerge. Evidence of its occurrence is found only for categories of disabled, who are least likely to be perceived as 'handicapped.*

It could be suggested that the way the view of disabled students is constructed in the context of Kuwait, which is affected by the medical model of understanding disability, determines who is included and who is excluded. An analysis of the policy clearly indicates that policy makers see inclusion as suitable for students with disability who are physically and mentally more capable of being included and can be accommodated with minimal change in the context of mainstream school. "Slow learners" and those with Down's Syndrome are the only two categories of students that are identified to be included in mainstream schools, while other students, with disability, are still excluded in special schools.

Kearney and Kane (2006, p.206), who studied inclusive education policy in New Zealand, argue that successful implementation of inclusive education would require a different knowledge base than that of traditional special educational paradigms, claiming that:

> *Defining disability or difficulty as something inherent within the student (with no regard to the part played by environments, attitudes and cultures in the disablement of individuals) has a tendency to absolve those working with the student of any responsibility to meet their needs.*

The social and cultural beliefs in defining disability, and individuals with special needs in the region, is consistent with the assumptions of the medical model and contribute to the existing exclusionary policy language and practices for "slow learners" in mainstream schools. This is also true for other students with physical impairments, who are mentally capable of being included but are excluded from mainstream schools in Kuwait.

Liasidou (2008, p.483) argues that, "Local cultures, language and ideological dynamics infiltrate and eventually domesticate inclusive educational policies". The collectivist culture in Kuwait suggests that families are responsible for caring for their child or children with disability. Sometimes, families prefer to care for their disabled children instead of sending them to educational institutions. Moreover, a culture that emphasises dependency might underestimate children's 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. Brown (2005) states that in the Middle East, traditional powers have worked to both protect and care for the disabled, nevertheless they have maintained psychosocial borders that prevent them from being integrated into the larger society, which has led to the cautious and hesitant emergence of inclusive thinking.

Gaps and limitations in the policy document of inclusive education in the context of Kuwait

Pijl et al. (1998) articulate that a well-formulated policy statement for inclusion needs to clarify the goals of education, assuring that local policy-makers, school principals and teachers understand the government's expectations. Developing a clear policy in any field strongly affects the success of the practice of such a field. Bell and Stevenson (2006, p.23) propose that:

> *As policy texts emerge with greater clarity this in turn shapes the organizational principles, and ultimately the operational practices, that shape the experience of policy at an institutional level.*

Thus, the Salamanca Statement argues for all governments to give the highest policy

and budgetary priority to improve their education systems to facilitate the inclusion of all children, regardless of individual differences (UNESCO, 1994). However, the current policy document on inclusive education in Kuwait has limitations, in a number of important aspects. Thus, it is of major importance to highlight the absences or silences in the text, as identified by Taylor (2004, p.444) as the "marginalized discourses" of the policy text. The Salamanca Statement encourages governments to consider several factors when building their policy on inclusive education. Table 4.1 highlights some of the aspects from the Salamanca Statement and GIRFEC that are not invoked and are marginalised in Kuwaiti policy relating to inclusive education. In addition, some religious texts are highlighted with the aim to show that Islamic principles do not influence the policy related to inclusive education in Kuwait.

Principles of the policy	***Salamanca Statement***	***GIRFEC (2012)***	***Policy document of inclusive education in Kuwait*** (*Regulation of law 4 of 1996*)	***Islam's principles***
Celebrate diversity	Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs. (p. viii).	Promoting opportunities and valuing diversity: children and young people should feel valued in all circumstances and practitioners should create opportunities to celebrate diversity. (p.7)	Not mentioned	The prophet Muhammad as preserved in his saying (Hadith) states that: 'Verily, God does not look at your bodies or your appearances, but looks into your hearts' (Muslim,32,6220)
The role of leaders and managers	Local administrators and school heads can play a major role in making schools more responsive to children with special educational needs if they are given necessary authority and adequate training to do so (p.23).	For managers in children's and adult services, *Getting it right for every child* means: Providing leadership and strategic support to implement the changes in culture, systems and practice required within and across agencies to implement *Getting it right for every child* Planning for the transition as staff in agencies move from the current working processes to the new child centred processes. (p.5)	Not mentioned	
Cooperation and team work	-Each school should be a community collectively accountable for the success or failure of every student. The educational team, rather than the individual teacher, should share the responsibility for the education of special needs children. Parents and volunteers should be invited to take an active part in the work of the school. (p.24)	-Making the most of bringing together each worker's expertise: respecting the contribution of others' and co-operating with them, recognising that sharing responsibility does not mean acting beyond a worker's competence or responsibilities. -Coordinating help: recognising that children, young people and families need practitioners to work together, when appropriate (p.7)	Not mentioned	Qur'an indicates: 'And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.' (Al-Maidah: 2)

Involvement of individuals with disability	Every person with a disability has a right to express their wishes with regard to their education. as far as this can be ascertained (p.6) It is also important to actively involve people with disabilities in research and training roles in order to ensure that their perspectives are taken fully into account. (p. 29).	Putting the child at the Centre: children and young people should have their views listened to and they should be involved in decisions that affect them. (p.7)	Not mentioned	
Parent partnership	-The role of families and parents could be enhanced by the provision of necessary information in simple and clear language; addressing the needs for information and training in parenting skills is a particularly important task in cultural environments where there is little tradition of schooling. Both parents and teachers may need support and encouragement in learning to work together as equal partners (p. 37). -A co-operative, supportive partnership between school administrators, teachers and parents should be developed .(p.38)	-For children, young people and their families *Getting it right for every child* means: -They will feel confident about the help they are getting. -They understand what is happening and why. -They have been listened to carefully and their wishes have been heard and understood. -They are appropriately involved in discussions and decisions that affect them. -They can rely on appropriate help being available as soon as possible. -They will have experienced a more streamlined and co-ordinated response from practitioners. (p.5)	- Only the following points is mentioned in Article (4): -'Parents have the right to accept or refuse transfer their child with slow learning to special classes'. - 'If the parents refused to transfer their child with slow learning to the special classes, a written agreement form will be taken from them not to oblige the Ministry of education to accept the child with slow learning in the special classes in the future only if places in such classes is available'	

Table 4.1: Comparison of the Kuwaiti policy, GIRFEC and Islamic principles

In order to develop inclusive education in line with the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and the GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) policy documents, Table (4.1) lists the important issues that should be addressed by Kuwait, which signed the Salamanca Statement in 1994 claiming that it supports inclusive education. However, reviewing the Kuwaiti policy on inclusive education, it was found that most of these issues are either absent, misrepresented or vague. *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* does not require mainstream schools to consider all children of equal value to the school community. Furthermore, it fails to stipulate procedures and coordinating efforts to maximise the participation of "slow learners" in these schools. Thus, it could be argued that "slow learner" children and their families are forced to accept and adapt in an unchanged educational system. Only *Article 5* of the *Regulation 4 of law 1996* addresses some important issues related to the curriculum flexibility, as follows:

- The secretariat for special education, in coordination with substantive guidance of teachers of special classes, has to amend certain concepts or activities in the curriculum to serve the educational needs of students.
- The amended curriculum must include physical and practical activities.
- These changes in the concepts or activities need to be based on evaluating the performance of these students as well as their mental characteristics and ability to understand the material.
- The adaptive and amended curriculum must be considered as a broad rather than a codified framework, affording the teacher and students the flexibility in teaching and learning.

However, such changes in the curriculum still reflect the dominant mode of thinking about the term "special". The special education concerns are thoroughly articulated in the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusive education. Discourses related to the need to restructure the educational context are only articulated with limited reference as presented in Article (5) as "modifications" in the curriculum, and significantly no details are given about the Ministry of Education's responsibilities and the necessary procedures required to implement these modifications. For instance, the changes in the pedagogy are misrepresented, with Brown (2005, p. 263) indicating that three countries (Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain), "Significant barriers to academic integration are contained

within the government curriculum, as it does not provide for differentiation or individualisation of instruction at any level".

Conclusion

In conclusion, the articulation of *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*, acts to create exclusionary practices for "slow learners" in mainstream schools, despite the exhortations of Islam; policy acts to discriminate, as indicated by (Ballard, 1999, p.3).

> *Understanding that seeing students such as the disabled as 'others' creates the discrimination of 'them' and 'us', valued and not so valued, that is a basis for exclusion.*

The effects of the social and cultural contexts in the articulation of such policy play a fundamental role in the way that the current policy is presented. Discourses which encourage the independent life of children with disability are not found. In addition, the key aspect of the medical model of understanding disability has been found throughout the articulation of *Regulation of law 4 of 1996, the creation of special classes in mainstream schools*. These include concepts such as "categrozation" and "labelling"; focusing on the "deficit" of the child with disability. However, concepts such as considering the development of the mainstream school system and structure, promoting the values and principles of inclusion in the mainstream schools was not found in the Kuwaiti policy of inclusion.

In the policy document, the role of the disabled and their families is marginalised. For example, the voice of students with disabilities is not considered in *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* and their parents' voice is limited to accepting or rejecting the transfer of their child to special classes. There is nothing mentioned in the document about children's rights. The document just states the procedures for transferring "slow learner" students from mainstream classes to special classes in regular schools to ensure some kind of school integration.

Drawing comparisons with Scottish policy, as set out in GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) which has implemented most of the important principles and values that the Salamanca Statement moved forward, has helped to identify the key limitations in the policy of inclusion in Kuwait. Such comparisons have helped to conclude that the current policy of inclusive education in Kuwait is in sharp contrast

with the equal rights' discourses and the key principles of inclusive education that are encouraged by global policy, specifically by the Salamanca Statement framework.

Chapter Five
Findings: Perspectives and Understandings of Disability and Inclusion

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and interpretation of the findings of the interview data. Each theme, identified in the analysis, is examined in detail followed by a general summary of the findings of participants' views regarding the studied phenomenon. Before proceeding to the different sections of this chapter, it is worth reiterating the research questions in order to contextualise the findings.

1. What is the policy context for inclusive education in Kuwait?
2. How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand disability?
3. How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand the concept of inclusion?
4. What are Kuwaiti female head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion?

Themes

The data analysis produced three themes and two sub-themes, relating to head teachers', teachers', and mothers' understanding and perceptions of disability and inclusion. Data were analysed for themes directly relevant to the research questions and additional themes emergent from the data, were also identified. These are as follows (see Figure 5.1).

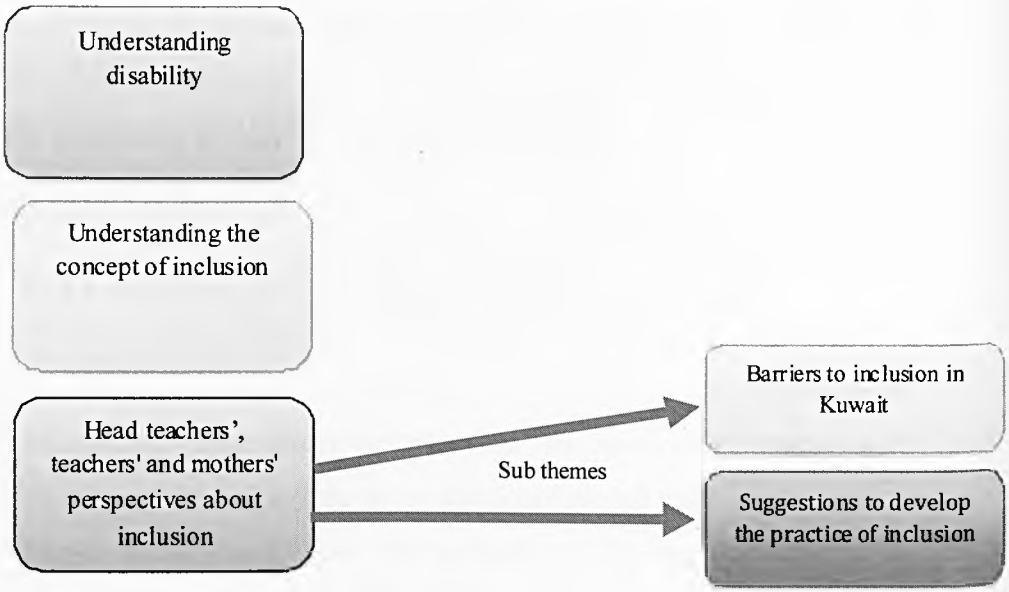

Figure 5.1: Themes

While these themes are presented as discrete themes, for the purpose of analysis, it is important to recognise that they are interconnected and "enfolded". These key themes have a significant overlap with each other and are closely connected to each other. All of them together provide a theoretical framework for understanding perspectives towards inclusion in Kuwait.

Understanding disability

The interpretation of data in this theme answers the following research question:

How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand disability?

Models of understanding disability	Number of Respondents	Participant code
Medical Model	*12 participants*	ST (5) M (A) ST (3) M (C) ST (6) M (E) HT (A) M (D) MT (1) M (G) MT (2) M (H)
Social Model	*3 participants*	HT (B) MT (7) MT (8)
Capability Model	*None*	
Participants who have drawn on the "Medical Model" and "Social Model"	*3 participants*	ST (4) M (B) M (F)

(HT–Head Teacher; MT–Mainstream Teacher; ST–Special Teacher; M–Mother)

Table 5.1 : The participants' responses about disability

Most of the participants understanding of disability reflected the medical model of understanding disability. For example, the majority of respondents focused on the physical and or mental impairment of individuals with disability in constructing their own ideas about what disability means. Some teachers and mothers considered disability in terms of what is "visible", such as "physical impairment". Such understanding is exemplified by the following responses:

ST (5):

"Disability is what we can clearly see in the individual such as physical impairment."

"I call the disabled, disabled if he/she is physically disabled and can't hold things or walk. I only consider physical impairments as disability."

ST (6):

"Disability means physical disabilities, or the person who can't move or speak."

M (B):

"The person with a disability is the person who, for example uses a wheelchair because they have a physical impairment."

While physical disability was mainly attributed to visible physical characteristics, such as being unable to walk or to move or to write and speak, others referred to some invisible characteristics such as mental impairment or not being able to understand. For example:

M (C) :

"The disabled is the one who does not know what is going on around him/her because they are mentally different than the non-disabled students".

M (E):

"Those who have a clear disability, such as a mental disability, I consider them as disabled because of their limited understanding."

Other respondents considered disability in terms of both visible and invisible impairment. They think of disability categorically in terms of physical or mental characteristics. It could be argued that for most of these participants the deficits of the individuals with disability, whether physical or mental, is the main concern. Such views are exemplified by the following responses:

HT (A):

"Students with mental and physical disabilities are considered disabled".

MT (1):

"Disability means every person who is unsound and not healthy, one hundred percent, whether mentally or physically, or hyperactive can be considered disabled".

Difference and special care

Some participants highlighted difference/normalcy issues, also a tenet of the medical model, where a person can be considered disabled because they are mentally or physically different from the normal. Some participants considered the individual with disability on the basis of being unable to function as a "normal" person because of their mental disability, as indicated by the following response:

MT (2):

"Individuals with disability are considered disabled because they are different from non-disabled students."

M (G)

"Because the impairments of the students with disability, whether mental or physical make the students different than other students."

Moreover, teachers and mothers reiterated one of the main assumptions of the medical model of understanding disability; that is special care. The medical model considers disability a problem, for the individual,that is directly caused by a disease, an injury, or some other health condition and requires medical care in the form of treatment. Both teachers' and mothers' responses, regarding special care, help and overcoming weaknesses and deficits, reflect such assumptions of the medical model which promotes the concept of dependency of individuals with disability. For example:

ST (3):

"The disabled students, unlike the non-disabled students, require help from others, special care and concentration on the weaknesses to strengthen them."

M (H):

"Disability means that the person has something missing and needs more care, for example some people can't walk, so they need help, and some people can't hear so they also need help. Therefore, the disabled need more care from non-disabled people."

M (D):

"Each disabled student has to be taken care of according to his impairment."

These responses indicate that for the participants in this study, care and help are important factors to overcome disability. Care is therefore seen as a positive construct rather than potentially a disabling factor. The giving of care is culturally embedded in Kuwait and there is little appreciation of the potentially negative consequences of this. This is further highlighted later in Chapter Six.

Disability in the educational context

With regard to the meaning of disability within the educational environment most of the participants considered the impairments of students with disability and their low academic performance as the main factors that hinder them in the classroom. They located the source of difficulties and problems within the child (factors such as mental, physical and hearing impairment) rather than within the educational environment, which reflects the "medical model's" assumption of deficiency. For example:

MT (1):

"Disability in the educational environment means: mental disability and disability in understanding, in addition to hearing disability, which affects the learning process and the academic achievement as well."

ST (6):

"Disability in the educational environment means for example, if we include students who are slow learners their disability will appear clearly and they cannot get along with the non-disabled students because their IQ level is lower than the non-disabled students."

M (E):

"Disability in an educational environment means that the child cannot understand the lesson or the concepts easily which disables their learning. For example, the delays of mental development, hearing disability, and speech disability such as stuttering are affected negatively in the child's learning process."

This gives rise to the construction of a person who is different from normal and hence needs special care and who cannot learn alongside their peers. Such understanding could lead to excluding and marginalising groups of students, who in one way or another do not fit in with the mainstream setting. The affect of the medical model of

understanding disability on the practice of inclusion in Kuwait, will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Social model

On the other hand, three out of 18 participants, one head teacher and two mainstream teachers, reflected the social model of understanding disability to describe the meaning of the term disability, by considering the role of the teacher in the class, the curriculum and pedagogy or teaching methods as factors in creating disability. Some participants also emphasised the role of society in creating disability and the role of families and their attitudes were also highlighted. For example:

HT (B):

> *"The way of dealing with an individual with disability affects his/her performance, thus if the teacher makes him/her feel disabled that will affect their self confidence negatively. However, if the teacher deals with the student with disability normally, as with non-disabled students in the class, that will increase their self confidence. So the way that the teacher deals with the student with disability could be one of the barriers and could inhibit them."*

It is worth mentioning here that views such as that of **HT (B)** imply treating students normally as opposed to giving special 'care'. Therefore, treating students normally supports the social model, whereas care could be considered to be part of the medical model. Care, in this context, could become potentially a disabling factor, in **HT (B)'s** view.

However, lack of care was considered by **MT (8)** to be a factor in creating disability, indicating that:

> *"The family could be a reason for a child's disability because some parents do not follow up and care about their child's study which leads to a decrease in their academic performance. In addition, the shortcomings of the teacher's role in helping and supporting students with disability in the class could disadvantage such students in the learning environment."*

MT (8) also further commented on the disabled child, stating that:

> *"Our society disables people with special needs not their impairment. There are people who don't have hands but are drawing by using their legs, so if there are people or families that help the individual with special needs, they can reach their goals and potentials."*

Considering society, families and the role of teachers in the class, as disabling factors for students with disability, rather than their impairments, reflects a view of the social model. However, although locating the source of the problem within the surrounding environment, rather than within the child, mentioning the lack of care and help from the families and teachers towards students with disability can be considered as disabling factors from the perspectives of both **HT (B)** and **MT (8).** Care thus emerged as a complex construct with different meanings within the discourses of the medical and social models. This is discussed further in Chapter Six.

Moreover, some participants highlighted the importance of addressing the potential of every single child and accommodating the teaching process according to the child's needs and abilities. Such understanding reflects one of the assumptions of the social model that children's current attainment reflects the nature and quality of previous learning experiences and that children with disabilities will learn when taught appropriately. This indicates the importance of all the other potential factors of disability, especially school-related factors such as teaching methods, resources etc., in creating the problem rather than concentrating only on the within-child factors. A response from **MT (7),** reflects the view of inclusion that it is not about identifying the difficulties of the students but is, rather, finding a way to respond to their needs.

MT (7):

> *"I prefer not to call it disability because I have a deaf sister. I prefer to call it special needs not disability. In my view no one is disabled, every student has a key and each students has a certain way to learn. For example, some students have strong audio memory and others have strong visual memory, so the teacher's role is to identify the key and try to not disadvantage the students in the class by using a suitable teaching methods and resources in the class."*

Social and medical models

Further, the findings show that some of the participants' views (one special teacher and two mothers) about the meaning of disability incorporated aspects of both the social model and the medical model. They sometimes concentrated on within child factors and sometimes on environmental factors, indicating the ambiguities inherent in the concept of disability. For example:

M (F):

> *"I think the teacher can disadvantage the student in the class because if the teaching performance is good it will reflect positively on the student's learning. So, the teacher is the main factor, if the student loves his way of teaching they will make progress. My son was totally unable to learn, but as a result of the current teacher's performance in the special classes his learning performance has developed and became better."* (social model)

> *"The impairment of the child, such as a mental disability and also family problems could affect the students with special needs and disadvantage them."* (social and medical model)

ST (4):

> *"I consider students with severe learning difficulties as disabled because they lack mental ability, it is limited and they need special care."* (medical model)

> *"The environment that the student lives in could disable the child, for example, does the family accept them and deal with them positively."* (social model)

It could be concluded that the concept of disability is perceived and understood differently among the participants. The findings show that teachers are more likely to hold the social model, while no mother in this study holds the view of the social model of understanding disability. The findings also show that some participants' views about understanding disability incorporate aspects of both the social model and the medical model, with none of the participants holding a capability model view of disability. However, the dominance of the medical model of understanding disability is clear among most of the participants' responses.

Understanding inclusion

The interpretation of data in this theme answers the following research question:

How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand the concept of inclusion?

Head teachers', teachers' and mothers' understanding of the term inclusion was diverse and in some cases indicated confusion and uncertainty. Their views included defining inclusion as educating students together in terms of placement, social aims and participation in some less academic subjects. Such understanding of the concept of inclusion is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Inclusion means "mixing"

Two participants (one mother and one mainstream teacher) gave explanations of the meaning of inclusion by using the meaning of the word itself in the Arabic language, which means "mixing or including two different things together". This is arguably closer to the concept of integration rather than inclusion, which is based on participation and human and equal rights as set out in the Salamanca Statement. Such understanding is exemplified by the following responses:

MT (8):

> *"Inclusion means mixing slow learners and non-disabled students in the same school."*

M (B):

> *"Inclusion means include two different things together, for example the disabled and non-disabled in the same school."*

These responses, concerning the meaning of the concept of inclusion, reflect an orientation towards locational placement. Teachers and mothers tried to explain inclusion in a very particular and limited way, via its linguistic meaning. Such an explanation reflects a limited understanding of the term inclusion.

Inclusion means including "slow learners" in special classes inside the mainstream schools and having them participate in some lessons and activities with non-disabled students

For many participants, in all categories, understanding of the concept of inclusion is dominated by the way inclusion is implemented in Kuwait. This implementation takes the form of special classes inside the mainstream school with pupils only being integrated during recess and sport, art and music lessons. Thus, the participants understanding is built and shaped by what is seen and done in practice, in school. For example:

HT (A):

> *"Inclusion should be in some school activities, and some lessons such as art, sport and music."*

MT (2):

"Inclusion means including slow learner students in non-academic subjects and some school activities with non-disabled students."

ST (6):

"Inclusion means to include slow learner students in some classes such as sport, art and music."

M (C):

"Inclusion means including the slow learner students with non-disabled students in some classes such as music, sport and art while other subjects are excluded."

Such responses indicate that some participants believe that inclusion is mainly about participation. However, they mentioned limited degrees of participation such as taking part in some but not all subjects and school activities. It is evident that both teachers' and mothers' understanding is mainly affected by the current practice of inclusion in Kuwaiti schools which reflects an integration ethos.

Inclusion aims to change the view of others and to develop social skills of "slow learner" students

When attempting to clarify the meaning of inclusion two of the participants, one mother and one teacher, tried to explain the meaning of inclusion via its social aims. **M (A)** explained the meaning of inclusion by talking about its aim to change the view of non-disabled students towards "slow learners", by increasing welcoming attitudes, creating social acceptance between all students, improving social skills, and helping to avoid the labeling of disabled students by including them in the mainstream school. For example **M (A)** stated **:**

"The aim of inclusion is to change the view of non-disabled students towards the disabled students and deal with them normally, in addition to developing their social skills and to not feel that they are different."

ST (4) explained the meaning of inclusion via its social benefits, such as increasing the communication skills of "slow learners", with other people in their society, she stated:

"The aim of inclusion is to help slow learner students to be able to communicate with people in society."

Such responses reflect a belief that inclusion is to overcome negative attitudes towards disabled individuals and decrease social exclusion, however this view was not widespread among the interviewees.

'I don't have enough idea about the concept of inclusion'

Analysis of the data indicated that there is confusion among some participants about the meaning of inclusion. Two participants **M (A)** and **ST (4)** explained the meaning of inclusion by describing the social aims of inclusion, as indicated in the previous responses, and then stated that they did not have enough knowledge about the concept. Such views are exemplified as follows.

M (A) articulated a view of inclusion as changing attitudes:

> *"I do not have enough idea about the meaning of inclusion. Before implementation of inclusion in school, there was not any awareness about the meaning of the concept of inclusion. I have not received any letter from the school, as a parent, that there will be inclusion in the school. In the meantime, I have not received any instructions or awareness raising about the process of inclusion as a member of staff in the school. All that I know is that there will be special classes for slow learner students in our school, however I do not have any idea about inclusion."*

And **ST (4)** said in addition to her previous response:

> *"I do not understand inclusion very well I can't tell what it means because my understanding of inclusion is very limited. I am not sure if inclusion is implemented in our school properly or improperly. I need training and preparation to develop my understanding of inclusion."*

Such responses indicate that there is confusion surrounding the concept and practice of inclusion among both teachers and mothers. Other participants also expressed uncertainty regarding the meaning and the concept of inclusion and its implementation for practice:

ST (3):

> *"There is lack of awareness about inclusion, I do not know if we do the right thing."*

M (D):

> *"I am not sure what inclusion means, all what I know is that there is allocation of special classes for slow learner students in mainstream school."*

Other participants (head teachers and teachers) expressed concerns about the shortcomings of the role of the Ministry of Education, as a key factor in confusion regarding the concept and practice of inclusion, for example:

HT (A):

> *"There is a lack of awareness about the concept of inclusion in the school, the Ministry of Education plays no role in this regard."*

ST (5) stated that:

> *"The current situation of inclusion is just allocating some special classes in mainstream schools without any understanding of the concept of inclusion and without any strategy that helps us to adapt. Then, we deal within our limited experience and without any direction from the Ministry of Education, so we do not know whether our work is right or wrong."*

Confusion, uncertainty, limited understanding and knowledge of the concept of inclusion, and the lack of the role of the Ministry of Education, were identified as main factors contributing to the lack of awareness of the concept of inclusion. This will be discussed later and form the basis of the recommendations set out in Chapter Seven.

