

ENAS MAJADLEY
ORCID: 0000-0001-5403-3746
Al-Qasemi Academy – Academic College of Education
E-mail: enasalaa.gaze@gmail.com

INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE PALESTINIAN-ARAB COMMUNITY IN THE ISRAELI EDUCATION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

Arab Israeli society is a traditional society. The Arab-Israeli community has a clear and defined system of customs. This system regulates personal behavior and relationships between people within a community. An individual is directed in a way that traces its origins back to traditions and values more than environmental conditions, such as poverty or educational neglect, or from conditions of distinct abundance to modern society. Arabs in Israel constitute approximately 20% of the general population. They are considered traditional residents, and they undergo rapid changes, transitions and modernization processes. These operations show an expression of the high level of education for men and women, the improvement of the level of health services, the improvement of the general level, and the constant exposure and relationships with the contemporary Jewish population in Israel. Religious beliefs are of great importance in shaping teaching curricula.

The concept of comprehensive education was initially considered a concept in the education system in Israel. However, general education has witnessed huge improvements over the last decade despite cultural, socioeconomic and political constraints. These enhancements to Israeli national education policy have provided support mechanisms for children with disabilities because of government policies and cultural constraints, including education that has not witnessed a series of advocacy, litigation, and legislation, as seen in large-scale companies such as the United States of America, which have set up a legal mechanism to address the needs of children. With inclusive style. By definition, overall education is, by definition, the full integration of learners with and without special needs in class-

rooms and schools, thereby exposing them to the same learning opportunities. A comprehensive education definition is the education of all children and young people with and without disabilities or difficulties in co-teaching in schools with the support and assistance of an integrated teacher who adapts the material taught to the students.

The trend of educating students with disabilities in Arab schools in Israel is growing. As a result, teacher preparation and appropriate training will help them teach students with intellectual disabilities. An important element in designing teachers' initial tendencies stems from school experiences and interaction with student with teachers. The purpose of this article is to review the literature on integrating students with disabilities into general education Arab school in Israel.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES IN THE ISRAELI EDUCATION SYSTEM

The provision of inclusive education was initially adopted in community-based and philanthropic bodies in the Israeli-Arab society. In 1974, the Israel's ministry of education (MOE) was the formal organization for special education in the Arab community. However, only during the 1980s, there was a formal establishment for the provision of special education services¹. Moreover, the general status of people with disabilities in the Arab and Jewish communities was improved by the 1988 Special Education Law (SEL) in Israel. This law called for the government's duty to provide children with disabilities with their defined set of rights. The Israeli SEL, consists of five subsections: 1) definitions of terms, 2) free special education, 3) diagnosis and placement, 4) education at the special education institution and variance, and 5) before breaking the law, special education. The procedures were based on informal and personal negotiation between the education system, the child's family and the Ministry of Education and Culture².

The Equal Rights for People with Disabilities Law in Israel was enacted in 1998 and was last amended in 2014 (Amendment No. 14). This law aims to protect the dignity and freedom of individuals with disabilities, and to ensure their right to effective and equal participation in society, in all areas of life. In addition, it aims to ensure an appropriate response to their needs, thereby enabling them to enjoy independence, privacy and respect, while taking advantage of their capabilities. The development of legal regulations concerning equality and equity

¹ K. Abu-Asbah, *The Arab Education System and Questions of Equality*, "Mifne" 2008, 58, p. 43–50.

² T. Gumpel, *Special Education Law in Israel*, "The Journal of Special Education" 1996, 29, p. 457–468.

improved the situation of people with disabilities and children with special educational needs in Israel.

There is great concern about opportunities for students with disabilities in Israel because the curriculum differs significantly between individual and general programs. The situation is wider analyzed by Gilada Avissar³. The curriculum in Israel varies from school to school. Therefore, students with disabilities, especially in a segregated setting, did not meet the same academic standards as their general education counterparts.

Students with disabilities cannot advance to general education because they will be far behind in their learning skills and keep pace with their unlimited peers in general education. According to Avissar – as a result, the mainstream of children in Israel has become a major difficulty because there is a large gap between the curriculum being taught to special education students and general education students. The Israeli education system is starting to move towards inclusion, therefore, the author stresses that there is also a need to change the curriculum and consistency in the Israeli education system. According to her idea, if the school exercises inclusion in Israel, teachers are required to make general education materials available to the student through modifications or facilities, provide an individualized education plan for their students, and develop a curriculum that is agreed upon by all teachers in the school⁴.