'Inclusion in Kuwait is different'

While **ST (3)** and **M (D)** did not know if what was done was correct or not, one mainstream teacher's (**MT (1)**) response, about the meaning of inclusion, focused on the issue of labelling. Her response reflected an awareness of the concept of inclusion by mentioning one of its tenets - that is to avoid labels. She tried to define inclusion by explaining the current negative practice of inclusion for "slow learners", such as the negative effect of the name of classes, which in Kuwaiti inclusive schools are known as special classes. She indicated that such a name is labelling and leads to stigmatisation. The mainstream teacher commented:

MT (1):

> *"The concept of inclusion means including students with disability inside the mainstream classes, however in Kuwait the implementation of inclusion is incorrect because students who are slow learners are isolated in some classes which are called 'special classes' and such a name is labeling them which can affect them negatively because it makes them and other, non-disabled students different."*

Other participants indicated that the practice of inclusion in Kuwait is not correct, and emphasised negative issues in current practice in reflecting their understanding of inclusion. These issues included the placement of "slow learners" in mainstream schools, in special classes, without special resources and unqualified teachers. For example, **HT (B)** focused on the issue of placement:

> *"I think inclusion is that slow learner students should be in the same class with other students not what is happening in our inclusive schools."*

In one case, although the participant did not say that the policy was flawed, regarding the way inclusion is implemented in inclusive schools in Kuwait (in relation to what is set out in the Salamanca Statement), she did draw attention to the differences between Kuwait and what she perceived happens elsewhere. **M (G)** indicated that:

> *"What I know about inclusion is from the internet, is that it includes students with disability with non-disabled students in the same class with a teacher's assistant. However, in Kuwait the implementation of inclusion is different."*

Inclusion means equal rights for all students in the school

Only one participant, a mainstream teacher, understood inclusion as having equal rights in mainstream schools; this participant talked about equal opportunities for all students in inclusive schools.

MT (7):

> *"Inclusion means including students with special needs with non-disabled students and they should get the same commitment from the teachers and the same rights. But, I consider that it is a big challenge for the teachers, if they have to balance between both groups of children at the same time."*

According to UNESCO, rights and equal opportunities are key principles for inclusion. Although **MT (7)** was the only participant who reflected on the equal rights discourse in understanding inclusion, interestingly this teacher was aware that achieving such equality is a big challenge that requires commitment from all teachers, drawing on the frequently used construction (UNESCO, 1994), "I am in favour of inclusion but..." (Sikes et al., 2007). The absence of human rights discourse among teachers' and mothers' perspectives, regarding inclusion, could be affected by and related to the socio-cultural practices in Kuwait towards individuals with disabilities. When dealing

with any issues of disabled individuals, it is often under the umbrella of charity rather than the rights based approach. Such issues will be highlighted in the next chapter.

Teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion

There is some overlap between this and the previous theme in terms of having a view on what is meant by the concept of inclusion. However, this theme highlights teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards the current practice of inclusion as well as their views about the best model for implementing inclusion for "slow learners", in mainstream schools. There were no significant differences in participants views between category groups. In my event, with such small numbers of participants in each category such comparisons could not be validly made. Head teachers, and teachers are drawing on their inside knowledge, albeit from differing perspectives, of schools and classes, while mothers are situated outside the classroom. Some participants, in all categories, seem positive about inclusion while simultaneously being negative about its current practice in Kuwait. Some supported the current process of inclusion, which is special classes in mainstream schools, while at the same time appealing for special buildings situated within mainstream school sites. Others appealed for separate schools. Only a few responses, by two mothers and one mainstream teacher, identified full engagement in school life as an equal right and opportunity for all students. Most teachers' and mothers' responses strongly supported inclusion for "slow learners", in some school activities, like playing and some non-academic subjects such as drawing, sport and music. However, most did not agree with participation in academic subjects for several reasons, such as the perceived limited understanding of "slow learners". Such perspectives are highlighted in the following sections.

Special classes in mainstream schools

It would appear that most of the participants in all categories (head teachers, teachers, and mothers) regard the best model of inclusion for "slow learners" as special classes in mainstream schools. This is the system currently implemented in inclusive schools in Kuwait which is reflected in their understanding of the concept of inclusion. Most also feel that "slow learners" should be allowed to participate in school activities such as playing and gardening, and in lessons such as art, music and sport, with an aim to develop their social skills. Their preference for such a model of inclusion is based on several reasons. The main reasons being the limited understanding ability of "slow

learners" and the difficulties for the teachers in balancing inclusion, while focusing on classroom practice as a result of the additional attention and care that the "slow learners" require from the teacher. This, they considered as one of the main obstacles to including "slow learners" in mainstream classes. Broadly, such responses are in line with the integration ethos, where disabled children can be integrated in some, but not all, school activities.

Interestingly, there is no clear or significant divergence between, head teachers', teachers', and mothers' responses and views in either of the schools studied. All groups mentioned similar views and issues surrounding inclusion. However a few issues were highlighted, by mothers of "slow learner" students, such as the academic progress of their children within special classes and the problems their children suffer in mainstream classes as a result of the lack of support by the mainstream teacher in such classes. This is discussed in the following sections. The following diagram (Figure 5.2) outlines the reasons for teachers', head teachers' and mothers' preferences for *"special classes in mainstream school"* as the best model of inclusion rather than full participation in all school activities.

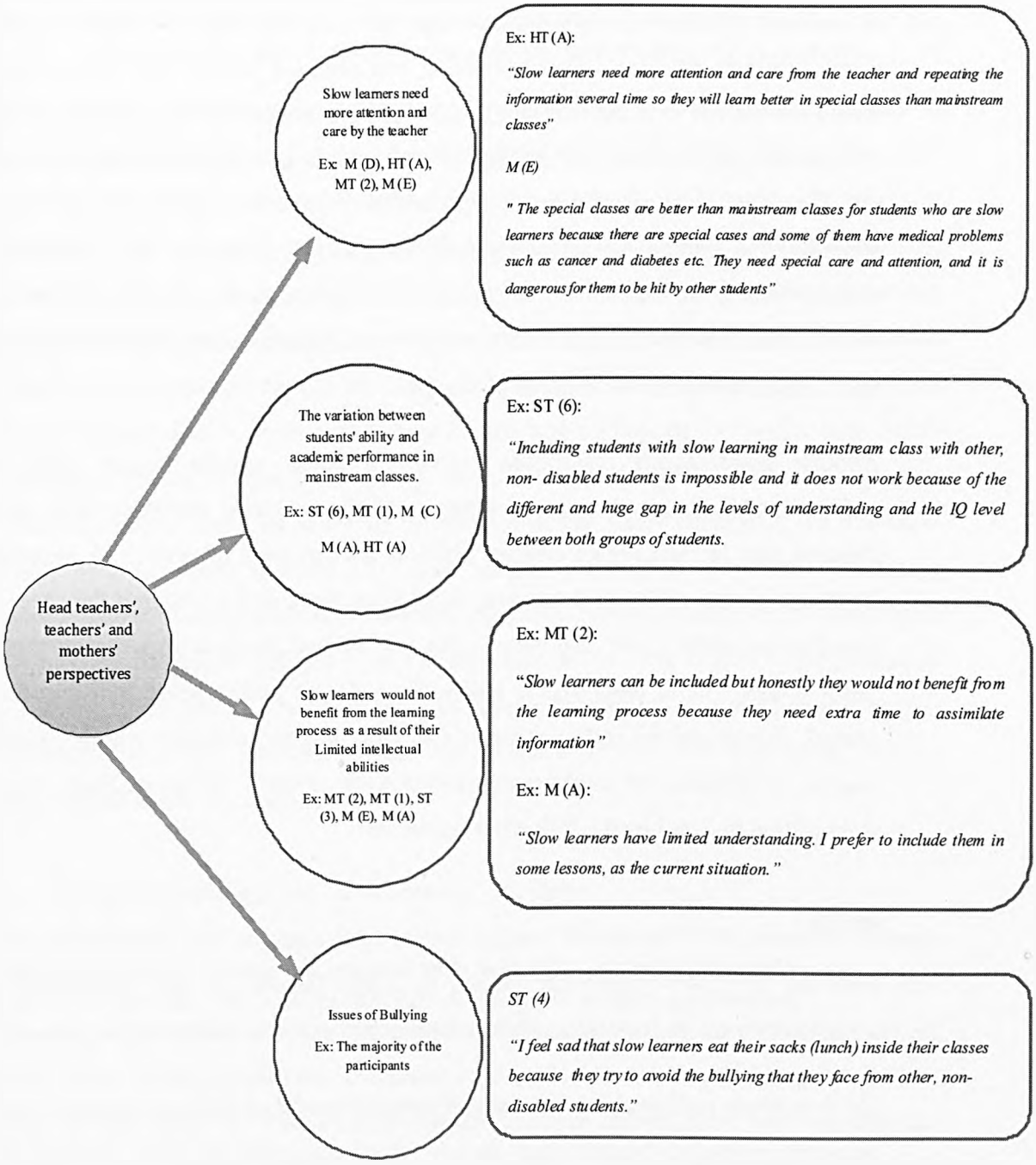

Figure 5.2: Diagrammatic outline of head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives about the difficulties of full inclusion of "slow learners"

It can be clearly seen from the previous responses in Figure 5.2 that the way that "slow learners" are conceptualised, (incapable students in terms of their limited mental disability), affects teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards the level of inclusion.

The findings indicate that most of the participants believe that the students who should be included or excluded is based on, or determined, by their IQ level which in Arabic is called "Darajat althakaa". Some teachers and mothers believe that "slow learners" would not benefit from the learning process in inclusive classes as a result of their lack of academic performance and intellectual and understanding ability, arguing that they may learn better in special settings, in addition to their need for special care and attention. The cultural beliefs and values, such as the concept of care, protection for and supporting the dependency of disabled individuals, in the context of Kuwait, will be highlighted in the discussion chapter as a fundamental element that affects teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion.

Another point which pressurises parents to prefer special classes, rather than mainstream classes, is the lack of support and the problems that their "slow learner" children face in mainstream classes. There is not any kind of support or arrangement for them by the mainstream teacher, in addition there is the bullying they face from non-disabled peers. This also reflects the role of bad previous experiences that their "slow learner" child has faced in mainstream classes before being transferred to the special classes and the lack of support for "slow learner" children, within mainstream classes, in shaping the participants' perspectives towards inclusion. Such views are exemplified in detail by the following responses:

M (E) :

> *"Regarding my son, who is a slow learner, the special classes are better than mainstream classes because in special classes my son will receive more attention and care from the teachers compared with the mainstream classes."*

Other mothers preferred the current implemented model of inclusion (special classes in mainstream school) because they are concerned about the academic progress of their "slow learner" child and the care and attention by the special teachers, which in their view is better in special classes than in mainstream classes. For example:

M (C):

> *"Special classes are better for slow learner students. I felt that my daughter made real progress. I thought that because my daughter is surrounded with the same level of students' performance, also she was not obliged to finish her writing as the mainstream teacher used to demand."*

M (D):

> *"I prefer special classes in mainstream schools, in order to allow for the teachers to pay more attention and support the child who is a slow learner."*

The policy document states that parents have the right to transfer their children to special classes. However, if they refuse, their child does not have the right to have their special needs met in the mainstream classroom. Analysis of the policy document in Chapter Four indicates that the policy gives parents choice, but on the surface. However, this is not quite what it seems as there is a gap in the policy regarding emphasising the role of the mainstream teacher towards "slow learners" in mainstream classes, in the cases where the parents of such students refuse to transfer their children to the special classes. Such a position puts pressure on parents to transfer their "slow learner" children to special classes to be better served (see Chapter Four, p. 98). Although mothers are not aware of the content of the policy document, the interview data, obtained from mothers of "slow learners", confirms the lack of teaching appropriate to special needs in the mainstream class. This situation is clearly confirmed by mothers **M (E), M (D)** and **M (C)** as indicated above. The impact of the limitation of the current policy document of inclusive education in Kuwait, based on the perspectives of the participants and the practice of inclusive education, will be highlighted in the discussion chapter.

Special buildings for "slow learner" students

Some head teachers, teachers and mothers support the currently implemented process of inclusion, that is - special classes in mainstream school - while at the same time wanting to go further appealing for special buildings situated on the mainstream school site. Thereby, they support the integration ethos, which is the current form of inclusion. The reasons given for this are to avoid the negative outcomes of implementing the current version of inclusion. In effect, the construction of separate buildings will impact on "slow learners" participation and inclusion in art, sport and music lessons, which is currently adopted in these inclusive schools. It is worth mentioning that the Ministry of Education has already prepared special buildings in the inclusive schools in order to transfer "slow learners" from the special classes to the special buildings. Some of the teachers and head teachers interviewed in this study know about this and are waiting for such buildings to be ready. The main support for this is due to the negative impact of social integration which is perceived as leading to bullying of disabled

students. Therefore, to address bullying, "slow learners" have to be segregated for their own good. The following responses reflect such views:

M (D):

> *"The current school is not equipped and prepared for inclusion. I prefer special buildings in mainstream schools for students who are slow learners because of the problems that they face from other, non-disabled students who call them 'crazy' and hit them sometimes."*

ST (3):

> *"A special building for slow learners is better for them to meet their needs by providing different facilities for them such as equipped classes, resources and qualified staff."*

Some other teachers and mothers indicated that special separate schools are better for "slow learners" rather than a special building inside mainstream schools. They believe that the current school is not prepared for "slow learners" in several aspects, such as under equipped classrooms and lack of awareness which causes bullying by non-disabled students. For example **M (F)** stated:

> *"I am not supporting the idea of inclusion at all and I have registered my son in this school because of the special classes which are separate from mainstream classes."*
> *"Honestly, I strongly disagree with the idea of inclusion and I have not found any other parents of students who are slow learners supporting such an idea. Everyone is suffering, when I meet the parents in the school they said: 'We are not satisfied and our children are not satisfied as well because of the bullying and aggression from non-disabled students'. So it is better to isolate them in separate schools, which are specialized for them."*

The negative experiences among the participants of the practice of inclusion, as a result of the current situation, could contribute in forming teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion. This point will be considered in the next chapter.

Lack of intent in implementing inclusion by the Ministry of Education

Some teachers and mothers, such as **M (E), MT (8)** and **ST (4)**, talked about the lack of seriousness of implementing inclusion by the Ministry of Education in Kuwait, for instance **M (E)** indicated that:

> *"In my view, the implementation of inclusion is not serious because there is no awareness and follow up process, so it is just a kind of formality."*

MT (8) stated that:

"The current school is not ready for inclusion and I think that the current implementation of inclusion is not serious, it is a variable implementation only."

The lack of intent, or seriousness on the part of the Ministry of Education towards inclusion gives rise to a number of issues concerning the practice of inclusion.

Inclusion is not applied in practice

Most of the participants (head teachers, teachers and mothers) in the current study indicate that inclusion is not implemented in practice in inclusive schools in Kuwait. They raise several issues, regarding the practice of the schools, which are in contrast with the principles of inclusive education, these responses are summarised in Figure 5.3.

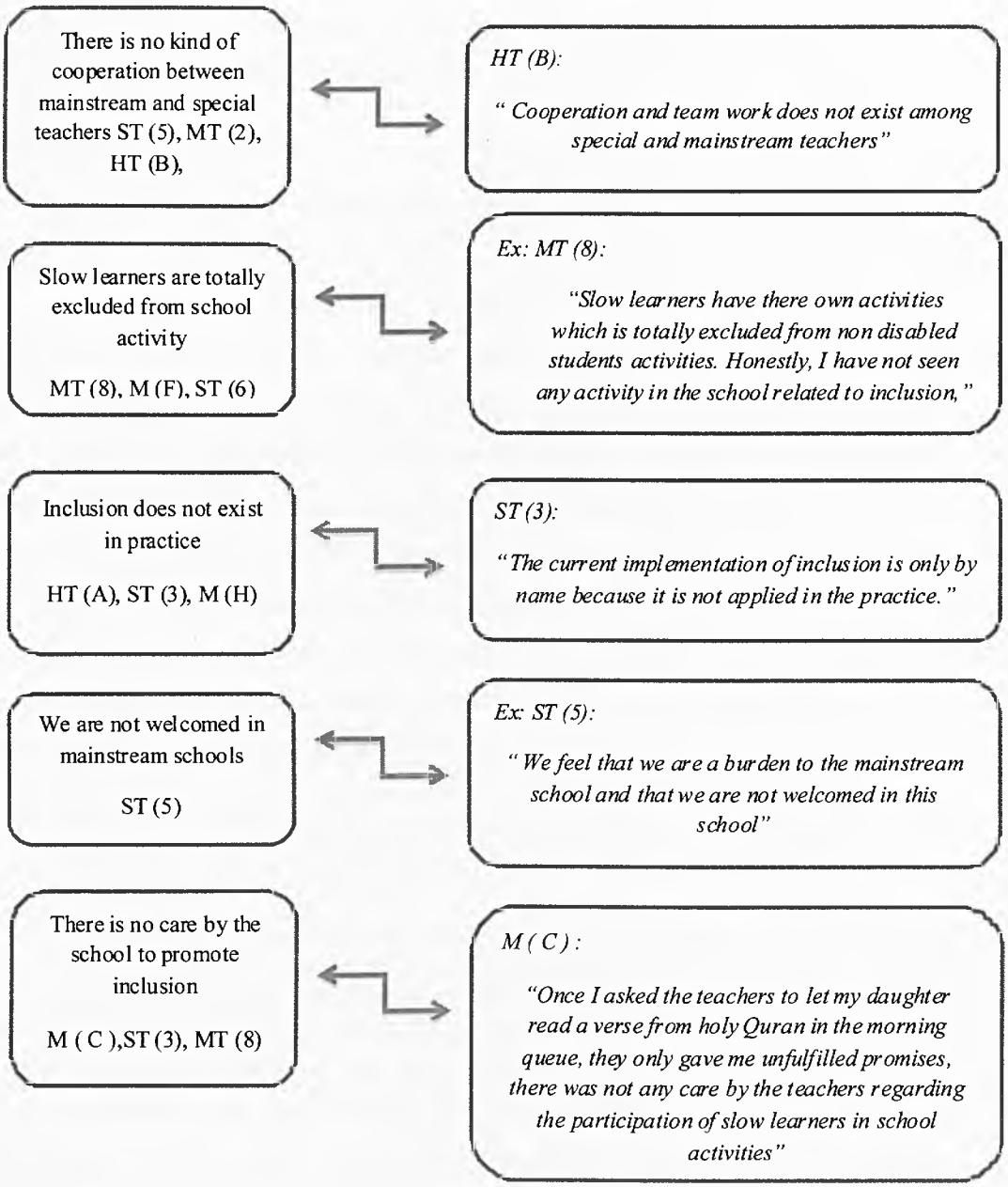

Figure 5.3: The main aspects that show that inclusion is not applied in practice in inclusive schools in Kuwait.

The data in Figure 5.3 reflects a clear absence of considering four important principles of inclusion promoted by the Salamanca Statement that Kuwait signed in 1994:

(1) Cooperation and team work.

(2) Increasing the participation of students with disability in mainstream school.

(3) Educational programmes that are implemented should take into account the wide diversity of the characteristics and needs of students.

(4) Promoting positive attitudes throughout the school community.

It can be clearly seen that the absence of such important principles is contributing to the existence of exclusionary practices for "slow learners" in inclusive schools in Kuwait, as indicated by the participants responses in Figure 5.3. In addition, it could be argued that the Ministry of Education itself pushes towards exclusion rather than promoting inclusion in such schools. The following responses clearly indicate such a tendency towards exclusion in mainstream schools.

MT (7):

> *"The mainstream teacher is prevented by the inspector of the special classes from engaging with, visiting or working with the special teacher."*

ST (4):

> *"The school administration indicated that they will put the slow learners temporarily in special classes in our school until completion of the special building inside the school for them."*

Support for full inclusion

It is worth mentioning that support for inclusion among very few participants (one mother and one mainstream teacher) is not linked to the model of disability held, for example **M (H) and MT (1)** reflect the medical model of understanding disability in their previous responses concerning disability, however in the meantime they hold positive perspectives towards inclusion as they support the idea of full inclusion of student with disability to be alongside non-disabled students within mainstream classes. Their support for full inclusion is based on several reasons such as: avoiding labelling, human rights and that individuals with disability are a part of society. As one of these mothers said:

M (H)

> *"I support the idea of including other categories of students with disability, not just students with slow learning as well, in the same classes with non-disabled students. Why not because there was not a huge problem between students in the current inclusive school. Why do we exclude them, they are part of society and we are living together, so I agree and support the idea of including them in mainstream school because that is one of their rights. I wish to include all students with disability, why do we make them feel that they are different by excluding them in special schools, it is their right to live as other people with*

non-disabilities, and they should be provided with all the facilities to meet their needs in mainstream school."

One mainstream teacher said:

MT (1)

"Other disabilities, such as physical disability, could be included in mainstream school if the school is qualified and equipped. Why not, for example, provide the school a lift, resources, and qualified teachers."

However, there was some divergence of opinion was evident, for example:

M (E) stated that:

"I don't think that we can include other categories of students with disability, the other non-disabled students will bully them. For example, my eldest son is mentally disabled, he cannot speak, he has difficulty in his speech and lacks independence so the special school is better for him."

ST (4) stated that:

"It is difficult to include some other students with special needs in our school, especially, severe mental disability as their level of understanding is very low compared with non-disabled students. It is better for them to be in special schools to meet their needs."

HT (A) stated:

"Other categories of children with disability such as visual and hearing impairments, who need special teaching methods, cannot be included"

Thus, the severity of disability has an effect on some teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion. The limited understanding of the concept of inclusion means for some participants, "some but not all" categories of students with disability, whereas inclusion encourages all students with disability to be in mainstream schools regardless of their physical or mental conditions as promoted by the Salamanca Statement. Such points will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The absence of human rights discourses among head teacher', teachers' and mothers' perspectives, regarding inclusion, could be affected by and related to the socio-cultural practices in the state towards individuals with disabilities, when dealing with any issues of disabled individuals. Such issues will be highlighted in Chapter Six.

Sub-theme one: barriers to inclusion

The findings identified key perceived barriers to inclusion. Figure 5.4 presents the

most significant barriers identified by the participants:

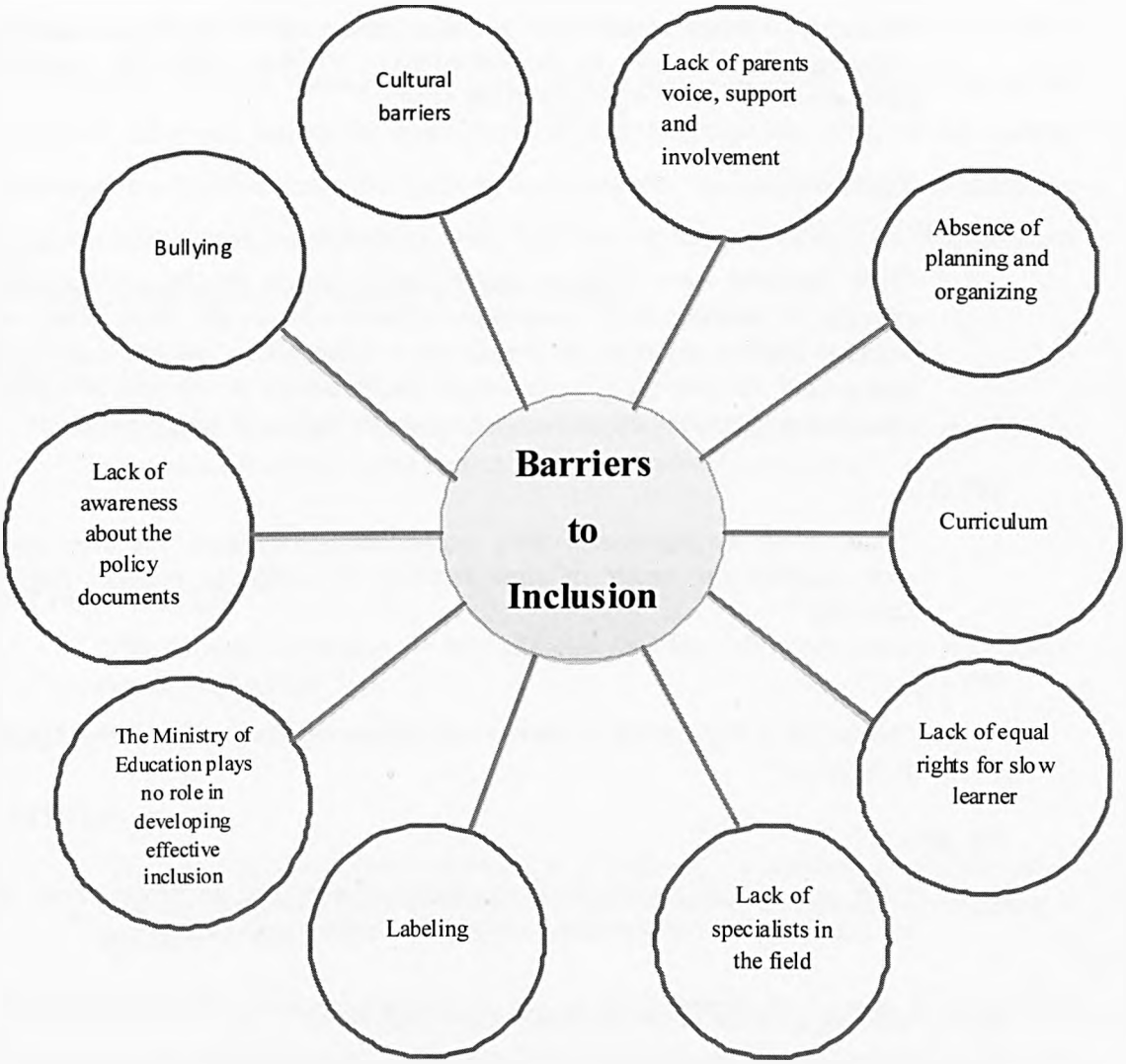

Figure 5.4: The key perceived barriers to inclusion

Key barriers to inclusion were exemplified by the participants as follows:

Absence of planning and organising

Most of the participants have concerns about the absence of planning and organising for the process of inclusion, both before and after implementation, and the negative effect of such weak planning on the practice of inclusion in schools. Also, there is no guidance and clear strategy for head teachers managing inclusive schools. Such views

are exemplified as barriers to inclusion by the following responses in all groups of participants:

HT (A):

> *"There is a huge absence of planning and organising for the process of including slow learners in the mainstream. We don't have any guidance or plans about inclusion to follow in the school."*

HT (B):

> *"Slow learners were included without any changes in the schools, the only changes is locating some unequipped special classes for them. Also, we are working without any plans by the Ministry of Education, which could help us to understand the concept of inclusion for such students in our school. I think this situation reflects the careless attitude towards the needs of such students."*

MT (2):

> *"There is no arrangement before implementing inclusion. We need guidance that clarifies the needs of slow learners in order to provide them good learning."*

MT (7):

> *"Inclusion is impossible in the current failure of leadership by the Ministry of Education."*

ST (4):

> *"The school has no clear plan regarding adopting inclusion, only special classes in mainstream schools and this is really disappointing."*

M (G) working as a teacher in the same school and states:

> *"I hope to organise the process of inclusion rather than the current bad, failing and unplanned situation."*

Such concerns regarding the absence of planning and organising of the process of inclusion could be a result of the lack of intent by the government towards inclusion. The Ministry of Education does not make any effort to organise the work of schools by creating clear plans for inclusive schools. Such issues impact negatively on the practice of inclusion in schools, as indicated by teachers and mothers. The current practice of inclusion in Kuwait is in contrast with other systems. The weak role of the Ministry of Education towards inclusion, contrasts with other signatories to the Salamanca Statement (e.g., the detailed guidance given in GIRFEC in Scotland). This issue will be considered in the next chapter.

Curriculum

Some of mothers and teachers expressed concerns about the content of the current curriculum for "slow learner" students in mainstream schools, citing these as one of the barriers to inclusion. The participants' main concern is that the current curriculum does not meet the needs of "slow learners". The lack of ability of "slow learners" to follow the curriculum was seen as the main barrier to their participation. This reflects another assumption of the medical model among head teachers, teachers and mothers that these students lack something, debarring them from the mainstream classroom. This concern is clearly exemplified by the following statements:

M (F):

> *"I hope to establish a special curriculum for slow learners because the current curriculum is difficult and most of the information is canceled."*

ST (4) and ST (3):

> *"The current curriculum is very difficult for slow learners because it is above their actual ability."*

MT (2):

> *"The level of the current curriculum is difficult, in addition to the variation between students' ability and academic performance, so I think full inclusion is difficult."*

Some participants pointed out that there are no amendments or changes in the current curriculum for "slow learner" students within inclusive school. For example, **HT (A)** said:

> *"There is no change in the curriculum for inclusion."*

Such responses indicate that curriculum reform, to meet the students' diversity, is considered as a key factor for effective inclusion to exist. Some other teachers and one head teacher have concerns regarding giving authority to the inspector to finalise the content of the school curriculum. Concerns were expressed that schools and teachers lack autonomy to implement a curriculum that meets the needs of "slow learners". For example:

HT (B):

"The current situation is that the teacher is obliged to deliver the curriculum without any care or attention to the benefits or needs of the slow learners."

ST (6):

"I don't have freedom as a teacher to give the students the important skills that they need, the inspector forces me to finish the school curriculum."

Only focusing on the content of the curriculum by the administrator, rather than meeting the needs of "slow learners" is in contrast with the concept of inclusive education. Inclusive education is a project of educational reconceptualization (Slee, 2001) however such a situation is in sharp contrast with the key principles of inclusion, which encourage teachers to be given flexibility in the teaching process as well as is accepting and supporting student diversity (UNESCO, 1994). This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Labelling

Some teachers and mothers considered the special classes as a barrier to inclusion because such a name causes several negative issues for "slow learner" students in inclusive schools. This leads to labelling and creating negative concepts among the non-disabled students towards the "slow learner" students, who are located in such classes. Such views are exemplified by the following responses:

MT (1):

"Students who are slow learners are isolated in some classes which are called 'special classes' and such a name is labeling them which can affect them negatively because it makes them and other, non-disabled students different."

ST (5):

"The present name of 'special classes' causes them trouble when the slow learners leave their classes, the other, non-disabled students laugh at them and call them crazy. So to implement inclusion the classes of slow learner students should be without any labels or names."

"Some parents feel sad because they feel that their children in 'special classes' are different from other students. For instance, once a mother came to me crying and she said: I do not want my son to be with those crazy students. Then she said: the name of 'special classes' will make her son different from other students in the school."

M (G):

> *"My son always asks me: are the students with special needs crazy? I said: no, who said that? He said: so why are they are excluded in special classes and they have their own teachers. The name of 'special classes' labels them and creates negative concepts about them among the non-disabled students."*

M (A):

> *"My daughter said that she and her friends avoid playing with them in sports class because they feel a fear of them and because they are crazy and excluded in special classes."*

These findings, from the interview data, reflect the results of the analysis of the policy document of inclusive education in Article (3) *Regulation of law 4 of 1996.* This Kuwaiti policy document contains contradictory language which could lead to negative practices of inclusive education. The interviewed participants' perspectives, about the barriers of inclusion, confirm the negative effect of the current policy of inclusion on its practice. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The Ministry of Education plays no role in developing effective inclusion

The silence of the Ministry of Education on the development of the process of inclusion is clear in a number of areas. Most of the participants indicated that the Ministry of Education plays no role regarding developing effective inclusion; this serious lack of attention by the Ministry of Education towards developing the process of inclusion, as presented in Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), is clear. This is exemplified by the views held by both head teachers.

HT (B):

> *"Our complaints and suggestions about the current process of inclusion are not heard or considered by the educational local authority and the Ministry of Education."*

HT (A):

> *"There is no published information, by the Ministry of Education, about inclusion and slow learner students available for teachers, parents and the public."*

And this is also supported by two of the mothers who expressed concern at the lack of parental involvement in planning for inclusion:

M (E):

"There is no support from the Ministry of Education regarding increasing awareness about the process of inclusion for parents and the non-disabled students before it is implemented."

M (F):

"There are no seminars about inclusion or about slow learner students for parents. I found the process of inclusion is seriously lacking."

Such responses indicate that the weak role of the Ministry of Education, towards inclusion in Kuwait, could be considered as a key barrier to inclusion, and leads to dissatisfaction among the participants regarding the concept of implementing inclusion.

Lack of parents' voice, support and involvement

As well as the lack of parental involvement at policy level, most of the mothers of "slow learner" children indicated concerns about the lack of involvement, support, cooperation and communication between the schools and parents. Such issues are exemplified by the following response:

M (C):

"There is no support and arrangements by the school for parents to communicate with each other about their slow learner children. Views and opinions of parents are marginalised."

Parents' involvement, as an important element of successful inclusive education, is marginalised. Such a response indicates that parents of "slow learners" are dissatisfied with the current provision for them; they are not supported and their voices are not heard by the schools. The findings indicate that there is lack of early identification of "slow learners" within mainstream schools, as well as dissatisfaction by parents of "slow learners" regarding the lack of awareness of the available services for their children. For example one mother stated:

M (E):

"I discovered my son's case when I noticed a decrease in his academic performance and that he was sleeping most of the time. His doctor told me to take him to the measurement and evaluation centre to do the IQ test, they told me that my son is a slow learner. His previous school did not provide me with any information about the steps that I have to take regarding my son's case, I have not found any kind of support. Then I registered him in this school which includes special classes for slow learners, after I asked the public authority about a suitable school for him."

In addition, some teachers have similar concerns such as **MT (2)** who states that:

> *"The school does not strength the relationship between parent and the schools as their views about inclusion is not consider."*

Such a response could be attributed to two points, first the absence of early intervention and identification of children as "slow learners" who showed no sensory or physical disability in mainstream school and secondly, the absence of multiagency services, as such parents faced difficulties finding available support and professional services outside the educational system. Such points are considered as a lack of partnership between schools and parents and a lack of support for such parents and their "slow learner" children.

Lack of specialists and trained teachers in the field of inclusive education

Most of the teachers and mothers indicated that one of the main barriers to inclusion is the lack of availability of qualified human resources, which is considered as an important aspect of inclusive education. Most of the current teachers are not qualified and/or prepared to deal with "slow learner" students and have no idea about inclusion as a result of lack of training and preparation for such processes. One head teacher said:

HT (B):

> *"Most of the current teachers are not qualified to teach slow learners because they don't have any training courses in this field."*

And both mainstream and special teachers echoed this view:

MT (2):

> *"I am not qualified and not prepared to deal with slow learners."*

ST (4):

> *"My undergraduate study is in the field of special education, however I feel that I am not qualified for the inclusion process and to deal with students with slow learning because my study does not cover such issues. The course did not involve any subject about inclusion."*

ST (6):

> *"There are no seminars or training courses for teachers about the concept of inclusion or slow learners. It is very rare and not about inclusion or slow learners."*

In addition, some mother have similar concern such as:

M (A):

> *"One of the main barriers to inclusion in Kuwait is the lack of specialists in the field of inclusive education."*

It can be clearly seen that the absence of training, preparation and knowledge among in-service teachers, about inclusion and "slow learners", is likely to adversely affect the practice of inclusion in Kuwait. Teachers' knowledge is considered as one of the most important factors for successful inclusive education not least because it can affect their attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007). However, the findings show lack of support and preparation for inclusion, for both pre-service and in-service teachers, with the effect on teachers' knowledge. This issue and its affect on teachers' perspectives and the practice of inclusion in Kuwait will be highlighted in the discussion chapter.

Cultural barriers

Teachers and mothers shared similar views regarding a number of cultural barriers to inclusion, in the context of Kuwait. Fears of societal views towards a child with a disability emerged as a serious concerns. **M (A)** commented about societal attitudes and their effects:

> *"We live in a society with strange views or outlook towards individuals with disability. It is rare for mothers and parents to go outside in public with their child who has a disability. As a result of the fear of society's views, some parents avoid taking their child with a disability out to public places. And some parents feel shame that their child has a disability."*

A different parental reaction, as described by **ST (6),** indicated that the child's well-being could be less important to parents than their standing in society:

> *"One of the parents of a student, who is slow learner, has refused to transfer his son to the special classes. He said: do you want my friend to say to me that my son is crazy? So some parents refuse to transfer their children, who are slow learners, as a result of the fear of society's views but when their son/daughter has failed once or twice in years in the mainstream classes he/she is persuaded to transfer him/her to the special classes."*

The previous response indicates that cultural barriers could affect the practice and the development of inclusion in Kuwait in the future. There is what might be described as an "image of wholeness" and "shame" (Brown, 2005) constructed by society, which

gives rise to ambiguous feelings around disability, and could result in some parents refusing to transfer their children from special schools to mainstream schools in order to avoid society's discrimination and negative views. Inclusion and dealing normally with individuals with disability follows the principles of Islam. However, some participants showed concern about the attitude of "pitying kindness" from society towards disabled or disadvantaged students. For example:

HT (A):

> *"There is an attitude of pity in our society towards individuals with disability, which could lead them to feel that they are different from others."*

MT (8) states:

> *"In short, the culture of our society is an obstacle to inclusion, so avoid including them because as I said our society is unprepared for inclusion. Inclusion in our Arabic countries does not go. The society needs to rebuild."*

M (F):

> *"The prevailing view of most people in Kuwait is to look at the individuals with disability with kindness."*

One reading of this is that teachers and mothers have concerns about the views of kindness and pity towards disabled individuals as constituting a barrier to inclusion. This view indicates that the concept of inclusion, as a western notion being imposed, might not sit comfortably within the socio-cultural beliefs held in Arabian Gulf states. Such cultural issues and their negative effect on the development and implementation of inclusive education in Kuwait will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Bullying

The majority of the participants have concerns about the issue of bullying by non-disabled students. For instance, one head teacher said:

HT (A):

> *"Even in the recess, teachers avoid including them with non-disabled students because when they include them, students who are slow learners, they suffer bullying and aggression from non-disabled students."*

Teachers too had witnessed bullying:

MT (1):

> *"There was one student in my class with a stammer, and as a result of other students' bullying, she doesn't speak at all in the class."*

ST (4):

> *"Laughing and beating the disabled students during the recess forces the slow learning students to stay inside the class during the recess because the non-disabled students call them crazy because the classes they attend are labelled as special classes."*

Mothers were also concerned about the issue of bullying:

M (F):

> *"The mainstream school is not suitable for slow learners because during the break, the non-disabled students bully and hit them sometimes."*

M (B):

> *"Laughing at slow learners during the recess, forces the slow learner students to stay inside the class during the recess, I have noticed that slow learners are not friends with non-disabled students in this school."* (a secretary in the same school)

MT (2):

> *"I prefer special classes in mainstream schools for students who are slow learners because of the problems that they face from other, non-disabled students who call them 'crazy'."*

The previous responses indicate the negative consequences of bullying by non-disabled students towards "slow learners". This affects the practice of inclusion, in mainstream schools, by contributing to teachers avoiding inclusion and by "slow learners" avoiding engaging with other non-disabled students during break times to avoid the issues of bullying, as indicated by most of the participants.

Lack of equal rights for slow learner students compared with non-disabled students in inclusive schools

Some teachers expressed concerns that there are not equal rights for "slow learner" students as compared with non-disabled students in mainstream schools. There is a lack of seriousness regarding "'slow learner" students by the school administration and the Ministry of Education. All these concerns are exemplified by the following responses:

HT (B):

"Some the mainstream teachers of art, music, and sports lessons (the only subjects that slow learners are included with other, non-disabled students) refuse to accept the attendance of slow learners in their classes, for instance because of the number of students in the same class or because of the lack of ability of the teacher in managing the class. Slow learners need special science labs."

I asked her, why do they not use the labs of the school? She said:

"Sometimes it is busy with mainstream class students, so they can't use it'."

ST (7):

"Some mainstream teachers refuse to teach the students from special classes. Some of them say that they are not officially required to teach students who are slow learners, such as the drawing teacher who refuses to accept any of the students from mainstream classes, so the drawing class becomes a spare one because we don't have a drawing teacher for students who are slow learners. The school administration has not taken any action towards this issue because there is no law that obliges mainstream teachers to accept students who are slow learners in their classes."

MT (8):

"Last year, one special class did not have a teacher for the Islamic education subject for one academic year, and the public authority responsible for the special classes did not care or respond to the school's request to provide the school with a teacher to teach this subject. So the class remains without studying the Islamic subject for one academic year."

These responses reflect the analysis of the policy document, which indicates that the equal rights discourse is marginalised in the policy document of inclusive education in Kuwait and that this could strongly affect the practice of inclusion of "slow learner" students (see Chapter Four, p.102). The findings indicate that "slow learners" do not have equal rights, compared with the non-disabled students in mainstream schools, in several aspects. For instance, in using the school facilities, such as the science labs, where non-disabled students are given priority in the timetable. Also their participation with other non-disabled students in art, sport and music subjects, where they should be included they are not, as a result of the refusal of some mainstream teachers to accept them in their classes. And academically, in one instance, they remained without teachers for the Islamic subject for a year. It is unlikely that such a situation would be allowed to continue for non-disabled students. Such issues indicate that the rights of "slow learners" in mainstream schools are not protected, as a result of the absence of the rights discourse in the policy of inclusive education in Kuwait.

Lack of awareness about the policy document

None of the participants in the current study were aware of the policy document for inclusive education in Kuwait. It is not available for them, either as a published guide or electronically, this could be considered as a barrier to inclusion which might affect the practice and the organisation of such a process. Such a situation is exemplified by the following responses from all groups of the participants:

HT (B):

> *"I have not seen or heard about the policy for inclusion. When I arrived at the school, I had no information about the special classes, also I did not find any official reference regarding the policy of inclusion that I could go to for clarification of the picture. There were no guides about the system of special classes in mainstream schools, so I depended on questioning and asking the school teachers and the special education administrator at the public authority."*

HT (A):

> *"The Ministry of Education and the local authority play no role regarding providing the school of the policy, I have not seen the policy for inclusion"*

MT (8):

> *"I have not seen or heard about the policy of inclusion in Kuwait"*
>
> She laughed and then she said, "*If you have it give it to me to look at it."*

ST (6):

> *"I have never seen any documents related to inclusion."*

M (C):

> *"There is no guidance for parents about the concept of inclusion. And I am not aware about the policy document of implementing inclusion in Kuwait."*

Sub-theme two: participants' suggestions for the development of inclusive education in Kuwait

As a result of this study, suggestions have emerged from head teachers, teachers and mothers which voice their concerns regarding the development and practice of inclusion. These suggestions are of significant value, as they arise from individuals who have firsthand experience of the current situation regarding inclusive education. The suggestions from each group are presented next.

Developing teachers' and head teachers' knowledge

For example, **HT (B)** said:

> *"Train head teachers and increase their knowledge about inclusion and students with disability".*

And **ST (6)** stated:

> *"Provide teachers' training courses regularly, to explain the aim and concept of inclusion and how to deal with students who are "slow learners" ".*

Curriculum

Some participants considered the curriculum as a barrier, as indicated in previous sections of this chapter. In this regard **MT (1)**, for example suggested:

> *"Improve the curriculum to include information about the concept of inclusion and individuals with disability is important".*

Some mothers too where concerned about this issue, for instance **M (G)** stated:

> *"The curriculum should include awareness lessons about inclusion and students with disability".*

Resources

HT (A) indicated that:

> *"Suitably equipped and resourced classroom, with electronic (e.g., data show or smart boards) and standard facilities is required".*

Participation

HT (B) suggested to:

> *"increase the participation of students who are slow learners in all school activities, not only in some subjects".*

Developing parents awareness about inclusion

In this regard, **M (A)** said:

> *"Inclusive schools should organise seminars or training courses for parents of non-disabled students and parent of slow learners to increase their awareness about inclusion".*

Publications

HT (A) raised the importance of the publications indicating the need to:

"Provide published guides of inclusion for parents, schools, students and teachers".

Teachers too highlighted this issue, for example **ST (3)** said:

"The Ministry of Education should design clear plans and clarify for parents, teachers and students the concept of inclusion, before implementation".

Research

Some teachers were concerned about the key role of conducting research in the field of special needs and inclusion, for example **MT (7)** stated:

"Inclusion needs previous studies about the educational context and planning before its implementation".

And **ST (5)** raised the same concern:

"Increase the research and surveys about inclusion".

ST (6) made an important suggestion:

"Arrange visits to other countries who have had successful experiences with inclusive education and acquire new information about the development of inclusive education".

Support

HT (A) emphasised that:

"Inclusion requires support, this should be via increasing the role of the media, holding seminars, publishing guides about inclusion and disabled people and how to deal with them".

Awareness of all school staff

Lack of awareness about inclusion was one of the key barriers raised amongst the participants. In this regard most of the participants suggested to increase awareness about the concept of inclusion in inclusive schools, for example, **M (H)** stated:

"The school administration and all the staff of the school should be prepared for the inclusion of students with disability, not only the teachers".

Teachers also suggested increasing parents' awareness about inclusion, **MT (2)** suggested:

"Organise seminars for parents of students who are slow learners and non-disabled students".

Increasing student awareness

To avoid negative attitudes towards "slow learners" students in inclusive schools, some participants such as **M (C)** indicated that:

> *"Before implementing inclusion, non-disabled students need educating about students who are slow learners and how to deal with them and respect them, in order to avoid bullying".*

Parent involvement

Lack of parents involvement was considered as one of the barriers of inclusion. In this regard, some teachers and mothers, such as **M (G)** who works as a teacher in the same school suggest to:

> *"Establish communication links between the parents of both non-disabled students and slow learners and the schools; and consider their voice and views towards inclusion by the school".*

Overall, there was little significant difference among the participants' suggestions in the different groups. Their views are oriented towards school educational reconstruction, as well as social change. Such views, which focus on educational and social reform for inclusive education, are in line with Slee (2006) who argues that inclusion is not about disability, however inclusion is about educational reconstruction, about school reform and about social change. Further recommendations of this study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.

These considered recommendations from the participants of the study are incorporated into Chapter Seven, which discusses implications and recommendations for policy and practice.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the analysed data obtained from interviews conducted with head teachers, teachers and mothers, in two inclusive schools in Kuwait. Mamas (2013) indicates that inclusion cannot be divided into separate stages or levels because this generally leads to locational inclusion. Such situations can lead to pupils with disability being marginalised. It can be argued that the current case study has found that inclusion is understood as consisting of separate and distinguishable levels, namely locational (special classes in mainstream school), social (implement inclusion in the recess and some school activities) and academic inclusion (inclusion only in less academic

subjects such as music, art and sport). Consequently, inclusion in Kuwait is implemented at an exclusively locational level without any application of its principles.

The findings of the current case study indicate that there is misunderstanding and lack of knowledge among all the participants regarding the meaning and the key principles of inclusion. Some participants demonstrated little understanding of the term, however confusion and uncertainty was evident. In this study, the dominant understanding of inclusion, among head teachers, teachers and mothers, clearly reflects the integration ethos rather than the inclusion ethos. Such understanding might be strongly shaped by the way inclusion is implemented by the Ministry of Education and by the medical model of understanding disability, both of which have influenced most of the participants perspectives of category groups towards inclusion. In addition, most of the participants support integration for "slow learners" which means participation in some and not all activities in mainstream school. It could be argued that the situation of the current experiences of existing practices of inclusion strongly contribute to forming the participants' perspectives towards inclusion.

There are several factors which have also contributed to shaping and negatively affecting the practice of inclusion, such as weak, limited and contradictory language in the policy documentation for inclusion in Kuwait. Thus, it could be argued that the negative practice of inclusion is a consequences of such articulation of the policy. The limitations of the policy, and effects on the practice of inclusion, will be further explained in the next chapter.

The participants raised some concerns regarding their reluctance towards inclusion, such as organisational and structural barriers, lack of resources, limited support by the Ministry of Education, bullying, the limited abilities of "slow learners" and marginalisation of their rights in mainstream schools. These findings agree with those of Avramidis and Norwich (2002) who suggest that a connection exists between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the existence of school factors.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the effect of the broader cultural context on shaping the participants' views towards inclusion. Some teachers considered the negative socio-cultural views about the disabled, such as the shame felt by some parents of "slow

learners", resulted from fears from society's views, as major barriers to inclusion. Armstrong et al. (2000) argue that the existing cultural and ideological influences, which may endorse current exclusionary practices and policies, would have to be modified to achieve successful inclusion. Translating inclusive education into action may involve confrontation with fundamental socio-cultural values and beliefs that exist, within a region, towards disabled people. This point will be highlighted in the discussion chapter as a fundamental element that affects teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion. Investigation of these contextual factors helps to enlighten the picture of inclusive education in Kuwait and gain insight into what constitutes head teachers, teachers' and mothers' understanding of the studied phenomena.

Identifying the differences between the perspectives of mainstream teachers and special teachers, the differences between the perspectives of mothers of "slow learners" and mothers of non-disabled students, as well as the differences between all the category groups of the participants in this study (head teachers, teachers and mothers) was not one of my aims in conducting this study. I gave the priority to exploring how disability and inclusion is understood, in addition to the barriers that affect the current practice of inclusive education in Kuwait, instead of distinguishing the differences between these groups of participants. This is because in the end all these perspectives reflect on the development of inclusion in Kuwait. In fact, there were no significant differences in participants views between category groups, I did not find a clear difference between the groups of the participants that could affect the results of this study. I believe that this study has reached its aims to investigate and draw a picture of the situation of inclusive education in Kuwait and it has highlighted the negative aspects that affect its practice, without the need to distinguish between the participants views or responses in each group. For example, regarding the issue of understanding disability, the medical model of understanding disability was dominant among most of the participants in all the category groups (head teachers, teachers and mothers) in the current study. This view is an important and clear indication that the way of understanding disability, through the lens of the medical model, is affecting the way of understanding and implementing inclusion in Kuwait, without the need to distinguish between the category groups of participants. In addition, all the participants discussed similar issues regarding the barriers of inclusion that they face in the current practice in mainstream schools in

Kuwait. For example, the issue of bullying and the lack of teachers' knowledge about inclusion was shared between all the participants (head teachers, teachers and mothers). In general, I was able to notice the differences in a few points, for example mothers of "slow learners" mentioned some indication of lack of inclusive practice in previous mainstream classes, before transferring their "slow learner" children to the special classes. Furthermore, the head teachers placed more emphasis on the issues of structuring the schools, developing teachers' knowledge of inclusion and designing clear plans and clarifying for parents and teachers the concept of inclusion, however, this does not mean that other groups of the participants do not mention similar issues. Nevertheless, mothers and teachers have also highlighted these issues. In addition, some mothers in this study mentioned that parents' voice, support and involvement are important aspects to be considered. This does not mean that such issues are not important for teachers as some teachers have also highlighted the importance of parents' voice, support and involvement. In the end, the schools that we aspire to are inclusive schools for all, which consider the needs of all learners (disabled and non-disabled) equally, as indicated by Oliver (1995, p.113, cited in Thomas &Vaughan, 2004), "An essential prerequisite of inclusion is the acquisition of a commitment on the part of all teachers to work with all children, regardless of their needs". Thus, I believe that distinguishing the differences between the perspectives of the participants in this study is not important because in the end, all their voices should be considered equally by the stakeholders in the future. All these voices and perspectives are highly and equally considered by the researcher of this study.

Chapter Six
Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter I draw together the findings of the previous two chapters in order to establish a picture of the inclusion of "slow learners" in mainstream schools in Kuwait, from the perspectives of head teachers, teachers, and mothers. I relate this to the culture, policy, and religious contexts in Kuwait and the wider region. In particular, the influence of the principles of Islam and its implications for inclusive education in Kuwait is discussed. The aim of this is to provide insights into the factors which influence inclusion in Kuwait, to guide future policy and practice regarding inclusion.

Understanding disability

The findings indicate a range of meanings attached to the concept of disability, which may be grouped under the social and medical models of disability. However, among the study participants their understanding of disability indicates a dominance of the medical model. According to this model, individuals with disabilities have functional limitations and are considered disabled, with regard to their physical and mental capacities (Gronvik, 2009). This perspective implies that disability is something inherent within a person, with clear categorisation, labelling and distinctions between normal and abnormal, as well as between able and disabled. In this regard, by focusing on differences that are considered as one of the main assumptions of the medical model, and what appears to account for differences among some of the participants, such understanding of disability could divert attention away from the effects of classroom processes that may be limiting learning and participation for all students.

Such a view is not uncommon. For example, Mamas (2013, p.481) in his study of understanding inclusion in Cyprus found that, "The medical, deficit and/or charitable model reflects the behaviours and views of teachers, pupils and parents". Similar results in the Indian context, reported by Singal (2005), indicate that the focus is not on exclusionary processes within the system, but remains on the child, especially on the child with impairment. The child is seen through a medical or expert gaze, suggesting that the child should be diagnosed and placed in an appropriate setting. Hodkinson and

Vickerman (2009) suggest the ideology of the medical model, which supports a belief that impairment is the main barrier for individuals with disability, may influence some teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. The findings from this study, of the dominance of the medical model, also points to this as an obstacle towards more inclusive education practices in Kuwait.

On the other hand, a few responses (two teachers and one head teacher) reflected the social model perspective. Responses in this regard are in line with the main assumptions of the social model that the difficulties that children face are inherent in the surrounding environment, not in the child. As Barnes (1996) indicates that shifting attention from the individual and their functionings and disabilities may increase awareness of the shortcomings of the environment and social attitudes. In this regard, one of the participants spoke of treating students with disability "normally", as opposed to giving "care", a perspective that is in line with the social model. Adopting the perspective of providing care, rather than dealing with students with special needs "normally", is potentially considered as a social barrier that could disable them. However, other participants considered the lack of care and help from the teachers and families, towards students with disability, as in itself disabling. This gives rise to complex and ambiguous meanings in respect to the concept of "care" – is care provided to enable a disabled individual to lead a "normal life'" or does care constitute a disabling concept which prevents an individual from becoming independent? Such ambiguities were clearly revealed in the data presented here. There is clearly awareness among a small number of the participants that not only the impairment itself is disabling but this is compounded by other social and attitudinal barriers. For many participants, however, there appeared to be a lack of awareness that "care" and help for students with disability could constitute a social barrier preventing them from living an independent life. As Barners et al. (2002, p.38) claim these, "social barriers - both physical and attitudinal - limit activity and constrain the lives of people with impairment". This will be further highlighted later in this chapter in relation to Noddings' (2005) "ethics of care".

While the medical model was clearly dominant in this study, a small number of participants' (one special teacher and two mothers) understanding of disability incorporated aspects of both the social model and the medical model. This finding is in

line with Hassanein's (2010) study in Egypt, of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, which indicates that teachers' responses do not reflect the medical model or the social model, rather they draw on two different models of understanding disability, which recognise both the environmental factors and the within-child factors. It is worth mentioning that simultaneous adherence to two models of disability could arguably give rise to contradictory responses to disability views which adhere to these two models of understanding disability, and could affect the level of inclusion and participation of students with disability in mainstream schools. The views arising from the participants, adhering to these two distinct models, might produce and promote participation in some activities, which reflects the assumption of integration. This is because inclusive education supports, and is oriented towards, the view of the social model that encourages equal rights and opportunities and removes the barriers for individuals with disability, within an aim to achieve full engagement and equal opportunity in school life. However, the medical model could limit the level of participation and full engagement in school life, as the organising concept for the medical model is that disability is fundamentally located within the individual. This requires the individual to adapt to social and environmental structures around them in an effort to fit within the mainstream school (Anthony, 2011). Therefore, adhering to both the social model and medical model of understanding disability could lead to practices that are contradictory to the inclusive education ethos.

Regarding the capability model of understanding disability, the capability approach does not emphasise within-child factors over environmental factors, or vice versa, however it considers the interaction between these two elements (Terzi, 2010). Within the capability perspective disabilityis considered as a limitation on relevant capabilities and is seen as a combination of the relationship between the impairment, the environment and relevant social arrangements (Terzi, 2010). However, the findings in this study indicate that most of the participants' responses reflect assumptions of the medical model with emphasis on within child factors and promoting the concept of "dependency" of individuals with disability. Barners et al. (2002) indicate that from the perspective of the medical model, welfarist and other cultural discourses, the restrictions of activity and social disadvantage are the consequence of being impaired. These perspectives could be understood to be a crucial part of the oppression and struggles that determine the quality of life of people with disability. Thus, participants'

responses, in relation to the medical model of understanding disability, are in contrast with the assumptions of the capability model which acknowledges the importance of the quality of life that people are able to achieve (Sen, 1992). Sen states that capabilities are people's effective freedoms to choose among valued "beings and doings". Thus, what a person is able to be and to do determines a person's quality of life and well-being.

Foucault (1991, p.27) illustrates that there is a connection between knowledge and power, arguing that power and knowledge directly imply one another and that "we should admit that power produces knowledge". In Kuwait, the power of cultural beliefs, as well as the knowledge that is consistent with the medical model of understanding disability, affects the quality of life of individuals with disabilities, both with respect to limiting their opportunities to achieve their well-being and restricting their opportunities to achieve their capabilities to value and live independent life. As Barners et al. (2002, p.53) indicate, "Ensuing debates about disability have demanded an engagement with the significance of culture in the creation of disability, and with the matter of impairment itself".

In addition, the capability model not only acknowledge the importance of the quality of life that people are able to achieve, but also emphasises the importance of the economic consequences of disability (Mitra, 2006). In this regard, it is interesting to note here that due to the high standard of economic and social welfare provision and financial support that the government of Kuwait provides, not only to disabled individuals but also to their families (see Chapter One p.18) on the provisions and services for disabled people in Kuwait), none of the participants have concerns about the economic factors which might affect an individual's capabilities to function. Economic need is therefore not thought of as a driver to bring about changed perspectives towards disabled people. Most disabled individuals, in Kuwait, are not economically disadvantaged or suffer from the consequences of economic need. Quality of life and well-being, which are at the core of the capability worldview, are affected by a number of factors. These include, special care, encouraged dependency, helplessness, and an overprotective environment, which are all promoted by socio-cultural aspects and the medical model of understanding disability which can be, "narrow and reductionist" (Ballard, 1999, p.84). In this regard, Florian (2005, p.97) argues that:

> *A person may have their basic needs met but still be unable to achieve well-being if he/she is discriminated against within a given society (e.g., disabled people who are 'cared for' but restricted by the conditions of the care to determine the course of their own lives.*

Therefore, the differences in the interpretation of quality of life between the medical model of understanding disability and the capability model approach plays a key role in determining the quality of life for students with disability in Kuwait. Brisenden (1986, p.173) criticises the assumptions of the medical model and its effects on the independent living of individuals with disability, arguing that:

> *In order to understand disability as an experience, as a lived thing, we need much more than the medical 'facts', however necessary these are in determining medication. The problem comes when they determine not only the form of treatment (if treatment is appropriate), but also the form of life for the person who happens to be disabled.*

In this sense, the assumptions of the medical model, which emphasises deficits over considerations of the quality of life of the person with disability, could be considered as a reason why the participants, in this study, did not hold perspectives that are in line with the capability approach of understanding disability. The way of understanding disability, under the umbrella of the medical model, affects responses to the needs of individuals with disability. Ballard (1999, p.84) indicates that:

> *It is important to recognize some of the traditional problems with what is called the medical model because the paradigm affects the well-being and perspectives.*

He further states that the medical labels used tend to be "etiological, pathological and exclusive".

The medical model of understanding disability, emphasises clinical treatment and diagnosis that leads to a partial and inhibiting view of individuals with disability (Brisenden, 1986) as well as affecting their well-being. In this sense, care ethics theory is very relevant. Care ethics emphasises the difference between assumed needs and expressed needs, as Noddings (2012, p.773) indicates:

> *It is important not to confuse what the cared-for wants with that which we think he should want. We must listen, not just 'tell', assuming that we know what the other needs.*

Noddings (2005) claims that an individual may express his/her specific needs through

either words or behaviour, while other individuals may only infer the need of that individual; thus, they express this person's inferred needs. In the context of care ethics, Noddings (2005, p.148) identifies that, "an expressed need comes from the cared-for; an inferred need comes from one trying to care". Noddings uses the example of educators and learners. Teachers may identify what are called "inferred" needs that are said to be the "needs of the learners" even though they are not the needs expressed by the learners themselves. For example, a child may indicate a need to speak while the teacher may believe that the child's real need is to listen. Consequently, "special needs" thus become the needs assumed by the other.

In this regard, in Kuwait, the distinction between the expressed and assumed needs is one of the most important aspects that might contribute to overcoming the way in which disabled people are cared for without limits. The data indicates that the participants lack awareness about the limits of care, in terms of balance between expressed needs and assumed needs. There was very little, if any, mention of the importance of listening to disabled pupils and the importance of their independence. It is worth mentioning that, even the policy does not consider the independence of students with disability as there is no emphasis, and clearly silence, on the importance of the independent life of students with special needs in Kuwait's policy. This could suggest that there is no awareness about such an important issue. Thus, there seemed little awareness that such care can be considered as a disabling factor for the individual with disability to live an independent life. In such a situation, Noddings' view is very relevant in that caring offered needs to be received. Noddings (2005, p.148) argues that, "When I am the cared-for in a situation, I hope my need will be heard and, if not actually satisfied, at least treated with regard and understanding".

The medical model of disability continues to consider disability to be "equated with the impairment itself" (Barners et al., 2002, p.40). Thus, the participants who reflect such understanding, believe that care and help is required with an aim to overcome the disability of the individual with disability (see Chapter Five p. 116). Consequently, it could be argued that the medical model only emphasises and responds to the "assumed" needs, where the impairment is the central concern, without looking at other factors that could be disabling. Whereas, Noddings' ethics of care theory emphasises having expressed needs heard and acknowledged (Noddings, 2005). Therefore, the

well-being and the voice of individuals with disability are given priority and taken into account in the perspective of Noddings' theory, by allowing people with disabilities to take decisions for themselves, whereas such voices and the importance of wellbeing is marginilised in the medical model of understanding disability. Brisenden (1986, pp.176-177) criticises the medical model of disability indicating that:

> *We have to look at a person's independence and ask how this can be assisted and promoted without taking the right of control away from the individual. The individual should always be allowed to determine how a specific medical suggestion fits into the overall economy of their life.*

The findings suggest that the voices of parents and their "slow learner" children are marginalised, in both policy and practice of inclusion in Kuwait. This could threaten the movement towards inclusion, as the expressed needs of parents and their "slow learner" children are not considered. Furthermore, Noddings (2005) encourages a response to the expressed need rather than to what is thought to be needed. Thus, Bergman (2004, p.152) argues that, "One's caring is worthy, one is worthy of care is crucial to Noddings's entire argument". From this perspective, the key aim of providing the care is to achieve the positive affect of providing such care for the cared for. Indeed, the lack of awareness of care givers and teachers in inclusive schools, in considering the voice of disabled students and their expressed needs, could affect their well-being in mainstream schools. As Noddings states, "Acknowledgement of the contribution of recipients of care may be the very heart of the care theory. It recognises moral interdependence" (Noddings, 2002b, pp.87-88). Taking into consideration the voiced needs of disabled students is at the heart of most educational policy document principles, such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) and is incorporated into policy in the UK, such as the Scottish policy document GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) and Ofsted's Evaluating Educational Inclusion (OFSTED, 2000). However, the medical model of understanding disability and the cultural beliefs towards individuals with disability in the context of Kuwait, marginalises expressed needs in care provision for children with disability. It does not consider their needs as equal to the needs of the care giver/teacher.

Understanding inclusion

The definition of inclusion given in the Salamanca Statement emphasises the identification and removal of barriers, while supporting the presence, participation, and

achievement of all students including those at risk of marginalisation, exclusion, or underachievement (Ainscow, 2005). However, very few of the participants in this study identified with the concept of participation as "engagement and belonging in a school community" that is explicit in the inclusion principles set out in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Most of the participants view the concept of inclusion as a physical movement from mainstream classes to special classes with a limited level of participation in school activities, Ironically, this results in even less integration. The common assumption, among the majority of the participants, is that inclusion means participation in mainstream school life through taking part in some, but not all school activities, and only in some school subjects such as music, sport and arts. These views reflect integration rather than inclusion. Ainscow (1997) argues that what he refers to as "effective" inclusion requires restructuring educational environments to foster a sense of belonging in all children. However, the concept of integration places children into largely unchanged and un-restructured school environments (Thomas, 1997). Such limited understanding of the concept of inclusion, in the present study, supports the results of an in-depth case study by Avramidis et al. (2002). Their study with parents, students, teaching staff, and head teachers of a secondary inclusive school in the south-west of England found that the participants were *enculturated* into the integration model. These findings are also reflected in another recent study by Mamas (2013), which provides a framework for understanding inclusion in Cyprus resulting from a six-month qualitative research study in five Cypriot mainstream primary schools. Despite actual calls for inclusion, it seems that the Cypriot educational system is still highly segregated and does not fully support inclusion and participation for all children in school life.

Armstrong (1999, p.76) indicates that:

> *Discourses of inclusion have multiple meanings, used by different people in different contexts, and are commonly used in ways which mask the attitudes, social structures and processes which produce and sustain exclusions.*

The limited understanding of the concept of inclusion, among the majority of the participants, seems to emerge from the way it is supported and understood by the Kuwaiti policy of inclusion as a special, separate kind of provision without any steps towards restructuring mainstream schools. Thus most of the participants in the current

study understood inclusion in terms of what was offered. While movement away from this model is evident in some countries, for example the UK, elsewhere a similar model prevails. For example, findings by Zoniou-Sideri et al. (2006) indicate that inclusion in Greece is seen as the accommodation of disabled children in educational settings, that are characterised by uniformity at a structural, organisational, and curriculum level. They argue that inclusion in Greece is a special education concern rather than a conscious attempt to restructure education with the aim of inclusion.

In this study, several factors were identified that could contribute to shaping teachers' and mothers' understanding of inclusion. One such factor, is the weak and contradictory language of the Kuwaiti education policy documentation that does not clarify the principles of inclusion to be followed in schools, which in turn affects the practice of inclusion. Thus, inclusive education is implemented without any kind of awareness about the more widely accepted, broader concept of inclusion. This finding is in line with Zoniou-Sideri et al's. (2006, p.289) suggestion that, "Conflicting and contradictory policies and practices hinder further the efforts of parents, students, teachers and other professionals for inclusion". The findings, from the current case study, show that such practices have led to confusion and lack of understanding of the meaning of the concept of inclusion among head teachers, teachers and mothers.

The policy for inclusion in Kuwait is at odds with the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which considers it to be the responsibility of each country to develop clear policies to support the process of inclusion. In addition, most of the participants indicated that the Ministry of Education plays a limited role in increasing the awareness of the concept of inclusion among head teachers, teachers and parents in inclusive schools. Teachers' and mothers' lack of knowledge of the concept of inclusion, plays a considerable role in shaping their perspectives and limited understanding of inclusion. In addition, as Forlin (2001) suggests, one of the greatest obstacles to the development of inclusion is that most teachers do not have the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes to carry out this work. The findings in this study, indicate that teachers and head teachers are unwilling to implement inclusion without knowledge, preparation, and training. It could be argued that teachers' lack of knowledge and training contributes to shaping their understanding and current, less than willing, attitudes towards inclusion. This finding is in line with several studies, which have suggested

that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by specialised training in the field of special needs education, and that teachers' training in educating students with disability in mainstream school leads to more positive attitudes and willingness to implement inclusion (de Boer et al., 2010; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

The practice of inclusion, in inclusive schools in Kuwait, reflects integration principles by creating special classes for "slow learners" in mainstream schools. Such a way of implementing inclusion influences and shapes the understanding of teachers and mothers, who consequently regard the concept of inclusion as participation in some, but not all, school life. Hall (1997) acknowledges the puzzling language of integration versus segregation and explains that we are relatively content to engage in practices that are segregative but have an unwillingness to refer to them as such. Confusion about understanding inclusion, can reinforce existing assumptions which consequently continue the practice of exclusion and marginalisation of "slow learners". This inevitably leads to practices that go against the philosophy of inclusive education (Mamas, 2013). This seems to be the situation in Kuwait, as the current way of implementing inclusion is superficial and in fact, in practice, is integration. Such practice clearly reinforces exclusionary practices and marginalisation of "slow learners" in mainstream schools.

Practices in Kuwait highlight lack of movement towards implementation of the ideal set out in the Salamanca Statement. This is not uncommon. For example, Angelides et al. (2004) and Mamas (2012) conclude, in their studies of inclusive education in the context of Cyprus, also a signatory of the Salamanca Statement, that the way inclusive education operates there is contradictory and ultimately not inclusive. Findings from the present study are similar, as most participants expressed their concerns with and gave rise to a number of issues concerning lack of planning and lack of intention to implement inclusion in Kuwait. They indicated that inclusion is not applied in practice, identifying some exclusionary practices in their schools. For instance, they listed a lack of cooperation between special and mainstream teachers and the exclusion of students who are "slow learners" from school activities together with the lack of care by the school to promote inclusion. Thus, it could be argued that by not considering the important principles of inclusion, Kuwaiti policy contributes to the existence of exclusive practices in inclusive schools.

Teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion

The findings of this present study indicate that most participants - head teachers, teachers, and mothers - prefer the current implementation of inclusion through providing special classes in mainstream schools. They are less in agreement about full inclusion of "slow learners" and other students with disability in mainstream classes. It could be argued that the current understanding of inclusion is influenced by the culture of the country, especially regarding adopting the charity based approach rather than the equal rights based approach, towards disabled individuals in Kuwait. In this regard, it is evident that the current understanding of inclusion is in line with Armstrong et al.'s (2010, p.145) assertion that:

> *The nature of inclusion or exclusion in respect of any community is defined by those communities in the context of their structural relation to the broader society in which the relations of power between different groups are played.*

The findings also suggest that most participants' responses indicate that students should be included or excluded, based on their IQ level. Such views point towards "slow learners" being placed with their non-disabled peers on a part-time basis and only in less academic subjects. Some teachers and mothers consider that "slow learners" would not benefit from the learning process in inclusive classes because of their lack of academic performance and intellectual and understanding abilities, arguing that they may learn better in special classes. Consequently, based on the participants' responses, it could be suggested that the way "slow learners" are conceptualised and constructed by the participants as incapable students, in terms of their limited mental disability, who could struggle with the process of transition from the integration model, which is currently implemented, to the inclusion model, which supports the rights of all children to be educated together (UNESCO, 1994). The medical model interpretation of disability, adopted by most of the participants in the current study, narrows perspectives towards the level of inclusion as most participants support the current way of implementing inclusion, which is based on a special education paradigm of special classes in mainstream schools. These participants believe that it is impossible to educate "slow learners" and other students with disability within the same classroom as non-disabled students. Such views coincide with those identified by Mamas (2013, p.486) in a study of understanding inclusion in Cyprus:

> *Overall, most teachers across the five schools located learning and other*

problems within the child rather than acknowledging the social model or their responsibility to facilitate the learning of all pupils in the classroom. As a result, their teaching choices were based on the deficit model. In teaching terms, they usually claimed that it was impossible to educate all pupils within the classroom because of some pupils' special educational needs.

Some teachers and mothers support the currently implemented process of inclusion - that is special classes in mainstream schools - while at the same time appealing for special buildings inside the mainstream school site for several reasons, such as avoiding bullying by non-disabled students. Thereby, in both cases, they are supporting the integration ethos. This is in line with the results of Hassanein's (2010) study in Egypt, which reports that although teachers show support for the philosophy of inclusion, they tend to prefer special education placements for some students with disability. Cole (2008) also reports relevant findings indicating that some parents commit to mainstream school, but change to special schools, as they feel that their children are being excluded; consequently, they start to search for a welcoming environment. Cole (2008) suggests that parents' attitudes to inclusion are complex. Most parents who held the social model of understanding disability preferred mainstream schools for their children. Cole however, states that the analysis was complicated by parents who chose mainstream schools for their children initially, and then changed their minds and sent their children to special schools. As such these parents did not argue that their children could not be in mainstream schools because of their individual deficits, rather they focused on the structural and attitudinal barriers that excluded their children in mainstream schools. Thus, Cole (2008) indicates that such parents' attitudes, regarding their decision to send their children to special schools, was not driven by the assumptions of the medical model of understanding disability, but rather to finding environments where their children would not be excluded. These perspectives are in line with the findings of the current study that mothers of "slow learners", do not necessarily believe that their children cannot be included in the same school with non-disabled students. Such parents prefer segregation in order to avoid the negative consequences of inclusive practices, which are implemented without any plans and guidance within the school about the key principles of inclusion.

In this study, some head teachers, teachers and mothers expressed views which moved towards more exclusion. They rejected the current concept of inclusion on pragmatic

grounds, indicating that the schools are not ready for inclusion in several aspects such as lack of resources, training and teachers' knowledge about inclusion and plans for such a process. It could be argued that the role of current negative experiences and the non-organised situation of inclusion might contribute to forming the participants' perspectives towards inclusion. These findings are consistent with evidence from Avramidis and Norwich (2002), who suggest that a connection exists between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the existence of school factors. The varying views of participants in this study have been noted in previous research (e.g., Lambe & Bones, 2006) and explain the variability in teachers' views of inclusion, based on the lack of familiarity and experience with inclusion. In addition, one teacher answered with the familiar "yes, but" regarding the inclusion of "slow learner" students. This echoes Sikes et al.'s (2007, p.361) description of a common response to inclusion:

> *yes, inclusion is a good thing. But the money for doing it properly isn't there. Yes, inclusion is a good thing. But the curriculum we have to teach is inappropriate. Yes, inclusion is a good thing. But the teachers don't have the training to deal with kids with the variety of special needs.*

This implies that future well-structured practices of inclusion may enhance more advanced and positive perspectives and willingness towards inclusion.

Barriers to inclusion

A number and range of barriers to inclusion were identified by the participants, claiming that such barriers should be overcome in order to establish inclusive education in Kuwait. These barriers include absence of planning and organising, curriculum, lack of trained teachers in the field, social isolation (as a negative consequences of bullying), lack of parent voice, support and involvement and cultural barriers. All types of barriers were identified as being related, and interacting to affect teachers' and mothers' perspectives about inclusion. Furthermore, such barriers were identified by most of the participants as contributing to drawing negative perspectives towards inclusion. These are discussed below.

Policy: influence of current policy on the practice of inclusion

The policy document of inclusive education in Kuwait, *Regulation of law 4 of 1996,* was critically analysed in Chapter Four, where it was argued that the limitations, gaps and contradictions in the policy discourse of inclusion in Kuwait might be key barriers

to the inclusion movement and could negatively affect the practice. My argument was confirmed by analysis of the data collected via the interviews with the participants. As the participants discussed several negative issues in the current practice of inclusion in Kuwait, these enabled me to identify the role of the policy discourse in shaping the practice of inclusion.

Current policy on inclusive education in Kuwait plays a key role in shaping practices of inclusive education, both in terms of what it requires of schools (and the zeal, or lack of it, with which it is promoted) and in terms of what is omitted from policy. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) sets out clearly what is expected of signatories regarding the key principles of inclusive practice. Although a signatory, the policy of the State of Kuwait does not explicitly adhere to these principles, consequently contributing to the existence of exclusionary practices. *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* impacts on inclusion through:

- Absence of equal rights discourse.
- The contradictory language used in the policy.
- Lack of support for parental involvement.

Absence of equal rights discourse

Equality and human rights, concerned with children with disability, are the cornerstone of documents such as the Salamanca Statement. However, the findings from this study show that the equal rights discourse is marginalised in the policy. This key gap in the policy, in turn, negatively affects the practice of inclusion and has produced the current exclusionary practices. For example, "slow learners" do not have equal rights regarding the level of their participation in inclusive schools. The evidence indicates that "slow learners" are excluded from most school activities and do not have equal rights compared with non-disabled students (see Chapter Five, Figure 5.3, p.133). It is significant that only one teacher and two mothers reflected the view of inclusion as having equal rights in mainstream schools.

The absence of an equal rights discourse in Kuwaiti policy and practice, as well as teachers' and mothers' understanding and perspectives of inclusion, could be considered a consequence of the socio-cultural beliefs in the region, which places disability "under a 'charity' based approach rather than a 'rights' based approach" (Gaad, 2011, p.86).

Fulcher (1989, p.27) identifies medical, lay, and charity discourses regarding disabilities, as interconnected and sharing the notion that impairment means loss, which encourages an individualistic perception of disability. However, the concept of equal rights opposes this, suggesting that disability is more of a political issue, one that regards exclusion as oppression; thus, contradicting the medical, lay and charity discourses. Therefore, the medical and charity discourses regarding disability, which are perceived or used in the context of Kuwait, are at odds with the equal rights discourse on disabilities. This could significantly restrict the movement and implementation of inclusive education, as the medical model makes distinctions between normal and abnormal as well as between able and disabled. Consequently, the rights of students with disability to be included and participate equally with non-disabled students in mainstream school activities are significantly diminished. (Ballard, 1999). A rights discourse sits more easily with the social model of understanding disability, which emphasises the need to consider the role of structural, environmental, or attitudinal barriers rather than individual's impairment (Oliver, 1996). The participants' absence of viewing inclusion as including equal rights in mainstream schools is congruent with previous research conducted by Bailey et al. (2015). Bailey et al. identified Malaysian teachers' perspectives, concerning inclusive education, and found that 95% of them agreed that the idea of inclusion as an opportunity rather than a right that students with disability should be given. Bailey et al. study's was conducted in an Islamic country, thus such teachers' perspectives towards inclusion could be affected by the cultural context and beliefs regarding individuals with disability, which is based on the charity based approach rather than a rights based approach.

The contradictory language used in the policy

Article (3) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996* contains contradictory language regarding the name special classes. The contradictions within the legislation itself, reinforces labelling and categorisation and leads to current negative practices of inclusive education (see Chapter Four, p.96). Such a view was expressed by some of the mothers and teachers in this study about the negative effect of the current name of special classes in the practice of inclusion in mainstream schools. Most participants, in the current study, considered that the current label - special classes - is a barrier to inclusion and as such, labelling holds negative connotations. The contradictory language of the policy document negatively influences the practice of inclusion, which

in turn affects teachers' and parents' perspectives towards inclusion. Many of the participants are unsatisfied and have concerns that the name of such classes such as 'special classes' labels children, and causes bullying by non-disabled peers in mainstream schools. It is worth mentioning here that such participants do not refuse the idea of segregating such students in special classes, however they refuse the idea of choosing the name 'special classes' for such classes as it causes problems, such as bullying and labelling.

The policy document presents inclusion as a separate form of provision labelled special classes in mainstream school and as something extra that the school provides for "slow learners". The concept that this form of provision is something different within the school is indeed confirmed by the term special classes. Such labelling promotes the exclusive practices towards "slow learners", in these mainstream schools, as well as increasing the negative attitudes towards them from other, non-disabled students. It can be clearly seen that inclusive schools in Kuwait do not change their practice, but a special provision - special classes in mainstream school - is created within them. Such practices are in sharp contrast with the inclusion ethos.

Lack of parental voice, support and involvement

Article (4) of the *Regulation of law 4 of 1996,* states that, "Parents have the right to accept or refuse transfer of their 'slow learner' child to special classes" (see Chapter Four, p.98). However, in reality parents' choices are limited. Parents who refuse to transfer their children may not necessarily have additional support provided in the mainstream classes. As a result, they feel pressured into transferring their children to the special classes in order to receive better services. The interview data confirmed that this affects mothers' perspectives towards inclusion because such mothers do not support the idea of inclusion and are concerned that if their children are included in mainstream classes they will not be better served and may be marginalised by the mainstream teachers. This is what has been experienced by their "slow learner" children when they have been in mainstream classes, prior to transferring to special classes (see Chapter Five, p.129).

According to Palmer et al. (2001) parents' support and involvement is likely to facilitate inclusive education, furthermore it is necessary to consider their opinions,

suggestions, and recommendations about inclusion. However, the findings in this study indicate that parents' voices and involvement, as important elements of successful inclusive education, are marginalised in the policy and practice of inclusive education in Kuwait. Mothers of "slow learners" show dissatisfaction with the current provisions; they are not supported by their child's school with regard to the availability of advice about agencies and services that could support them and their child. It is worth mentioning here that the current educational structure in Kuwait sets no explicit procedures to identify and address the special educational needs of children within mainstream schools. Early intervention and identification, as well as multiagency services and professional team planning for problem solving, which could help and support parents and their children who are "slow learners" does not exist. The current policy does not encourage and highlight the importance of partnership between parent and school in promoting inclusive education. Consequently, parents of "slow learner" children expressed dissatisfaction when they discovered their child's disability by themselves, without any professional support, care, and attention by the schools about such learning difficulties of their child. (see Chapter Five p.141). The absence of this important partnership between parent and school could be considered a key barrier to inclusion in the context of Kuwait.

Absence of planning and organising

Vlachou (2004, pp.10-11) indicates that:

> *The structural level includes the strategic, scientifically supported, changes that need to take place in terms of planning, organization, administration and infrastructure as well as the creation of an organizational culture that will have as an ultimate aim to ensure appropriate responses to a full range of learners in all schools.*

Provision of inclusive education is not solely a political influence and decisions. It is also about constructing and managing the specific features that would enable schools to move from reproducers of existing inequality to producers of equity and education for all (Vlachou, 2004). However, significantly the findings in this study indicate that "slow learners" are included without planning and organising in different aspects. For example, they are included without any changes in the structure of the school, as well as without any guidance that clarifies how their needs should be met in mainstream schools. "Slow learners" are included without any additional support and resources, as

well as without any kind of recognition of their needs to participate equally in school life. Such practices of inclusion are in contrast with those of other signatories to the Salamanca Statement, for example the detailed guidance given in GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) in Scotland; the *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* (2007) in the USA, which entitles all students to be included in mainstream school and the "Five Key Messages for Inclusive Education" guidance developed by the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2014). In the Kuwaiti context, the lack of planning and organising impact negatively on the practice of inclusion in schools, factors strongly identified in this study by the head teachers, teachers and some mothers.

Many researchers in the field of inclusion indicate that moving towards inclusion calls for overall school reform and improvement (e.g., Ainscow, 1995; Clark et al., 1995; Vlachou, 2004). For instance, Ainscow (1999) considers organisational conditions as a necessary aspect of effective inclusion, which he argues produces more inclusive responses to students' diversity, such as distributed leadership; high levels of staff and student involvement; joint planning and a commitment to enquiry. These collectively promote collaboration and problem solving amongst staff. However, in the current situation in Kuwait, the absence of planning creates several barriers to inclusion in inclusive schools, as the current characteristics of schools involve inappropriate physical structure; lack of prepared teachers; lack of appropriate curriculum and pedagogy; lack of teamwork and lack of parental involvement. Thus the crucial elements of effective inclusion, which requires school reform, does not exist.

Powell and Tutt (2002, p.44) argue that, "positive discrimination is necessary if all children are to benefit from education opportunities". Such authors provide an example of their explanation of positive discrimination, arguing that it is already commonly accepted that positive discrimination is necessary if all children are to benefit from educational opportunities. So a hearing impaired child may need extra physical resources (e.g., hearing aids) and extra attention (e.g., specialist teaching) in order to have an equal chance to gain the possible benefits of education. However, in fact, it could be argued that the findings in the present study show that, in the context of Kuwait, both positive discrimination and equal rights practices are marginalised and do not exist for "slow learners" in inclusive schools. This is in contrast with other

signatories to the Salamanca Statement, for example the detailed guidance given in GIRFEC (Scottish Government, 2012) in Scotland, which is specifically developed for schools and communities and, it claims, is an accessible, and practical resource for parents, practitioners, teachers etc. and helps schools to put their own framework of values into action. It can be clearly seen that the features of school effectiveness for inclusion do not exist in Kuwait, thus currently schools can be described as non-inclusive.

Curriculum

The construction of the curriculum fundamentally shapes practice around inclusion and exclusion. In this regard, it is argued that the conceptualisation of the curriculum is key in developing inclusive practice (UNESCO, 1994; Florian, 2014, Thomas et al., 1998). Norwich (2007) indicates that the curriculum is one of the basic dilemmas faced by those who implement inclusion. In this sense, if the curriculum is seen as content to be mastered then an exclusionary outlook is adopted, however if the curriculum is conceived as encompassing pedagogies, then it will encourage the development of inclusive practice. In the current study, teachers considered the curriculum as a great challenge for inclusive education as some children are not able to meet the standards of achievement. For instance, some teachers mentioned that there is a need for a special curriculum, they suggested that the current curriculum is not suitable for students who are "slow learners" and it does not meet their needs. Thus, they see the curriculum as content to be mastered. Such understanding of the curriculum reflects an exclusionary outlook, where it is considered that these children will not be able to master the content. In this sense, the curriculum creates a barrier to learning for "slow learners" students in inclusive schools.

It is interesting to note here, that though the curriculum can create a barrier to learning, it is also possible for it to overcome barriers to inclusion. Reconstructed curricular provision can reach out to all pupils as individuals and not just integrate them into existing schools (Vislie, 2003). Lewis and Norwich (2005) argue that there are no separate teaching approaches appropriate only for children with special education needs, rather there are pedagogies which facilitate learning for all children. They point out that these pedagogies may be extended or intensified, therefore the differentiation can be in the extension of the intensity of pedagogies as well as in the choice of

pedagogies. Florian (2008) defines inclusion as the way in which teachers respond to diversity and differentiation during lessons. Considering a broader concept of the curriculum to achieve a more flexible model of teaching and learning does not exist in the policy and practice of inclusion in Kuwait. A similar situation was identified by Liasidou (2008) in Cyprus. Discourses that concern the curriculum and pedagogical practices do not exist in the Cypriot government's legislative documents of inclusive education. It could be argued that the absence of such an important element of inclusive education affects the development of inclusion and is in contrast with the recommendation of the Salamanca Statement, which states that:

> *Curricula should be adapted to children's needs, not vice versa. Schools should therefore provide curricular opportunities to suit children with different abilities and interests.* (UNESCO, 1994, p.22)

However, in Kuwait teachers are accountable for the delivery of the curriculum, as they do not have the flexibility and freedom to choose from the curriculum what is suitable for their students' needs and diversity. In the current study one head teacher and a few teachers of special classes expressed concern that the teacher is obliged, by the inspector to deliver the curriculum without any care for or attention to the benefits or needs of the "slow learners". Thus, teachers in this study consider the curriculum as a key barrier to inclusion, as a result of the lack of curriculum flexibility and the obligation to continue current negative practices. In this respect policy can be seen as a barrier, for example Article (5) of the *Regulation 4 of law 1996*, relating to curriculum amendments indicates that:

> *changes in the concepts or activities need to be based on evaluating the performance of these students as well as their mental characteristics and ability to understand the material.*

This article clearly focuses on the child's deficits in the process of curriculum amendment. This is in sharp contrast with the main principles of inclusion which are about accepting and supporting the child's differences (Ainscow, 1995) rather than emphasising differences and difficulties. Inclusive education is a project of educational re-conceptualisation (Slee, 2001).

It could be concluded that, in this study, the curriculum is perceived by both the policy document and participants' perspectives as content to be delivered to learners. Such

views represent an exclusionary perspective that hinders the development of inclusive education, however it has been suggested that a differentiated curriculum is a fundamental support for inclusive education (Bayliss, 1995). Differential curricula allow children with disability to progress through the school curriculum at their own pace, and ability, which should help to dispel feelings of inferiority. Therefore, it is imperative that the concept of the curriculum should be constructed in a more inclusive way; a differentiated curriculum encompassing pedagogies, to allow all children to progress through the school curriculum at their own pace and ability.

Lack of trained teachers in the field

Lack of training and qualified teachers, in the field of inclusive education, was viewed by all participants as a barrier to inclusive education in Kuwait. Therefore, inclusion is considered as a major challenge for schools, as it requires teachers to be creative and fully qualified to successfully respond to students' diversity, as the concept of inclusion is "about learning how to live with difference and learning how to learn from difference" (Ainscow & Miles, 2009, p.2).

The lack of preparation and training for teachers is one of the factors that influences teachers' perspectives and confidence in dealing with "slow learners" and inclusion. Most teachers, in this present study, have negative perspectives about implementing inclusion without preparation, and such a shortfall can have a profound influence on the success of inclusion. The lack of skills, knowledge, and confidence of teachers in Kuwait, when dealing with students' diversity in inclusive settings, is in accord with research reported even in countries where inclusive practices are relatively well established. For example, a survey of 125 student teachers in Northern Ireland evaluated their attitude towards several issues related to inclusive education and found that 60% of respondents expressed concern about their lack of skills to work with students with disability in inclusive classes (Lambe & Bones, 2007). Further, the negative attitudes towards inclusion, as a consequence of the lack of teachers' skills and training for inclusion reported in this study, are in line with the results of Gaad and Khan (2007), who found that teachers in Dubai reject the idea of including children with disability without appropriate resources and training. This includes, for example, knowledge about individual educational plans; characteristics of students with special education needs differentiation and strategies of behaviour management.

Teachers' knowledge is considered one of the most important factors for successful inclusive education, not least because it can affect their attitudes towards inclusion. Marchesi (1998) argues that professional training for teachers is a key factor for successful inclusion. "Teachers with further training in SEN and inclusion matters hold significantly more positive attitudes than those with little or no training concerning inclusion" (Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007, p.385). However, in this study, most teachers and head teachers indicated that the Ministry of Education plays no role in developing inclusion processes, especially in terms of improving in-service teachers' knowledge through training courses or seminars on inclusion and disability. In addition, analysis of the current policy of inclusion indicates that the preparation of teachers, both at university level and in-service teachers, about inclusive education is virtually non-existent. There are no clear plans by the Kuwaiti government to improve teachers' knowledge about inclusion. Such practice of inclusion is in contrast with other signatories to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). For example, in the UK this has been well-established for over a decade. The Department for Education and Skills set out the Government's vision for the education of children with disability in their strategy paper - Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004, p.51), which highlights the importance of all teachers having the skills, training, knowledge and confidence to help students with special educational needs reach their full potential. This document particularly refers to initial teacher education (ITE) indicating that:

> *we will work with the Teacher Training Agency and higher education institutions to ensure that initial teacher training and programmes for continuous professional development provide a good grounding in core skills and knowledge of SEN and work with higher education institutions to assess the scope for developing specialist qualifications.*

Therefore, lack of training for pre-service as well as in-service teachers affects teachers' confidence and perspectives towards inclusion and is considered to be one of the most important barriers to inclusion in Kuwait. Teachers' lack of training and knowledge, as a key barrier to inclusive education, has been widely reported in previous research over several decades which has shown that lack of teacher training and professional development are crucial barriers to inclusive education (Florian, 2008; Forlin, 2001; Winter, 2006; Golder et al., 2005; Mittler, 1992).

The findings, in this study, indicate that teachers do not have the necessary skills to

teach children with disability and that they feel frustrated, and cannot accommodate these children in their classes. These findings support the argument of Avramidis and Norwich (2002, p.139) that, "without a coherent plan for teacher training in the educational needs of children with SEN, attempts to include these children in the mainstream would be difficult". Thus, the appropriate training of teachers in Kuwait is crucial if they are to be confident and capable of teaching students with disability and be accepting of all learners' diversity in inclusive settings.

Social isolation and bullying

Many participants, in this study, were concerned about the issue of bullying by non-disabled students. There is dissatisfaction regarding the negative consequences of bullying by non-disabled students of "slow learners", and the negative role of the school in how they deal seriously with such situations. As the data indicate, the possibility of bullying has contributed to teachers avoiding inclusion and "slow learners" avoiding engaging and establishing friendships with other non-disabled students during break times. The issue of bullying affects the perspectives of some mothers of "slow learners" towards inclusion, encouraging them to support exclusion, such as having separate special buildings for their children. This finding supports previous research, which suggests that parents of disabled children reason that placing their child in an inclusive class would lead to social isolation, rejection, and bullying, and thus they argue that an inclusive class is not an option for their child (Leyser & Kirk, 2004). In addition, Avramidis et al. (2002) reported similar results, indicating that while professionals reported positive social outcomes of inclusion, some parents in their study viewed their children with special needs as socially isolated. In addition, they found that some students with disability were experiencing difficulties in forming friendships in school. Most participants, in this study, reported negative social outcomes of inclusion for "slow learners" in mainstream schools and have concerns about the issue of bullying. This finding concurs with the results of Norwich and Kelly (2004) who found that 83% of children with moderate learning difficulties experienced some form of bullying in mainstream and special schools. Some teachers' and mothers' responses, in the current study, also confirm previous research findings on the social interaction among children with disability in the mainstream schools, which revealed that students with disability recorded fewer social interactions with non-disabled peers (e.g., Carter et al., 2005; Mu et al., 2000). Negative social outcomes, such as bullying

and lack of friendship among students with disability and non-disabled students in inclusive settings, as indicated by the findings of this study, could affect the well-being of disabled students in mainstream schools. This indicates that although inclusion may be considered socially beneficial for children with disabilities, concerns about bullying and other social problems remain very real.

Cultural barriers

Culture has been defined in different ways, but for the purpose of this present study Parsons' (1951, p.28) classic definition, "shared beliefs, interests and ideologies which serve to legitimate the social order" is adopted. Some cultural barriers to inclusion have been identified by the participants in this study. The findings show that an "image of wholeness", "shame" and fear of society's views towards a child with a disability, and the attitude of "pitying kindness" towards disabled individuals were serious concerns for many participants in this study. The data indicate that such socio-cultural attitudes towards people with disabilities could be a potential barrier to the implementation of inclusion. Negative socio-cultural attitudes towards disability have been confirmed in previous research such as that of Šiška and Habib (2013), who studied attitudes towards disability in Bangladesh. They found indications that "Attitudes towards disability are found to be culturally negative" (Šiška & Habib, 2013, p.397). They suggest that the social construction of disability is based on a wide range of socio-economic and cultural factors, such as religious and cultural values. Furthermore, the "image of wholeness" and "shame" fosters a tendency towards rejecting imperfection. Indeed, such understanding contradicts the philosophy of inclusion, which welcomes and celebrates differences and recognises individual needs (Corbett, 2001; Ainscow & Miles, 2009). In this regard, Brown (2005, pp.268-269) suggests that:

> *The concept of 'handicap' or disability contradicts the cultural image of wholeness, the impetus for rejecting information that confirms the existence of any imperfection is strong.*

Brown's view indicates that the wish to ignore imperfection works against the concept of inclusion, as the concept of inclusion supports responding to students' diversity by an acceptance of differences between students as regular aspects of the human condition (Ainscow, 2007; Florian, 2008; Coulston & Smith, 2013).

The attitude of "pitying kindness" by society towards disabled or disadvantaged

students, "shame", the "image of wholeness" 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. There is an ambivalence towards disability: there are exclusionary cultural attitudes related to disability such as "shame", dependency and helplessness however there is also the desire to care. Such exclusionary thinking is one of the key challenges to inclusive education in Kuwait. However, it is noticeable that the way the participants, in the current study, reported these views and perspectives reflects their dissatisfaction with such attitudes and some of them considered such attitudes towards individuals with disability as barriers to inclusion. They tended to attribute such views to "the other" rather than espousing them directly themselves. As indicated by Watson (2012) it is commonly the case that people position themselves in relation to the "other" who is generally represented as lacking.

The overemphasis on an individual's pathology can jeopardise attempts for inclusive education (Ware, 2003). It could be argued that in the context of Kuwait the dominance of the medical model, which is consistent with the charity based approach for disabled individuals, and the absence of the social model of understanding disability negatively affects the existence of equal rights practices for disabled students. Šiška and Habib (2013, p.403) note that:

> *The paradigm of the social model of disability is not only evolving in its way of thinking but also in the activities of the disability movement from charity to rights*

According to Brown (2005, p.270), "the response to the risk of shame is a complicating factor in providing opportunity for inclusive practices in schools". The findings of this current study point to the concepts of "shame" and the "image of wholeness", as two cultural aspects that could affect the practice of inclusion. Some teachers and mothers highlighted parents' behaviours and perspectives that clearly reflect the sense of these two concepts. The findings show that the feelings of "shame", that some parents experience, result from their fear of society's views. These parents emphasised that the recognition or identification of their child's disability by others in their society makes them and their children feel incomplete and reflects negatively upon the "image of wholeness" as perfection.

This is in agreement with Kisanji (1993) who considers that cultural beliefs and perceptions of disability might influence exclusion and inclusion, as sometimes children with special needs are hidden away by the family to avoid the feelings of "shame". Identifying undesired differences is likely to lead to feelings of stigmatisation, and local culture can impose the pressure of stigmatisation itself (Coleman, 1997). In this study, some teachers indicated that a child's well-being could be less important to some parents, compared to their standing in society. Therefore, the existing cultural issues in Kuwait could affect the development of inclusive education offered to students with other types of disabilities. This could lead to refusal to transfer such students from special schools to mainstream schools, as some parents might feel "shame" if their child's disability affects their "image of wholeness".

Religion: principles of Islam and inclusion

A perception that emerged from the study was that cultural issues, such as the prevailing views and attitudes of pity towards individuals with disability, are barriers to inclusive education in Kuwait. Despite the Islamic concern for equal rights for all individuals in society and inclusion of individuals with disability, Gaad (2011, p.81) argues that in the Middle East:

> *Common cultural understanding of special needs and disabilities based on supporting the 'weak and vulnerable' from a charity-based approach rather than supporting citizens with equal rights and benefits from a rights based approach as the region is still in a transitional phase between the two notions.*

Such cultural principles could encourage "feelings of pity" for individuals with disability because such charity provision is only offered to people who are incapable of self-reliance. That individuals with disability are perceived as incapable, in the culture of the region, is consistent with the dominance of the medical model of understanding disability. In this regard, Gaad (2011, p.86) claims that in the Middle Eastern and Gulf media:

> *We can sense the cultural attitudes towards marginalizing of and, in some cases, manipulation of people with disabilities and current use of a 'charity' based rather than a 'rights' based approach when dealing with any issues to do with disabilities.*

The cultural context towards individuals with disability, such as encouraging a dependent kind of life, helplessness and care and protection as well as social

connectedness, where most people help and accept help from each other, is held in great value in the culture of the region. Brown (2005, p.260) claims that in Gulf countries:

> *The concept of collective human rights for all individuals with a disability is a relatively new concept in a region that has taken pride in its traditions of charity.*

Brown (2005, p.260) further states that such charity ethos is associated with, "compassion, recreation, cleanliness, custodial care, dependence and freedom from many of life's challenges". Therefore, it could be argued that the language of equal rights, which is explicit in Islam, and inclusive education which is new in the region, and the shift from the charity obligation to the equal rights ethos, are notions in progress. This situation might play a key role in strangling inclusion. In addition, promoting dependence, care and compassion in dealing with individuals with disability could be attributed to the cultural understanding of the religion's principles. It is worth mentioning here that within the Qur'an there is no direct reference to the specific concept of disability, instead referring to these individuals as disadvantaged people (Bazna & Hatab, 2005). "The Qur'an is replete with exhortations towards protecting the rights and dignity of the weak members of society" (Bazna & Hatab, 2005, p.19). Thus, it could be suggested that while Islam encourages people to help each other, especially disadvantaged and weak people and dealing with them equally, the culture of the region considers individuals with disability as an incapable, weak and disadvantaged group that needs help, and encourages a dependent life for them, as well as dealing with them on a charity basis. Therefore, it could be argued that dealing with individual with disability under a charity basis and considering them as a weak members of society is considered as a matter of interpretation of the Qur'an. It is worth highlighting here the Islamic principles of equality before critiquing the current assumptions and practices. The equal rights discourse is one of the basic assumptions of inclusive education and such principles of inclusion are at the heart of Islamic principles. For example, Islam openly declares that all people, men and women, able and disabled, poor and rich … etc. have an equal status and value within society, also any differences in race, colour, or language have no effect on human dignity or the application of Shariah Laws (Hassanein, 2015). This argument is supported by the following verse from the Qur'an:

> *O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. [Al-Hujurat, 49:13]*

This verse indicates that the noblest of human beings, in the sight of God, are the most deeply conscious of Him also. God's measure of a human being's worth relies not on physical attributes or material achievements, but on spiritual maturity and ethical development. Furthermore, Islam emphasises that all people, regardless of their abilities, have equal rights stating that the needs of disabled people need to be met and respected (see Chapter One, p.15), as Bazna and Hatab (2005, p.9) state:

> *The concepts of perfection and imperfection in the physical sense have little application in the Islamic view of human life. By extension, so too do the concepts of normalcy and abnormalcy.*

Thus, the interpretation of the Qur'an text affected by the cultural understanding of disability, could lead to different and contradictory perceptions and understanding of Islamic principles. In other words, such cultural beliefs about individuals with disability, which consider the weak members of society that the Qur'an encourages to protect, have affected the interpretation of Islamic principles towards individuals with disability.

Each of the five pillars of Islam, and indeed any religious duty, depends on each person's ability to perform it, which reflects a sense of accepting and celebrating diversity. As the following verse from the Holy Qur'an indicates:

> *Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. [Al-Baqarah,2:286]*

For example, within the principles of Islam a person need not pay Zakat if his wealth is below a certain level, and prayer may be modified if a person is physically unable to perform it, perhaps due to illness or disability. Moreover, the way these pillars are performed, especially Salat (prayer) and Hajj (pilgrimage), reflect the concept of equality very clearly. During Salat and Hajj there is no difference between all Muslims, which reflects a sense of unity and equality. Such Islamic perspectives support the key elements of inclusion, as indicated by Ainscow and Miles (2009, p.2):

> *Inclusion is a process. That is to say, inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to*

> *live with difference, and, learning how to learn from difference. In this way, differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning, amongst children and adults.*

While the issue of responding to diversity and equal rights is clearly addressed in Islam and supports the philosophy of inclusion, it has been misinterpreted as "the practices of the current day Muslims have been tainted by their local cultures" (Bazna & Hatab, 2005, p.6); a concept which may be applied to Kuwait. To sum up, the miss-match and contradiction between the ideal Islamic perspective of equal rights and responding to diversity and current cultural beliefs in turn affects the practice and development of inclusive education in Kuwait.

Collectivist culture

Arab cultures are often thought of as collectivist in nature, in contrast to western societies which are often held to be more individualistic. Although this is an overly simplistic definition, it is nonetheless helpful in explaining some aspects of responses to children with disability in the present study. Barakat (1993) suggests that Arabs tend to interact as members of a group rather than as independent individuals, so a strong sense of belonging is developed and maintained through commitment and loyalty to family, community, and friends. Consequently, the source of personal well-being is affiliation, which locates power within the group.

Mullen and Skitka (2009) claim that people raised in a collectivistic society have internalised the notion of helping others, although this affinity is restricted to the members of the in-group. However, Mullen and Skitka (2009) claim people raised in individualistic societies are less likely to adopt helping behaviours, although they might be more likely to help a stranger in an emergency. Further, Green et al. (2005) state that individualism is characterised by independence, self-reliance, uniqueness, achievement orientation, and competition. As inclusive education requires promoting independence of individuals with disability, Brown (2005, p.255) 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.*

In this regard, such inclusive thinking is in sharp contrast with the collectivist culture of the region, which promotes the notion of care, dependency and helplessness of

individuals with disability, but also for non-disabled individuals, thus presenting a key challenge to inclusion.

It could be argued that the negative aspects and consequences of collectivist cultural beliefs create an environment of care and overprotecting, which emphasises dependency and is consistent with the medical model of understanding disability. In Kuwait, as an example of a collectivist society, old people rarely live on their own or go outside their homes without assistance from family members, care givers, and the like. Even if they do not suffer from any health conditions, it is considered a duty of their sons and other family members to provide the care and support they need. In addition, it could be claimed that the collectivist culture and the Islamic religion are effectively interconnected. As it is one of Islam's religious duties to respect and look after parents during their life, not only when they are getting old, as indicated in the Holy Qu'ran:

> *And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small. (Surat Al-Isra, 17:23-24)*

As these cultural aspects of the region and the Islamic principles cannot be separated, they play a key role in the current limited inclusion practice in Kuwait; the notion of helplessness, dependency, and care, could be considered as sources of "obstacle thinking" towards inclusion. Manz (1992) distinguishes between "opportunistic thinking" and "obstacle thinking", arguing that when someone is engaged in "opportunistic thinking", they see a challenge as an opportunity. In this case, the individual focuses on the ways to meet the challenge. However, if the challenge is seen as an obstacle, the person focuses on the reasons to give up or run away from the problem. Consequently, it could be argued that the dominance of "obstacle thinking" underlies the medical model and the socio-cultural views of individuals with disability could be endangering the movement towards inclusion in Kuwait. Lambe and Bones (2006, p.178) claim that, "it is not the culture of inclusive thinking that has to be challenged but the culture of exclusive thinking". Inclusive thinking aims to build an

inclusive society which enables individuals with disability to achieve their potential and an independent life, whereas exclusionary thinking emphasises impairment.

Generally, most research in the field of inclusive education has focused on western cultures, such as Europe and the USA, with less attention being paid to other cultural beliefs and views about disability and inclusion. As shown in previous research, for example Hassanein (2015, p.1) argues that the concept of inclusion, from the western perspective, might not fit within the socio-cultural beliefs held in the Middle East:

> *Concepts of disability and inclusion are culturally constructed. Disability and inclusion are not a global agenda in the sense that one size fits all, rather they are completely context dependent and they should be deconstructed according to the suitability of each context.*

Alur (1998) argues that cultural and social values dominate the minds of policymakers and society, and they have created obstacles to inclusion. These socio-cultural values and beliefs include the concept of care and protection and support the dependency of disabled individuals, and the absence of inclusive thinking. Brown (2005, p.255) states that inclusive thinking:

> *refers to the internalized belief that society, and all of its institutions, will benefit from removing non-essential barriers to the participation of the disabled in natural environments within the community.*

Such cultural aspects could strongly affect the articulation of any policy, including that of inclusion. Gaad (2011, p.82) further suggests that:

Cultural attitudes towards individuals with special needs and disabilities are definitely a common factor that plays a role in shaping some elements of such systems.

Consequently, the culture of the region affects the policy of inclusive education. It could be argued that the current policy of inclusion, dominated by the medical model of understanding disability and affected by the culture of the region, contributes to informing current practice, as well as teachers' and mothers' understanding of inclusion, by considering inclusion as an expansion of special and separate provision in mainstream schools. This view has taken root, rather than the wish to reform the mainstream schools at a structural, organisational and curriculum level, as set out in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Similarly, Hassanein (2015, p.2) in his study of inclusive education in Egypt, suggests that, "cultural differences in understanding

disability may lead to different understandings, conceptualizations, and practices of inclusion".

Thomas (1983, p.1) claims that, "politics and education affect each other". In the current study, most participants supported an integration ethos, which is reflected in the policy of inclusion. The power of the policy and its role in transforming the way in which inclusion is implemented in inclusive schools shapes teachers' and mothers' understanding of inclusion as "it is not possible to choose or think your way out of the pressures that social structures apply to social action" (Jenks, 1993, p.25). Bell and Stevenson (2006, p.9) indicate that, "The policy is decisively by powerful structural forces of an economic, ideological and cultural nature". Thus, it could be claimed that policy makers are in tune with what teachers and parents want, and all could be affected by their culture and the perceptions of disability in the region.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning here the affect of the culture on the role of transnational policy in the development of domestic policy of inclusive education in Kuwait. Marsh and Sharman (2009, p.270) define policy transfer as:

> *A process by which knowledge about how policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting.*

Acedo (2008) states that inclusive education stands on the recognition of education as a human right that supports a wider view and more comprehensive strategy for achieving education for all. However, socio-cultural beliefs which are widespread among most the participants in this study and influence the construction of an inclusion policy in the State of Kuwait, are in sharp contrast with the equal rights discourses (as presented by the Salamanca Statement). These socio-cultural beliefs make the transition of a commitment towards inclusive education into reality into quite a different matter. Tension exists between commitments to the international declarations grounded on a social model of disability and local conceptualisations which are consistent with a medical model. This can be seen in the contradiction of the current policy and limited practice of inclusion in Kuwait. In this regard, Stone (2012, p.489) states that:

> *Logics of appropriateness entail a gradual adjustment and modifications that lead to different outcomes than may have originally been envisaged. Existing policy processes and sociocultural conditions alter imported ideas.*

The current attitudes, in the culture of the region, 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). Hulme (2005) claims that policies and practices are unlikely to be transferable because they are based on the legal, educational and social systems of their "host state"; therefore, they are not ideologically or culturally proximate.

Furthermore, the "translation and meaning making becomes the very working of power" (Stone, 2012, p.491). Therefore, it could be argued that the power of an eastern culture and the ideological assumption towards disability can be considered as key barriers in the translation process of international inclusive education policy as a western concept. Thomas & Johnstone (2015, p.480) argue that, '"global inclusive education policy discourses require a more nuanced approach than policy transfer or policy-borrowing". Vlachou (2004, p.9) suggests that:

> *Inclusive education is based on the belief that inclusive policy practices and discourses strike at the heart of the endemic tensions and contradictions inherent within mass education as a whole and this is one of the many reasons of explaining why the process of change towards more inclusive schooling practices has proven to be an extremely complex task.*

Thus, external policy transfer can struggle with the complexity, perspectives and interpretations of inclusion and disability in each cultural context, as one essential aspect of policy borrowing is that the cultural dimension is crucial in determining the degree of fit of borrowed educational models or ideologies (Lewis, 2007). In this respect "policy needs to be understood in the wider context in which it occurs and in the terms of its relationship to people's lives" (Armstrong, 2003, p. 5). Such a situation of implementing inclusion on a very narrow basis, as a consequence of the socio-cultural context, is not uncommon. For instance, previous findings reported by researchers such as Thomas (2012), indicate that many countries in the global south, especially in Africa, have quickly adopted the universal philosophy of inclusion under banners such as, 'Education for All' and 'Inclusive education for all'. These countries have enacted laws and formulated policies or plans of action, however these have only

been partially implemented in practice due to socio-cultural factors. Thus, it could be suggested that demonstrating a move towards inclusive paradigms, based on considering socio-cultural values and perspectives towards disability, as indicated by Kearney and Kane (2006), may be a way forward

Conclusion

Within the context of Kuwait, the negative effects of the cultural aspects that produce the notion of helplessness and dependency of individuals with disability could strongly affect the implementation of inclusive education, which is seen as suitable for some but not all students with disability. Inclusion and participation is essential to human dignity and the concept of human rights to which all children are entitled. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) emphasises that inclusive schooling has a major role in achieving these rights and advises governments to adopt this concept as law or policy, unless they are absolutely incapable of doing so (Kite, 2008). However, in the context of Kuwait, it is almost impossible not to associate provisions offered to learners with disabilities without considering the society's traditions, attitudes, and the current cultural convictions and beliefs about individuals with disability. Many exclusionary practices are often covert and hidden within deeply embedded cultural practices (Corbett, 1999). Moreover, the way disability is considered in Kuwait shapes inclusion practices and defines the challenges of developing inclusive schools.

In Kuwait, the current state of inclusive education may be described as having a weak inclusion policy with a particular understanding and practice of inclusion. The current practice reflects the integration ethos rather than the inclusion ethos. In Kuwait, it is interesting to note how the principles of inclusion - equal access - as promoted by the Salamanca Statement, translate into "excluding the included". "Slow learners" are included in mainstream schools, however in practice they are excluded from most aspects of school life activities. The use of the term "exclusion" in this present study is based on the explanation of Booth (1998, pp.34-35) who states that, "exclusion, like segregation, can be conceived of as the process of decreasing the participation of pupils in the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools". "Slow learners" are considered as outsiders in their own school, as revealed by the participants in this study. However Kearney and Kane (2006, p.205) indicate:

> *To be included is not to be excluded. Exclusion and inclusion are two sides of*

the same coin and to understand one, requires an understanding of the other.

The way inclusive education operates is ultimately not inclusive. The data demonstrate notions of exclusion paradigms, based on a special education knowledge base, by creating special classes for students who are "slow learners" in mainstream schools. This is undertaken without any planning, beyond location, to include them within mainstream school life. This displays some recognition of the part played by social and cultural forces in defining disability, which is consistent with the medical model of understanding disability. Armstrong et al. (2010, p.44) suggest that:

> *The way in which 'inclusion' is conceptualized may differ significantly in the practice of policy-makers, administrators, principals and teachers, and other professionals working in different national educational contexts.*

Thus, it can be argued that the current understanding and practice of inclusion, teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion and articulation of the inclusion policy in Kuwait is informed and conceptualised by the local culture of the region. In the context of Kuwait, there is a clear effect of the cultural understanding of disability on the way that the current policy of inclusive education is represented. Such cultural influence not only affects the policymakers of the region and the way inclusion is implemented, but also it affects "slow learners" as to how disability and inclusion is constructed by teachers and mothers in this study. Hassanein (2015, pp.1-2) argues that:

> *Inclusion, within western cultures is seen as a universal approach to providing educational opportunities for children with 'special educational needs' in ordinary school settings. However, such an approach may act differently in other cultural contexts, many cultural backgrounds, including Egyptians, have their own long-standing beliefs and practices which do not define or address disability in the same way as western culture, such cultural differences in understanding disability may lead to different understandings, conceptualisations and practices of inclusion.*

In this regard, the cultural and social values, beliefs, traditions and background of Kuwaiti culture, which does not see disability in the same way as in the west (e.g., UK; USA) could pose obstacles to the existence of inclusion in Kuwait and the development of inclusive thinking. Such cultural aspects interact and clash, creating a contradictory situation both for individuals with disability and inclusive education in Kuwait.

This discussion draws on theory and research in the connected fields of disability studies and inclusive education. I believe, that by exploring the way of understanding disability in the culture of the region could be considered as a starting point to be used as a vehicle for change towards a more inclusive education policy and practice in Kuwait. Ainscow and Sandill (2010, p.412) claim that, "the focus must not only be on practice. It must also address and sometimes challenge the thinking behind existing ways of working". This study identifies that in Kuwait, the situation not only lacks vision and seriousness but also knowledge of inclusive thinking. Consequently, the significant parts of the framework that is required for achieving inclusion are missing. The next chapter presents the contributions, implications and recommendations of this study.

Chapter Seven
Contributions, Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis and considers its contribution to knowledge and implications for practice. The research gives rise to a number of recommendations for policy makers to consider. The chapter also considers the strengths and limitations of the research and points to future areas for research.

Contribution to knowledge

This study has undertaken research into the concepts of disability and inclusive education in an Arab Muslim country, where research in this field is scarce. It contributes to knowledge by revealing attitudes and perspectives and relating them to prevailing policy and cultural contexts in the State of Kuwait. Its uniqueness is founded in exploring the perspectives of head teachers, teachers, and parents towards inclusion and relating these to the local policy context. In doing so it 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 the legislation of inclusion and the practice of inclusion. The research has also shed light on the translation of policy from global to national level and the importance of cultural contexts in this process.

This study contributes to the knowledge of inclusive education by showing how models of disability have shaped educational policy and practice offered to disabled children in general and specifically to "slow learners" in Kuwait. It also contributes to the knowledge of inclusive education by showing how models of disability have shaped educational policy and practices in different cultural contexts. This study has confirmed the dominance of the medical model of understanding disability among the

participants and in the articulation of the policy document of inclusion in Kuwait. This is influenced by the culture of the region, which is consistent with the assumptions of such a model. The cultural context results in overprotective environments, promotes dependency and focuses on impairments, when viewing the needs of care for individuals with disability. Such an understanding of disability affects independence and inhibits complete inclusion in mainstream schools. Furthermore, this research contributes by enabling individuals to become critically aware of the concepts of care within the culture of the region and practices that this involves. It provide more informed understanding of care, and has presented a critical reappraisal of the construct of "care" within different model of understanding disability.

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, policy, culture and practice.

Implications

This study gives rise to a number of implications, in the field of inclusive education. Inclusive education in Kuwait is dominated by the medical model of understanding disability and is affected by the collectivist culture that produces an overprotective care environment, especially for individuals with disability. Care is provided without limit and without encouragement to lead an independent life. In the context of Kuwaiti cultural norms, care and the resulting overprotective environment, relating to individuals with disability, results in these individuals struggling to achieve the same level of independence as their non-disabled peers. Gaad's study (2011, p.82) of inclusive education in the Middle East indicates that:

> *Care and concern for individuals having special needs and/or disabilities has been a component of both heritage and culture from time immemorial. Challenges lie, however, in identifying and meeting the needs of individuals and how cultural understanding, or perhaps misunderstanding, of their needs can play a role in such a caring process.*

Thus, considering the "ethics of care" and the distinction between expressed and inferred needs (Noddings, 1984) could further the practice of inclusion in mainstream schools if

it were to be considered by the policymakers of inclusive education in Kuwait. Brisenden (1986, pp.176-177) effectively encapsulates an ideal situation which could guide policy-makers and practitioners in this regard:

> *We should instead look at a life as a whole, and allow people with disabilities to take decisions for themselves based on many other factors as well as medical ones. We have to look at a person's independence and ask how this can be assisted and promoted without taking the right of control away from the individual.*

Noddings (2005, p.158) believes that there is more to education than just getting high grades and test scores. There is also a strong need to consider wider concerns and continual reflection that "should help us in the task of balancing expressed and inferred needs". Mitchell (2005, p.14) claims that:

> *Inclusive education is embedded in a series of contexts, extending from the broad society, through the local community, the family, the school and to the classroom.*

Clearly, consideration of Noddings' "ethics of care", regarding the "balancing of expressed and inferred needs" and considering it as an essential element in inclusive education, could contribute to removing barriers to learning and participation of all students, as indicated in the previous chapter.

The index for inclusion states that in order to become inclusive, school communities should restructure overall school organisation, acknowledge student diversity, increase participation of all students and remove barriers to learning and participation of all students (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Defining inclusion as valuing diversity or "a set of principles which ensures that the student with disability is viewed as a valued and needed member of the community" (Uditsky, 1993, p.88), is not enough. Barton (1998, pp.84-85) stresses that, "inclusive education is about participation of all children and young people and the removal of all forms of exclusionary practice". Inclusive education should not just be about participation and removal of the exclusionary practices, it should be also about listening, being open and empowering everyone regardless of ability or disability. Barton (1998, pp.84-85) believes that successful inclusive education should be "about learning to live with one another". Florian, 2014, p.293) suggests that:

> *What counts as evidence of inclusive education is an important question that*

> *can be partially answered by an approach to the study of teachers' practices that specifies principles, assumptions and actions.*

The most important issue is to theorise practice and attempt to recognise the actual needs of students with disability, in inclusive schools, in order to overcome the criticism of the concept of inclusive education that has been described as "promising more than it delivers" (Florian, 2014, p.286). In the UK, Ainscow (1991) links inclusive education to ideas of school improvement, arguing for the focus of special education to shift away from differences between learners towards changing school practices. In the context of Kuwait, this study suggests that to put Noddings' perspectives of "balancing expressed and inferred needs" at the heart of the policy of inclusive education would be a step towards changing current practices of inclusive education. Noddings' view is that, from the perspective of "ethics of care", the objective should be to understand what the cared-for is experiencing and to hear and understand their expressed needs. Noddings (2012, p.772) asserts that:

> *The teacher as carer is interested in the expressed needs of the cared-for, not simply the needs assumed by the school as an institution and the curriculum as a prescribed course of study.*

Applying Noddings' views should firmly place the student with disability at the centre of any policy and/or practice developments of inclusive education in Kuwait. Noddings (2012) highlights very significant aspects that could be used to theorise the practice of inclusion and achieve its fundamental aims, such as participation and responding to diversity. "Instead of meeting the expressed need, the carer's objective is to maintain the caring relationship" (Noddings, 2012, p.772). However, this may not always be possible for a range of reasons, including lack of resources or disapproval of the need, or the way it may be expressed. In such a case, it is essential to respond in a way that keeps the door of communication open, therefore the response of the cared-for completes the caring relationship (Noddings, 2012). This new thinking, based on the "ethics of care" theory, implies and creates a new role, in the context of Kuwait, for services for people with disabilities and for the people engaged with them. Such a way of responding towards the cared-for - the disabled child - means achieving his/her well being and valuing diversity in inclusive schools; the existence of these two principles is key in the field of inclusive education.

Legislation is seen as playing a crucial part in the efforts towards inclusive education (UNESCO, 1994). This is the first study in Kuwait to apply the CDA approach to analysing policy, with the aim to identify the gaps and provide a reference point for the government as a better future guide, where "policy is decisively shaped by powerful structural forces of an economic, ideological and cultural nature" (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 9). As such, CDA has helped to reveal the nature of these ideological and cultural forces and reveal the power relations among them. In addition, the CDA approach, applied to the policy document, has helped to identify the effect of culture on the articulation of policy. It confirms the absence of equal rights discourse in the document, and highlights a disparity with the Islamic religion. Hassanein (2015, p.174) provides a practical example of how Islam respects human beings and their differences:

> *One of the religious experiences that might have supported positive attitudes could be the social contact with disabled people in the five daily prayers in the mosque. In the mosque you are supposed to see all kinds of human beings; different colours, different abilities, different languages, etc. Additionally, the dilemma of difference is simply addressed in Islam as a feature of the human nature with nothing to do with the human dignity which is reserved for every single human being.*

The absence of equal rights discourse is an effect of the culture and is consistent with the medical model assumption, which distinguishes between able and disabled, normal and abnormal and encourages the notion of difference. The findings of this study support this point as well as the effect of the culture on the way of understanding the principles of Islam, as discussed previously. Therefore, this implies the need for a religious discourse on inclusion and disability to explore the role of religious values and other cultural notions and misconceptions in shaping policy and participants' views of inclusion and other controversial issues. Florian (2008) maintains that inclusive education accepts differences between students as normal aspects of human development. Current educational policies and practices, in Kuwait, should seriously consider the Islamic moral system in inclusive educational practices.

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.

Promoting equal rights discourse for all students with disability in policy and practice

The concept of widening participation in mainstream schools, as a means of ensuring quality education for all learners, is one of the key principles of inclusion as indicated in the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) to which Kuwait is a signatory. Cookson (1994, p.119) suggests that, "The significance of the power discourse at the national legislative level cannot be underestimated". However, this study has identified that the equal rights discourse does not exist in the inclusion policy in Kuwait, and such a gap in the policy strongly affects the rights of "slow learners" in mainstream schools.

Re-articulating the policy of inclusion in Kuwait is a key step towards improving inclusion. Re-articulation would need to consider the Salamanca Statement's principles to promote and encourage the protection of the rights of students with disability in inclusive schools, meet learners' diversity, and emphasise their right to equal participation. Fidler (1996, p.2) considers that, "Wellness and well-being are a result of participation in personally and socially relevant activities that focus on and maximise individual strengths and capacities". Thus, promoting equal rights for "slow learners" in mainstream schools, with an aim to achieve their wellbeing, should be at the heart of inclusive education policy in Kuwait.

Understanding disability through the lens of the social model

"Understanding the causes of disability opens more space for understanding the inclusion process" (Šiška & Habib, 2013, p.403). The current study identifies that the dominance of the medical model of understanding disability affects the articulation of the policy document of inclusion, as well as most of the participants' perspectives towards inclusion, which in turn affects the practice of inclusion in Kuwait. In this regard, first the content of the current policy of inclusion should be changed by redefining disability and the concept of inclusion. It should frame disability and inclusion under the umbrella of the social model of understanding disability, which is human rights-based, rather than the umbrella of the medical model of understanding disability. Doing so could contribute to improving the practice of inclusion in Kuwait. Oliver and Barnes (1996, p.66) explain the aim of developing the social model by emphasising that:

> *The social model was developed to counter the formidable tragedy discourse that surrounds disabled people and that depicts disability as a deficit, a tragedy and abnormal, and something to be avoided at all cost.*

Secondly, the socio-cultural context, which depicts disability as a "problem that has to be fixed", needs to change because human beings are social creatures who have the need to live within communities and socialise with others. It is important to distinguish between the terms "impairment" which is an individual organic dysfunction and "disability" which is restriction in response to the needs of individuals with disability (UPAIS, 1976 cited in Oliver, 1996). It is also important to overcome the deficit orientation to difference, which is consistent with the medical model that remains so influential among the participants in this study. Thus, increasing awareness and the level of training for pre-service and in-service teachers, regarding their way of viewing and understanding disability, should be in the heart of any education policy.

Increasing awareness about the concept of inclusion

The findings indicate that among the majority of the participants there is limited understanding of inclusion, that involves only physical movement from mainstream classes to special classes and participation in some but not all mainstream school life. Such an understanding reflects integration rather than inclusion. Furthermore, such understanding of inclusion is also reflected by the policy of inclusion in Kuwait as indicated in Chapter Four. It is important that the policy of inclusion in Kuwait addresses the main principles of inclusion, as well as defining the concept of inclusion presented in the Salamanca Statement, which is linked to acknowledgement that, "quality education for learners with SEN in mainstream schools must mean quality education for all learners" (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009, p.9). Such a policy needs to explain that for mainstream schools to be inclusive they need to consider:

> *The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a child-centred pedagogy capable of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. The merit of such schools is not only that they are capable of providing quality education to all children; their establishment is a crucial step in helping to change discriminatory attitudes, increasing welcoming communities and in developing an inclusive society.* (UNESCO, 1994, pp.6-7)

Thus, the concept of inclusion needs to be re-thought, with assumptions that differ from those of special education. Kuwait needs to move beyond the medical model of

understanding disability and frame inclusion through the Salamanca Statement principles, as "the progress towards inclusive education is often portrayed as a matter of identifying and removing barriers to participation and learning" (Booth & Ainscow, 2011, p.5).

Implementing inclusion for other students with disability in Kuwait

The data indicate that only students who are "slow learners" and Down's Syndrome are included in mainstream schools, while other students with disability such as students with physical disability are still excluded in special schools. However, this is in contrast with the concept of inclusive education, as presented in the Salamanca Statement, which clearly indicates that: "Education for All effectively means FOR ALL" (UNESCO, 1994, p.iv). There is no clear reason, in the current policy document about implementing inclusion for only two categories of students with disability. The State of Kuwait, being a signatory to the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), declared its commitment to inclusive education, therefore the key question for the policymakers is: *Why is inclusion implemented only for "slow learners" and Down's Syndrome students?*. It is important to encourage inclusive thinking in policy and practice to promote the inclusion of all students, regardless of their condition, to overcome current exclusive thinking.

Encouraging independence of life for individuals with disability in Kuwait

The culture of the region, which is consistent with the medical model of understanding disability, promotes the notion of care, dependency and helplessness for individuals with disability. It also inhibits inclusion because it emphasises the notion of difference and normalcy, by offering ways of care without limits, which can stifle independence. Brisenden (1989, p.9) considers that:

> *Independence is not linked to the physical or intellectual capacity to care for oneself without assistance; independence is created by having assistance when and how one requires it.*

Such cultural aspects of the region are in sharp contrast with the concept of inclusion, because they favour protection and care over independence. If independence is considered subordinate, then diversity may not be respected and appreciated. Coulston and Smith (2013) argue that inclusion incorporates best practice and shared values through which it supports the diversity of students. Brown (1997, p.262) claims that:

> *Settings that are barrier free allow people with disabilities to move about independently and in so doing, foster a sense of personal control. This perception of control is an important factor in preventing feelings of helplessness, both real and learned.*

Consequently, increasing awareness among people in the region could contribute to moving towards a more inclusive society and independent life for people with disability. As an outcome of this study, key groups such as pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, non-disabled students and parents need to be educated as to how they deal with individuals with disability by responding to their "expressed needs" (Noddings, 2005) and overcoming the notion of helplessness and the provision of overprotective environments. Overemphasising individual disabilities can jeopardise attempts to develop inclusive education (Ware, 2003). However, it would be naïve to ignore the fact that such students might require medical care and support (Barton, 1993).

Parental involvement

Leyser and Kirk (2004) state that parental involvement and support is critical for the successful implementation of inclusion. However, as the findings of this study show, the role of parents in developing inclusive education in Kuwait is not considered by policymakers or the Ministry of Education. On the other hand the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994, pp.37-38) encourages and emphasises the importance of parent partnership in the success of inclusive education, indicating that:

> *The education of children with special educational needs is a shared task of parents and professionals. A positive attitude on the part of parents favours school and social integration. Parents need support in order to assume the role of a parent of a child with special needs. The role of families and parents could be enhanced by the provision of necessary information in simple and clear language; addressing the needs for information and training in parenting skills is a particularly important task in cultural environments where there is little tradition of schooling. Both parents and teachers may need support and encouragement in learning to work together as equal partners.*

A cooperative and supportive partnership, between schools and parents, is a key element in delivering inclusive education. As Brown observes, "In countries with long-established traditions of inclusive practice, we find a considerable emphasis on professional team planning and systems for problem solving" (Brown, 2005, p.275). Thus, Kuwait needs to show its commitment to inclusion. It is time that educational

policies take full account of the role of parents in the development of inclusive education, by considering their voices and views, as well as cooperating with them and supporting them.

Restructure mainstream schools for inclusive education

The way of understanding disability, from the view of the medical model in the articulation of the policy and among most of the participants in this study, affects the way of understanding and implementing inclusion. Inclusion is clearly seen as accommodating children with disability in an education system that is unchanged at the structural, organisation, and curriculum level. However, inclusive education is not based on a child-by-child approach, it should be undertaken as a system-wide approach (Miles, 1999). Therefore, existing school systems and curricula, in inclusive schools in Kuwait, should be redesigned in a more comprehensive and extensive way by adopting the Salamanca Statement's framework. This provides clear and detailed guidance of the key school factors that should exist in inclusive schools, such as curriculum flexibility indicating that in inclusive schools:

> *Curricula should be adapted to children's needs, not vice versa. Schools should therefore provide curricular opportunities to suit children with different abilities and interests.* (UNESCO, 1994, p.22)

Restructuring the curriculum would be a step forward, however without associated organisational change the effectiveness of curricular changes will be reduced.

Ensuring all teachers are trained and feel able to assume responsibility for all learners, whatever their individual needs

The preparation of teachers for inclusive education requires suitable training to be available both during initial teacher education courses and for practicing teachers (Sharma et al., 2012a). The findings from this study, show that teachers point to a lack of training opportunities about inclusion and students with disability, in both pre-service and in-service training. This study has identified some important practical implications for teacher education in Kuwait. All who work in schools should be educated to overcome their negative views of difference, which may be deeply entrenched and which could define certain categories of students as lacking something (Trent et al., 1998). In addition, teachers' understanding and knowledge about the

principles of inclusion should be increased in order to enable them to identify their role in promoting greater inclusion practices. They should be aware that, as Slee (2007) indicates, inclusive education is not the adaptation or refinement of special education, it is a complete rejection of the claims of special education and regular education to be inclusive. Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) note that teachers with university preparation have more positive attitudes towards inclusion and greater self-esteem when covering the educational needs of children with disabilities. As the findings of the current study suggest, teachers lack both the necessary knowledge and attitudes in order to support inclusive education. Therefore, improving the level of training for teachers regarding inclusion and learner diversity is one of the essential factors that could contribute to the development of inclusive education in Kuwait.

Engendering teamwork in inclusive schools

This study identified a lack of cooperation between mainstream and special teachers in inclusive schools. Some mainstream teachers are prevented, by the inspector of the special classes, from engaging with, visiting or working with the special teachers. Such practices reflect current exclusive thinking and are in sharp contrast with the principles of inclusion, which require cooperation and communication among teachers, with an aim to meet all students' needs and diversity. Therefore, the policy of inclusion should emphasise this fundamental factor and encourage inspectors, teachers, parents and all school staff to work as a team to achieve inclusion, as indicated by the Salamanca Statement:

> *Each school should be a community collectively accountable for the success or failure of every student. The educational team, rather than the individual teacher, should share the responsibility for the education of special needs children. Parents and volunteers should be invited to take an active part in the work of the school.* (UNESCO,1994, p.24)

Teachers, head teachers and parents must be aware of the content of the policy

The data indicate that none of the participants in the current study are aware of the content of the policy *Regulation of law 4 of 1996*, as the Ministry of Education plays no role in increasing the awareness of schools about the policy content. The fact is that the current policy includes several limitations, related to inclusive education, which are not very helpful for schools. However, for future purposes it is important that all

stakeholders can access the policy and indeed, contribute to its development as well as its implementations. Green and Shinn (1995) suggest that sufficient information about the benefits of inclusion is likely to have a positive effect on attitudes towards inclusion. Thus, it is recommended that the policy of inclusion in Kuwait is published electronically and made widely available, with the aim for it to be a reference for teachers, head teachers and parents, as needed.

Practical recommendations and suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions are of significant value and contribute to the development of the current practice of inclusion in Kuwait.

Recommendation A

The process of inclusion in Kuwait needs support and direction from previous studies about the required educational context and planning.

Suggestions

- to 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;
- to encourage researchers to conduct research and surveys about inclusion and disability.

Recommendation B

The current implementation of inclusion is undertaken without any planning or organisation, therefore the concept of inclusion should be fully understood by those in education before any implementation.

Suggestions

- the Ministry of Education should design clear plans and clarify for schools, parents, teachers and students the concept of inclusion, before its implementation;
- special committees should be established to assess teachers, before transferring them to teach students who are "slow learners";
- the teacher training curriculum should include awareness lessons about inclusion and students

with disability.

Recommendation C

Increase the financial support for inclusive schools.

Suggestions

- prepare school buildings to be suitable for all student diversity;
- suitably equip and resource classes, with electronic (e.g. data show or smart boards) and standard facilities.

Recommendation D

To raise pupils' respect for each other to reduced levels of bullying and peer exclusion.

Suggestions

- before implementing inclusion, non-disabled students need to be educated about students who are "slow learners" and how to deal with them and respect them, in order to avoid bullying;
- the participation of students who are "slow learners" in all school activities, not only in some subjects, needs to be increased.

Recommendation E

For successful inclusion the awareness and the knowledge of head teachers, teachers, other school staff, parents, and students about the concept of inclusion and disability need to be developed.

Suggestions

head teachers

- train head teachers and increase their knowledge about inclusion and students with disability;

teachers

- develop specialists in the field of inclusion, who understand the situation of students who are "slow learners" and their needs ;
- provide teacher training courses regularly to explain the aim and concept of inclusion and how to deal with students who are "slow learners;

other school staff

- the school administration and all staff of the school should also be prepared for the inclusion of students with disability, not only the teachers;

parents

- organise seminars or training courses for parents of non-disabled students and parent of students who are "slow learners", in order to increase their awareness about inclusion; and how to deal with students with disability;

- establish communication links between the parents of both non-disabled students and students who are "slow learners";

Recommendation F

Increase awareness and support for inclusion to help parents, teachers, schools and society to understand inclusion.

Suggestions

- publicise inclusion through the media;
- publish guides to inclusion for parents, schools, students and teachers;
- develop a programme to encourage families to play a role in educating and increasing the awareness of their children about how to deal with disabled people positively.

Finally, as the findings show that there is a dominance of the medical model of understanding disability in the culture of the region, understanding disability through the lens of the social model and the capability model will increase awareness and change the existing understanding of disability.

Strengths and limitations of the study

Like any research enquiry, this study has its strengths and limitations. This study contributes to the further understanding of inclusive education in Kuwait. The methodological contributions arise from the case study approach, which made it possible to examine the complexities of inclusive education in Kuwait. The application of qualitative methods provided greater insight than a quantitative approach into the influences of cultural and religious factors on global and transferred policies relating to disability and inclusive education. Applying qualitative research methods provided rich sources of data for understanding inclusive education. In addition, the qualitative data analysis provided me with rich data and understanding of participants' views towards disability and inclusion, despite the small number of participants. It is impossible to obtain such a deep understanding by using quantitative methods only, because of the limited possibilities for participants to express their extended views. The use of a semi-structured open question approach, enabled me to conduct a wide-ranging exploration of ideas. Such an approach well suited the research purposes of identifying issues related to inclusive education in Kuwait.

The semi-structured interviews allowed the voices and perspectives of the different participants to be heard, in particular mothers of "slow learner" children. Sharing the thoughts, opinions, experiences and concerns of head teachers, teachers and mothers of "slow learners", as well as mothers of non-disabled students, provided a wide ranging exploration of ideas. This approach suited the research purposes, as it investigated the whole inclusion process and consequently has been able to inform stakeholders and decision-makers about making mainstream schools more inclusive for all learners.

To my knowledge, the current study is the first study to use CDA to analyse the policy document of inclusive education in the State of Kuwait. Therefore, it has value because it has started a process that begins to challenge the existing situation in Kuwait. Such an approach has helped to identify the contradictions and key limitations in the policy, that in turn affects the practices discussed in previous chapters. Riddell and Weedon (2014, p.364) state that it is, "very important to examine not only policy discourses but also their consequences". The current study has identified the consequences of the policy discourses, by using semi-structured interviews with teachers, head teachers and mothers to more closely identify the negative consequences of these policy discourses. This was achieved by considering the participants' concerns about the practice of inclusion in mainstream schools, and linking that with the limitations and the gaps, identified by using the CDA approach, in the Kuwaiti policy document of inclusion. Consequences identified in this study include the marginalisation of the equal rights discourses and its negative effect on the level of "slow learners" participation in mainstream schools.

Regarding the limitations of this study because of the limited time available it was conducted only in two inclusive schools in Kuwait and with a small number of participants. The value of a small scale study is supported by Flyvbjerg (2006, p.288), who corrects the misunderstanding surrounding case study, arguing that:

> *One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods.*

My intention was not to make any generalisation across the schools, but rather to enhance an in depth understanding and gain a clearer picture of the situation of inclusive education in Kuwait. A further limitation of this study, due to cultural

restriction issues, is that it did not include male teachers' and fathers' perspectives towards inclusion. This action was taken to avoid any problems that would arise for me as the researcher, in collecting data from male teachers or fathers. Furthermore, I decided to limit the scope of the current study by only considering the voices of head teachers, teachers and mothers, however even though the voices of disabled students were not heard, does not mean that such voices are not important. My reflections on undertaking the research process are included in Appendix 12.

Direction for future research

This study only investigated the perspectives of female head teachers, teachers and mothers towards inclusion. Thus, it is important to investigate the views of male teachers and head teachers, as well as fathers, towards inclusive education. Further, this study only focused on one group of children, who are currently included in mainstream schools in Kuwait - "slow learners". Thus, it would be interesting to investigate teachers' and parents' perspectives towards including all categories of children with special education needs. Furthermore, it would be significant to investigate, in future research, the perspectives of disabled students towards inclusion.

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.

Final thoughts

This study views inclusive education as a continuous process moving towards achieving social justice and an equal society. The barriers identified should be seen as obstacles to be overcome and not considered as discouraging the move towards inclusive education in Kuwait. This investigation should be used to clarify current practices of inclusive education in Kuwait and to provide directions for formulating policies to support inclusive practice in ways which are satisfactory to, head teachers, teachers, parents and students alike.

The aim of this study is to make stakeholders in the field of education, and the government of Kuwait, reconsider their approach to inclusive education and the way they work at present. I believe that this in-depth case study should be used as guidance for the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders in future action towards developing inclusive education. All stakeholders involved in education, in the State of Kuwait should consider the words of O'Toole and McConkey (1995, p.5):

"All of us need to look to the distant horizon to ensure that we are travelling on the right path".

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Appendix (1)

School A	Experience teaching	Jobs	Special /mainstream	Qualifications
Head Teacher (A)	25 years	-	Was Mainstream Teacher	Diploma in Arabic language
Teacher (1)	7 years	-	Mainstream Teacher	Bachelors in History + Master degree in methods of teaching
Teacher (2)	13 years	-	Mainstream Teacher	Bachelors in English language
Teacher (3)	9 years	-	Special classes Teacher	Bachelors in English language
Teacher (4)	5 years	-	Special classes Teacher	Bachelors in special education needs (mental retardation)
Mother of non disabled student (A)	-	Secretary in the same school	-	Diploma in Computer Science
Mother of non disabled student (B)	-	Secretary in the same school	-	Diploma in Management
Mother of "slow learners" (C)	-	Retired head teacher	-	Diploma in kindergarten
Mother of "slow learners" (D)	-	Ministry of electricity and water	-	High school certificate

School B	Experience teaching	Jobs	Special /mainstream	Qualifications
Head Teacher (B)	30 years		Was Mainstream Teacher	Diploma in Math and Science
Teacher (5)	21 years	-	Head of special classes department	Bachelors in Education
Teacher (6)	10 years	-	Special classes teacher	Bachelors in Social Science
Teacher (7)	8 years	-	Mainstream teacher	Bachelors in English language
Teacher (8)	4 years	-	Mainstream teacher	Bachelors in Islamic Education
Mother of "slow learners" (E)	-	Ministry of Health	-	Secondary school certificate
Mother of slow learners (F)	-	Housewife	-	High school certificate
Mother of non disabled student (G)	8 years	Teacher in the same school	Special classes teacher	Bachelors in Science
Mother of non disabled student (H)	-	Secretary in the same school	-	Diploma in Management

Appendix (2)

- ***An examples of some translated text from Arabic into English of the interviews transcripts***

- ولية أمر (أ) / A (Mother states :
- "هناك نقص في المتخصصين في المدارس العادية المطبقه للدمج ، بالإضافه الي نقص الوعي في كيفية التعامل مع الطلبة بطيء التعلم."

- There is lack of specialists in the inclusive schools, and a lack of awareness in dealing with students with Mild.

- "أنا من مؤيدين فكرة دمج الطلبة بطيء التعلم في المدارس العادية ولذلك لتجنب عزلهم عن المجتمع."

- I agree with the idea of including slow learners in mainstream schools in order to not exclude them from society.

- "ليس لدي فكرة كافية عن مفهوم الدمج."

- I do not have enough idea about the meaning of inclusion.

- "لم يكن هناك توعيه بمفهوم او فكرة الدمج قبل عملية التطبيق، بالنسبة لي كموظفه في نفس المدرسه وولية أمر في نفس الوقت ، لم أطلع أو استلم اي معلومات عن فكرة الدمج أو الطلبة بطيء التعلم."

- There is lack of awareness about inclusion before it is implemented, for me as a member of staff and as a parent I have not received any information about the concept of inclusion and about students with Ml.

- معلمة رقم (٦) /6 etsta teacher :
- "الإعاقه تعني الإعاقات الحركيه او الشخص الذي لايستطيع الحركة أو الكلام."

- Disability means physical disabilities, or the person who can't move or speak.

- "أفضل ان يكون هناك مدرسة خاصه بالطلبه بطيء التعلم ولذلك لتجنب النظرة السلبية تجاههم من قبل الطلبه والمعلمات العاديين ، عملية الدمج الحالية تحطمهم وتؤثر عليهم بشكل سلبي."

- I prefer them to have their own school just to avoid the negative views from mainstream teachers and the non-disabled students towards them; the current inclusion process damages them and affects them negatively.

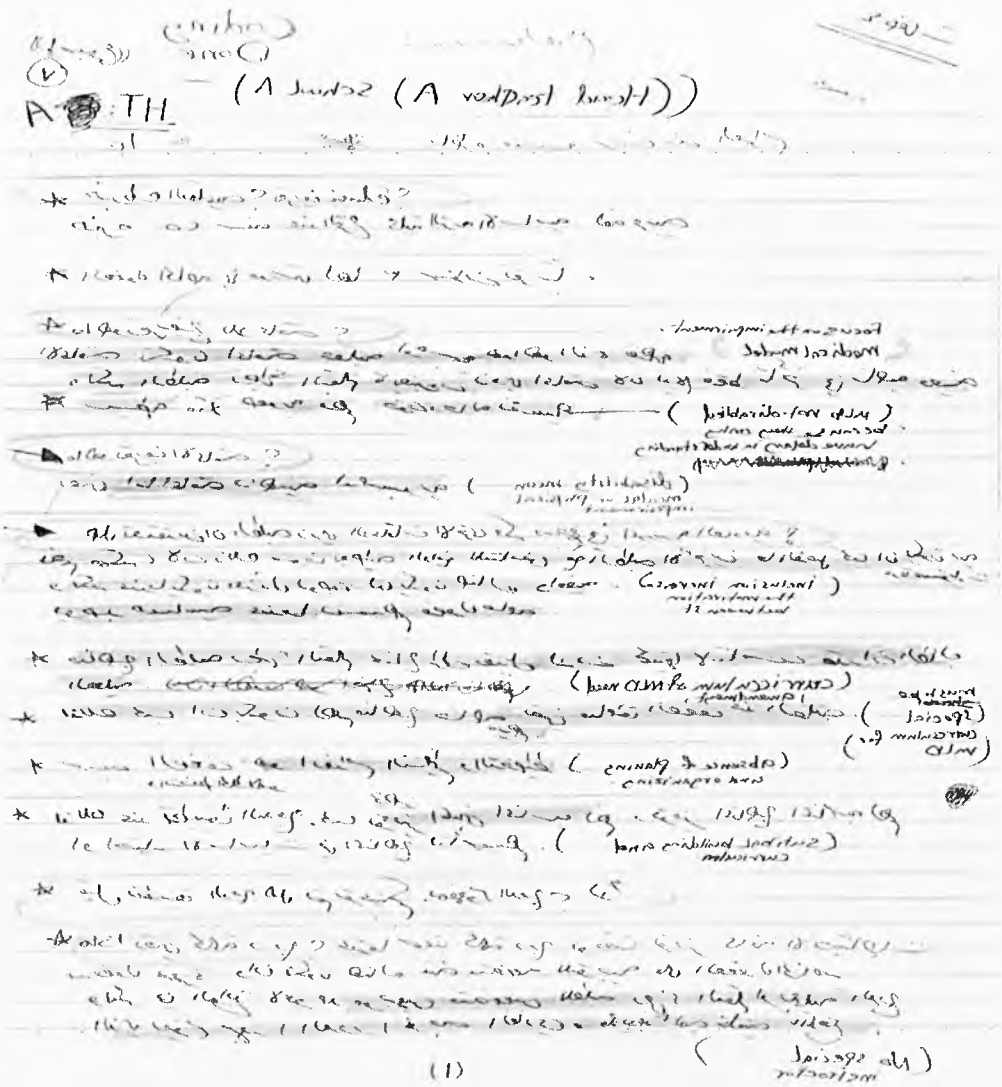
- "عملية الدمج تعني دمج طلبة الفصول الخاصه مع الطلبة العاديين في بعض الحصص كالموسيقى والرسم والرياضه، ولكن ذلك غير مطبق فعليا في المدرسة الحالية."

- Inclusion means including students of special classes with other, non-disabled students in some subjects such as music, art and sport. However, this is not implemented in practice in our school.

- "معلمة الرسم ترفض قبول أي طالب من طلبة الفصول الخاصه، فأصبحت حصة الرسم عباره عن حصة احتياط وذلك لعدم توفر معلمة رسم لطلبة بطيء التعلم. الإداره المدرسية لم تتخذ أي إجراء تجاه هذه القضيه وذلك لعدم توافر قانون يجبر المعلمة العاديه على قبول الطلبة بطيء التعلم في الفصل العادي"

- The drawing teachers refuse to accept any of the students from special classes, so the drawing class becomes a spare one because we don't have a drawing teacher for students who are slow learners. The school administration has not taken any action towards this issue because there is no law that obliges mainstream teachers to accept students who are slow learners in their classes.

Appendix (3) (A)



Appendix (3) (B)

Appendix (4)

(List of codes)

School (A)

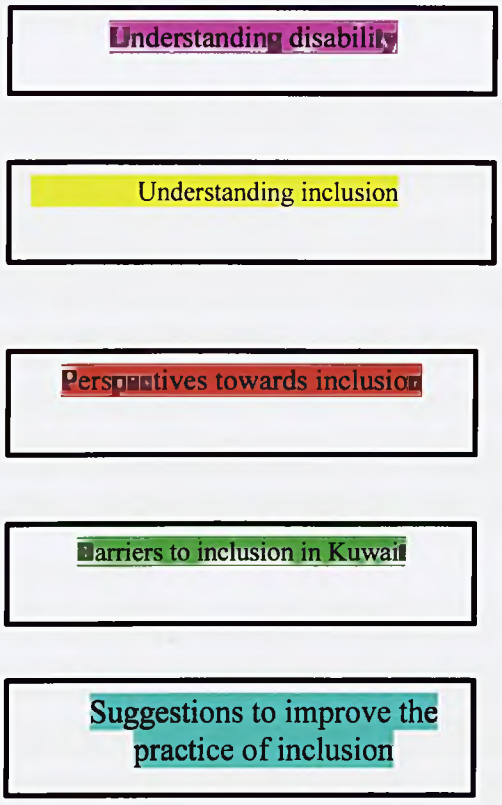
Head teacher (A)

- Disability means mental or physical.
- Slow learners are not considered disabled because they only have delayed understanding, fear and psychological problems.
- Inclusion can possibly increase their motivation to learn.
- The current curriculum for slow learners needs amendments.
- There must be a special curriculum for slow learners.
- Absence of planning and organizing.
- A suitable building and curriculum should be ready before inclusion.
- Students with mental and physical disabilities are considered disabled.
- Teacher could disable slow learners .
- No equipped classes.
- There is no special instructor to follow up the process of inclusion
- Lack of electronic resources in special classes.
- The current instructor has no background about inclusion and slow learners.
- The annual budget is always delayed.
- Mainstream schools are suitable for slow learners if there is planning and organizing for such a process.
- Current name (Special classes) should be changed because of the negative implications of using such a name.
- For inclusion, I prefer special classes in mainstream schools.
- Full inclusion of slow learners is difficult for teachers.
- No sort of awareness about inclusion before the implementation.
- No sort of awareness about slow learners.
- There should be special committees to assess teachers before transferring them to teach slow learners.
- Lack of planning and organizing.
- No supervising and following up from the administrators in the educational authority.

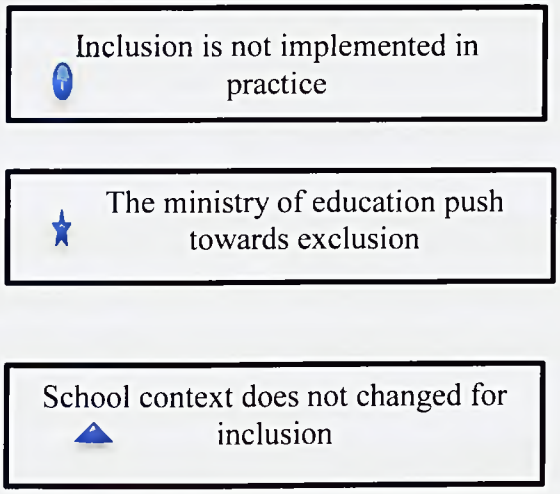
- Lack of specialists in the field of inclusive education
- The current inclusive school is not equipped and not ready for inclusion.
- The current budget for the special class is not sufficient.
- There are no seminars about inclusion or the slow learners.
- The current space for the special class is not enough and does not meet their needs.
- I have not heard or seen anything about an inclusion policy in Kuwait.
- There is no special curriculum for them.
- There are no modern means.
- There are no special activities for slow learners.
- Lack of specialized and qualified teachers.
- Our complaints and suggestions are not heard or considered by the educational authority and the Ministry of Education.
- The instructor for the special classes prevents the mainstream teachers from visiting the special classes' teachers.
- We need financial support.
- Head teachers need training and knowledge about inclusion and students with special needs.
- There is no published information about inclusion and slow learners available for teachers, parents and the public.

Appendix (5)

(Colors and shapes guide of the process of reducing the codes and categoriesing them under broad themes)



Emerging themes:



Appendix (6)

(List of highlighting codes attached with text segment of broad themes)

School (A)

Head teacher (A)

List of codes:

- Disability means mental or physical. (medical model of understanding disability)
- Slow learners are not considered disabled because they only have delayed understanding, fear and psychological problems. (medical model of understanding disability)
- Inclusion can possibly increase their motivation to learn. (perspectives)
- The current curriculum for slow learnersneeds amendments. (Barriers of inclusion)
- There must be a special curriculum for slow learners. (suggestions to improve inclusion
- Absence of planning and organizing. (Barriers of inclusion)
- A suitable building and curriculum should be ready before inclusion. (suggestions to improve inclusion practice)
- Students with mental and physical disabilities are considered disabled. (medical model of understanding disability)
- Teacher could disable the slow learners. (social model of understanding disability)
- Inclusion mean mixing ,however, I do not see this mixing , it is only during the recess . Inclusion should be in school activities, art, sport and music lessons (understanding the concept of inclusion)

- No equipped classes. (barriers) +
- There is no special instructor to follow up the process of inclusion. (`Barriers) +

- Lack of electronic resources in special classes.
- The current instructor has no background about inclusion and slow learners.
- The annual budget is always delayed. (Barriers)

- Mainstream schools are suitable for slow learnersif there is planning and organizing for such a process. (perspectives)
- Current name (Special classes) should be changed because of the negative implications of using such a name. (Barriers and perspectives) +

- For inclusion, I prefer special classes in mainstream schools. (perspectives)
- Full inclusion of slow learnersis difficult for teachers.(perspectives)
- No sort of awareness about inclusion before the implementation. (Barriers)
- No sort of awareness about slow learners. (Barriers)
- There should be special committees to assess teachers before transferring them to teach slow learners. (suggestions to improve inclusion practice)
- Lack of planning and organizing. (Barriers)
- No supervising and following up from the administrators in the educational authority. (Barriers) +

- Lack of specialists in the field of inclusive education
- The current inclusive school is not equipped and not ready for inclusion. (Barriers)
- The current budget for the special class is not sufficient. (Barriers)
- There are no seminars about inclusion or the slow learners. (Barriers)
- The current space for the special class is not enough and does not meet their needs. (Barriers) +

- I have not heard or seen anything about an inclusion policy in Kuwait. (Barriers)
- There is no special curriculum for them. (Barriers)
- There are no modern means.(Barriers)
- Our complaints and suggestions are not heard or considered by the educational authority and the Ministry of Education.(Barriers)
- The instructor for the special classes prevents the mainstream teachers from visiting the special classes' teachers.

- Head teachers need training and knowledge about inclusion and slow learners. (Suggestions to improve inclusion)

- There is no published information about inclusion and slow learnersavailable for teachers, parents and the public. (Barriers)
- We need to see and learn from other countries' experiences in the field of inclusive education.(suggestion to improve inclusion practice)

Appendix (7)

(Grouping the codes)

Understanding disability

- **Medical model** (ex: Students with mental and physical disabilities are considered disabled).
  - I consider mental and physical impairment as disability
  - Slow learnershave limited understanding.
  - When I heard the word disability, it directly comes to my mind mental disability.
  - Disability means every person who is unsound and not healthy 100%, whether mentally or physically, can be consider disabled, such as mental, physical, hyperactive and distracted are considered as disabled.

  -The disability in the educational environment is only the mental disability .

  -They are considered disabled because they are different from non-disabled students.
  - Students with physical disability can be included because they don't have a mental disability.
  - Disability means that a person has special needs.
  - The person with a disability is the person who for example uses a wheelchair because they have a physical impairment.
  - Disability in an educational environment means that the child cannot understand the lesson or the concepts easily which disables their learning, delays mental development, and hearing and speech such as stuttering are affected negatively in the child's learning process.

Understanding inclusion

- Inclusion mean mixing, however, I do not see this mixing , it is only during the recess . Inclusion should be in school activities, art, sport and music lessons.

- Inclusion means include two different things together in order not to exclude slow learnersfrom society.
- The aim of inclusion is to change the view of non-disabled students towards the disabled students and deal with them normally.
- I do not have enough idea about the meaning of inclusion.
- The current school is suitable for student with Mld because they have their own classes and special teachers, they are included in some lessons and during the recess. (*understanding inclusion*)
- For inclusion, I prefer special classes in mainstream schools because the slow learnershave limited understanding. I prefer to include them in some lessons, as the current situation, such as music, sport and art with an aim to develop their social skills and to not feel that they are different.
- Before implementation of inclusion in school, there was not any awareness about the meaning of the concept of inclusion. I have not received any letter from the school, as a parent, that there will be inclusion in the school. In the meantime, I have not received any instructions or awareness raising about the process of inclusion as a member of staff in the school. All that I know is that there will be special classes for slow learners, however I do not have any idea about inclusion.

The Ministry of Education push towards exclusion

- Inclusion can possibly increase their motivation to learn.
- Mainstream schools are suitable for slow learnersif there is planning and organizing for such a process.
- For inclusion, I prefer special classes in mainstream schools.
- Full inclusion of slow learnersis difficult for teachers.
- Current name (Special classes) should be changed because of the negative implications of using such a name.
- I agree with the idea of including slow learnersin mainstream schools in order to not exclude them from society.
- For inclusion, I prefer special classes in mainstream schools because the slow learnershave limited understanding. I prefer to include them in some lessons, as

the current situation, such as music, sport and art with an aim to develop their social skills and to not feel that they are different.

- Non-disabled students need awareness about slow learnersand how to deal with them and respect them.
- Inclusion in special classes for slow learnersis better than mainstream classes because it is difficult for the teacher and the time is not enough. In addition to the negative impact on the Mld students in mainstream class.
- Other disabilities such as physical disability could be included in mainstream school if the school is qualified and equipped. Why not, for example, provide the school a lift, resources, and qualified teachers.
- The current school is not ready for inclusion with the existing limited equipment and material. What is the difference between me and the special teacher, both of us use the same traditional means to convey the information and the lesson.
- For students who are slow learners, I prefer special classes in mainstream school for them. Full inclusion is not suitable for them because their understanding ability is limited and the time of the lesson is 45 minutes so it is not enough for the teacher to manage the class and deal with both students equally. In addition to the bullying that they will face from other, non-disabled students in the class. For example, there was one student in my class with a stammer, and as a result of other students bullying, she doesn't speak at all in the class. The curriculum problems, and the variation between students' ability and academic performance, so I think full inclusion is difficult for the teacher.
- I don't prefer to include them just in some lessons as well because that will distinguish them and cause disruptions.
- Slow learners need extra time to assimilate information.
- Slow learners do not participate in mainstream classes.
- slow learnerscan be included but, honestly, they would not benefit from the learning process, thus it is better for them to be in special classes
- Some slow learnersbecome better when we transfer them to the special classes.
- Inclusion is possible but it is not beneficial for them in mainstream classes.
- Mainstream school is suitable for slow learners if their need is met such as special classes for them and if there are good resources. (*emphasis on special class*).

- Regarding inclusion, for slow learners, I prefer special classes in the mainstream school and to include them in some lessons such art, sport, music or reading classes.

- The current school is not prepared for inclusion.

School contexts have not changed for inclusion

- Absence of planning and organizing.
- No equipped classes.
- There is no special instructor to follow up the process of inclusion.
- Current name (Special classes) should be changed because of the negative implications of using such a name.
- Lack of electronic resources in special classes.
- The current instructor has no background about inclusion and slow learners.
- The annual budget is always delayed.
- No sort of awareness about inclusion before the implementation.
- No sort of awareness about slow learners.
- Lack of planning and organizing.
- No supervising and following up from the administrators in the educational authority.

Suggestions to improve inclusion

- There must be a special curriculum for slow learners.
- A suitable building and curriculum should be ready before inclusion.
- There should be special committees to assess teachers before transferring them to teach slow learners.
- We need financial support.
- Head teachers need training and knowledge about inclusion and slow learners.
- We need to see and learn from other countries' experiences in the field of inclusive education

- Non-disabled students need awareness about slow learnersand how to deal with them and respect them.
- They require support, this should be via increasing the role of the media, holding seminars, publishing guides about inclusion and disabled people and how to deal with them.
- Increase parent awareness about inclusion.
- Educate non-disabled students about how to deal with slow learners, and other individuals with disability as well.
- Design plans for the process of inclusion that helps parents, teachers and schools to understand inclusion.
- Improve the curriculum because the current curriculum does not include any information about the concept of inclusion and individuals with disability.
- Inclusion needs previous studies about the educational context and planning.
- Before the implementation of inclusion both mainstream and special teachers should be prepared.
- Teachers should attend training courses or seminars about the concept of inclusion and should be aware of all categories of disability.
- The school administration and all the staff of the school should also be prepared for the inclusion of students with disability not only the teachers.

Emerging themes

The school does not implement inclusion in practice

- The instructor for the special classes prevents the mainstream teachers from visiting the special classes' teachers.
- There is a special building for students who are slow learners inside our school and it is almost finished in order to transfer them to such a building.
- In fact, in the current situation inclusion is not implemented; these students are not included in the recess and the mainstream teacher is prevented by the

instructor of the special classes from engaging with, visiting or working with the special teacher.

- I am happy that there is a special building inside the school, it will be for slow learners but it is still unfinished, to avoid the problem that the students face as a result of lack of awareness and lack of planning before implementing inclusion.
- Before implementing inclusion, the school administration told us that they will put the slow learner students temporarily in special classes in our school until completion of the special building inside the school for them.
- There are no action towards inclusion, for example, there are some seminars out of school which organized by the MOE and the attendance is optional, It is about how to distinguish between the slow learners and the students with specific learning difficulties. However, there are no seminars about inclusion. MT(2).

The Ministry of Education push towards exclusion

- Students who are slow learners are only included in the recess with other, non-disabled students, however they are totally excluded from school activities and they have their own activities which are separate from the non-disabled students' activities. The time of leaving the school is also different from non-disabled students, students who are slow learners are leaving the school half an hour before non-disabled students to avoid any contact and problems between them such as bullying etc.
- In fact there is no inclusion in the current situation, only what is happening is words and talk regarding inclusion, however inclusion is not implemented in practice it does not exist. There is no support and guidance from the Ministry to organize the work of inclusive schools in order to develop the process of inclusion. (*silence from the Ministry of Education towards the developing of the process of inclusion is clear)*
- We are forced to avoid including slow learners with non-disabled students because of the embarrassment for them from other non disabled students.
- There is blunder and carelessness towards inclusion and the improvement of teachers' knowledge everywhere.

- The school offers snacks for the slow learners and non-disabled students as well. However, there is no attention paid to the child for example who is hyperactive and must avoid specific kinds of food but such snacks include some kind of food stuff which increases their activity. All snacks are the same
- This year we were asked to separate the activities of non-disabled students from the activities of slow learners, and The head teacher agreed to separate the activities of Mld from the activities of non-disabled student in mainstream school
- There is no care about implementing inclusion between the teachers and the school.
- No cooperation between the mainstream teachers and special teachers.
- We only focus on slow learnersrather than how to include them. Inclusion (I have no idea about inclusion ???)
- Inclusion means include slow learners with non-disabled students in mainstream school. In the beginning, there were attempts to include them in school activities, however currently the school is starting to exclude them because of the problems that they are facing from other non disabled students such as bullying and aggressive behavior.
- The current implementation of inclusion is only by name because it is not applied.
- There was no awareness about the concept of inclusion at all, there is no planning or instructions to be adopted from the Ministry of Education about inclusion.
- Our school is not prepared for the process of inclusion and does not apply inclusion in the practice because:
    - we feel that we are a burden to the mainstream school, I mean the special classes, and we feel that we are not welcomed in the mainstream school;
    - most of the mainstream teachers don't want our students to participate in all activities with their non-disabled students, and there is no cooperation among the students as well;
    - the mainstream teachers don't accept our students in their classes and activities, I mean art, sport and music classes, the lessons that slow

learnersshould be included in, the reason being is that the mainstream teachers get nervous and say: I can't deal with them and manage the class. So we have stopped including them.

- There is no organizing for the work process and cooperation between both teachers (mainstream and special). *(**my note**: lack of cooperation and team work between mainstream teachers and special teachers (lack of inclusive thinking in the school) and lack of policy that does not protect the right of slow learners to have equal rights in participation of school activities as non-disabled students. Lack of the administration role for special classes in terms of following up the process of inclusion.*
- Once I asked the teachers to let my daughter read a verse from the holy Quran in the morning queue, but there was not any care by the teachers, and they only gave unfulfilled promises. (*exclusion from participation in school activities*).
- -I hope that the school Increase the participation of slow learnersin all school activities not only some subjects, because It is important to increase the role of slow learnersin the school in front of other, non-disabled students in the school or throughout school activities.
- The special classes and their teachers are isolated in their units there is no kind of communication between mainstream teachers and the special teachers.
- I am not supporting the idea of inclusion at all and I have registered my son in this school because of the special classes which are separated from mainstream classes. Even in the recess, teachers avoid including them with other, non-disabled students because when they include them, students who are slow learners, they suffer from bullying and aggression from non-disabled students. For me I don't like anyone to look at my son as different from other students and I have to suffer that, even outside the school.
- Inclusion means including the students of special classes with other, non- disabled students in the same school. However, I have not seen any kind of inclusion in this school because the special teachers and the school administration exclude them as best as they can from non-

disabled students to avoid the problems that usually happen - such as hitting and aggression and bullying between them.

- The students who are slow learners are totally excluded, even the time of leaving the school is different from non-disabled student in order to avoid the problems that happen between the students.
- Honestly, I have not seen any activity in the school related to inclusion.
- Actually, I have not seen or noticed the concept of inclusion in this school. I heard of transferring students, who are slow learners, to the special classes in mainstream schools with the aim of inclusion, however I saw the opposite, the special classes caused them big damage, because the non-disabled students called them crazy, they also left the school before non-disabled students, and some mainstream teachers were afraid of them so the situation was quiet negative.
- Inclusion means including students of special classes with other, non-disabled students in some subjects such as music, art and sport. However, this is not implemented in practice because:

  - first, mainstream teachers refuse to teach the students of special classes some of them say that they are not officially required to teach students who are slow learners;

  - some of them say that they cannot control them or even deal with them if they are included in their mainstream classes with other, non-disabled student.
- The school itself does not encourage inclusion to avoid problems between the students and the leaving time of student who are slow learners is different than the non-disabled students to avoid harassment from non-disabled students.
- Honestly, I feel that students who are slow learners are excluded in our school.
- Honestly, the school does not make any effort to promote and encourage inclusion for students who are slow learners, there is a lack of activities in the school and often such students do not participate in school activities with the non- disabled students.

- the special classes are excluded and there is no kind of interaction and communication between the students, thus any step by the Ministry of Education should be planned and studied before implementation in order to achieve positive results and to be of benefit for all.

Barriers to inclusion in Kuwait

- The current space for the special class is not enough and does not meet their needs.
- Before implementation of inclusion in school, there was not any awareness about the meaning of the concept of inclusion. I have not received any letter from the school, as a parent, that there will be inclusion in the school. In the meantime, I have not received any instructions or awareness raising about the process of inclusion as a member of staff in the school. All that I know is that there will be special classes for slow learners, however I do not have any idea about inclusion.
- Improve the curriculum because the current curriculum does not include any information about the concept of inclusion and individuals with disability.
- The current school is not ready for inclusion with the existing limited equipment and material. What is the difference between me and the special teacher, both of us use the same traditional means to convey the information and the lesson. For me I have 26 students in the class and the special teacher has 7 students in the class, the difference is only in the number of the students in the class, however there is no difference in the classes' equipment and resources and the special teacher prepares for the lesson in the same way as the mainstream teacher prepares for the lesson.
- The only preparation for inclusion is allocating two classes for students who are slow learners in our school. They have been included without any preparation for the school, staff, teachers and parents.
- No kind of preparation for the teacher about inclusion before implementation.

- The Ministry of Education plays no role regarding inclusion, at least clarification about the aims, definition of inclusion for parents and teachers, such as brochures. (*no available published information*).
- There are a lot of mistakes in the current situation. If the Ministry of Education considers slow learnersas special cases and allocates for them special classes in mainstream schools, in this instance I think it is better to have a special building with qualified teachers and head teacher and special resources and wider places that meet their needs, not just as what happens currently. They are excluded in some non-equipped special classes with non- qualified teachers and non-suitable places and in addition are opened to bullying from other, non-disabled students.
- The Ministry of Education allocates special classes in mainstream schools without any prior study of the situation and without any awareness and preparation for the schools, teachers, parents and students.
- I do not consider the current situation as inclusion, slow learnersare only divided in two special classes and they do not feel comfortable because their place is not adequate and they need wider places. There are no changes to the school system for the process of inclusion.
- The current inclusion is only special classes in mainstream schools, there is no change in the school context or system.
- There is no change in the curriculum.
- The school has no clear plan regarding adopting inclusion, only special classes in mainstream schools and this is really disappointing.
- The only changes for inclusion is located special classes for slow learnersin mainstream schools.
- There is no plan for the school about inclusion, it is not prepared totally the school has no policy or plan to implement inclusion.
- There are no steps or preparation of the school before the implementation of inclusion just the allocation of some special classes for slow learner students.

Appendix (8)

(Permission for accessing the Schools)

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الرقم: ٢٧٠ التاريخ: ٢٠١٢/١١/٢٠م

السيد المحترم/ أ. طلق صقر الهيم

مدير عام منطقة مبارك الكبير التعليمية

تحية طيبة وبعد...

الموضوع/ تسهيل مهمة

تقوم الطالبة / نوف سالم العنزي المسجلة بالهيئة العامة للتعليم التطبيقي والتدريب على درجة الدكتوراه في تخصص " التربية الخاصة/ تخلف عقلي في المملكة المتحدة "

فيرجى تسهيل مهمة المذكورة أعلاه من خلال إجراء مقابلات شخصية في مدرستين للمرحلة الابتدائية واحدة بنين وأخرى بنات التابعة لمنطقتكم التعليمية خلال العام الدراسي الحالي ٢٠١٣/٢٠١٤م.

مع خالص الشكر والتقدير

مدير إدارة البحوث التربوية

أ. إبتسام الحاي

مدير إدارة البحوث التربوية

وزارة التربية

إدارة البحوث التربوية

Ashs/2013

ص.ب : ١٦٢٢٢ القادسية - ٣٥٨٥٣ الكويت - تلفون : ٤٨٣٨٣٢١ - ٤٨٤٢٤٠٤ - فاكس : ٤٨٣٧٩٠٩ - ٤٨٤٢٤٠٤
P.O. Box : 16222 - QADSIAH - 35853 - KUWAIT - Tel : 4842404 - 4838321 - Fax : 4837909 - 4842404

Appendix (9)

Kuwait

(Information Leaflet for teachers, head teachers and mothers)

Dear Madam,

I would like to invite you to take part in my research which aims to explore Teachers' and Parents' perspectives towards including slow learners in mainstream schools in Kuwait. It is a case study research that I am undertaking as part of my PhD degree at Stirling University.

- **About the study**

  Currently, the issue of whether to include or exclude disabled students from mainstream schools is highly dominant and controversial, confronting educational policy-makers around the world. This study will investigate teachers' and parents' perspectives about the inclusion of slow learners in mainstream classrooms in Kuwait. I chose this topic because the movement towards inclusion of students with special needs is in the early stages in Kuwait. I chose to focus on parents and teachers as two key stakeholders because they strongly affect the inclusion practice and contribute to the success of this process.

- **Your involvement in the study**

As outlined earlier, I would like to conduct an interview with you in order to gain a better understanding of your perspectives on the idea of including slow learners in mainstream schools in Kuwait.

I would therefore be grateful if you could dedicate some of your time for the interview process. Given your view about such issue and your contribution in this study will be greatly appreciated. The interview is going to last for approximately one hour or one hour and 30 minutes and it will be recorded by audio recording.

Please, let me know if something is not clear so that I can provide the necessary explanations. Moreover, have in mind that anything you say will be treated as strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone else. I will use the information you provide in my thesis and in published research papers but you will not be named and all data will be anonymised. Data will not be shared between participants and will never become public. Any data that might identify the participants will be destroyed;

therefore feel free to express your opinion on the issue examined. Your participation will be voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the research at any given time without any problem. Please note that all data will be destroyed on completion of the project. Please note that I may write academic papers from my study which will be suitably anonymised. If you have any complaints or concerns about the research process you can contact the Head of the School of Education at University of Stirling:

Title of the project	Teachers' and Parents perspectives towards including slow learnersin mainstream schools in Kuwait
Supervisors	Dr. Alison Fox-University of Stirling Dr. Cate Watson- University of Stirling
Researcher	Nouf Alenezi
Head of the School of Education	Professor John Gardner (john.gardner@stir.ac.uk) Tel: + 44 (0) 1786 467013

Thank you in advance for your help. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me by e-mail (nouf.alenezi@stir.ac.uk)if you have any inquiries.

Yours sincerely,

Nouf Alenezi

Appendix (10) (A)

Consent Form for teachers and head teachers

Teachers' and Parents perspectives towards including slow learners in mainstream schools in Kuwait

I have read the project information leaflet and I am aware of the study's aims and the degree of involvement required from me. I understand that:

- My participation will be voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any given time without any problem and any information related to me will be destroyed.
- The researcher may write academic papers from the current study which will be suitably anonymised.
- The research is confidential and that there is no intention to identify the school or individual teachers in future research outputs.
- The interview will be recorded by audio recording and data gathered will be transcribed, the identity of the participants will never become public and will be stored safely in a secure location. In addition, all data will be destroyed on completion of the project.

With this in mind, I confirm that I am willing to take part in the project and be interviewed by the researcher Nouf Alenezi.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Signature of researcher .....

Date .....

Appendix (10) (B)

Consent Form for Mothers

Teachers' and Parents perspectives towards including slow learners in mainstream schools in Kuwait

I have read the project information leaflet and I am aware of the study's aims and the degree of involvement required from me. I understand that:

- my participation will be voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any given time without any problem and any information related to me will be destroyed.
- the researcher may write academic papers from the current study which will be suitably anonymised.
- the research is confidential and that there is no intention to identify the child school or mothers l in future research outputs.
- the interview will be recorded by audio recording and data gathered will be transcribed, the identity of the participants will never become public and will be stored safely in a secure location. In addition, all data will be destroyed on completion of the project.

With this in mind, I confirm that I am willing to take part in the project and
Be interviewed by the researcher Nouf Alenezi.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Signature of researcher .....

Date .....

Appendix (11)

Semi- Structured Interview schedule

For head teachers ,Special and mainstream teachers, mothers of slow learners and mothers of non-disabled students

Section (A) **Ice-Breaking questions:**

- Tell me about yourself and your teaching experience? **(for teachers)**
- Tell me about yourself and your child who is attending in inclusive school? **(for mothers)**

Section (B) **RQs (2) How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand disability?**

- **Interview questions:**
- What does the word disability mean for you within the school setting?
- Who are the individuals that you consider as disabled? Could you give examples?
- Why do you think they are disabled?
- As you may know, in Kuwait that students with slow learning are taught in mainstream schools. How would you describe or define slow learners?
- Do you think students with other disabilities should or could be included? Why or why not? Could you give examples?

Section (C) **RQs (3) How do female head teachers, teachers and mothers understand the concept of inclusion?**

- What do you understand by inclusion? Or what does inclusion mean to you?
- Do you think that mainstream school environment is educationally suitable for slow learners? What is the ideal model of inclusion for slow learners from your perspectives (full inclusion or special class in mainstream school or included in main class but may have some lessons in a special class)? Or How do you think that slow learners should be educated? (for mothers)
- What is the most appropriate setting or academic environment for teaching slow learners? (for teachers)

Section (D) **RQs (4) What are Kuwaiti female head teachers', teachers' and mothers' perspectives towards inclusion?**

- Have you received any pre or in-service training relative to special education needs? If yes, how long?
- Have you received any pre or in-service training relative to inclusive education?
- Do you feel well prepared to teach slow learners in mainstream schools?
- Have you got any previous experience in teaching students with special needs?
- Have you got any previous experience in teaching slow learners?
- What preparation does a teacher need to cope with inclusion?
- What steps or actions did the school take before implementing inclusion in your school?
- How the school prepared to carrying out the policy of inclusion in Kuwait?
- To what extend do you think your school is resourced and ready for inclusion?
- Do you receive any support from the Ministry of Education or the local authorities regarding the education of slow learners? What kind of support?
- Are you aware of the current documents related to inclusive education policy in Kuwait? What do you think about them? Are there any gaps that you would like to highlight?

- Do you feel that teachers in the inclusive school are well prepared for teaching slow learners?
- What preparation does a teacher need to cope with inclusion?
- What steps or actions did the school take before implementing inclusion in your child's school?
- To what extend do you think your child's school is resourced and ready for inclusion?
- Do you receive any support from the Ministry of education, your child school or the local authorities regarding the education of slow learners in inclusive school? What kind of support?
- Are you aware of the current documents related to inclusive education policy

in Kuwait? What do you think about them?

- **Or for more explanation** (Do you think that the current instructions and policy document related to inclusive education practice in Kuwait are clear, helpful and enough for parents of disabled and non- disabled students to successful inclusion? are there any gaps?

- In your opinion what are the challenges that face inclusive education in Kuwait now?
- Could you mention any important changes that should be done in order to improve inclusive education in Kuwait?
- What sort of support would you like to implement for successful inclusion?
- Finally, would you like to add anything else?

The first research question will be answer by documentary analysis method using the approach of critical discourse analysis: **RQs *(1) what are the policy context for Inclusive Education in Kuwait?***

Many thanks for your time

Appendix (12)

Reflection on my research journey

As a Kuwaiti student, I came with interest to study in the UK and with the belief that I would build on the knowledge, skills and experience that I had acquired up to that time. I was slightly worried, as it was my first experience of studying abroad. Coping with a different educational system and different way of academic writing as well as a different life style would be a big challenge for me, not only in my academic career but also in terms of my daily life. However, I overcame my first challenge successfully as I received my Master's degree from the University of Exeter in the field of special education. During my PhD study, attending the School of Education seminars, participating in conferences such as the Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) gave me opportunities to meet students from different countries and learn from their experiences and knowledge. The annual School of Education Conference was an excellent opportunity for me and my research student colleagues to give presentations in front of experienced audience members, as well as to receive helpful feedback. In addition, attending several workshops organized by Stirling University with an aim to develop my research skills. An example of some of these follows:

- Doctoral Conference, 2012, giving presentation.
- International Doctoral Summer School: Traditions of Theorising in Doctoral Research in Education. 10-14th June 2012. University of Stirling.
- School of Education Doctoral Conference, May 2013, poster presentation.
- School of Education Doctoral Conference, May 2014, presenting a paper "Critical discourse analysis of the policy of inclusion in the state of Kuwait".
- Effective conference presentation talks. Session for advice on giving conference talks (23 May 2014).
- School of Education Doctoral Conference May 2015, presenting a paper "Inclusive education in the context of Kuwait".
- Two day NVivo course (at introductory level). Stirling campus (2-3 June 2014).
- Scottish Educational Research Association (SERA) 39th Annual Conference, 2014 - "From widening horizons to a worldview" - with the World Education Research Association. Focal Meeting at the University of Edinburgh, Wednesday 19 November - Friday 21 November 2014 (presented a chapter).
- Wednesday 4 June 2014 RefWorks Fundamentals workshop - for new

RefWorks users or anyone who would like to refresh their skills. It does not include use of Write-N-Cite.

- 'Effective Communication with your Supervisor'. 19 March 2015, Stirling University.

To this date I have lived in UK for almost seven years and have gained experience and knowledge, which I hope I will be able to use to develop the educational system in Kuwait. Studying in UK has helped me to develop my research skills and has opened the door for me to explore different philosophical assumptions, perspectives, educational policy, cultural contexts and knowledge in addition to developing my critical thinking skills. I hope that I have succeeded in showing some of my learning skills, learnt in UK in this study. I hope that this study will be my starting point for carrying out further research in the field of inclusive education in the near future, as I will be working at the Department of Special Education Needs at Jaber al-ahamad University in the State of Kuwait, which prepares pre-service teachers. Finally, I would like to expresses my appreciation to all the kind people that I have met in British society. I have found British society to be one of the kindest, most respectful and successful societies (and its citizens) in the world, in addition to their reality of supporting the idea of inclusive society and accepting diversity.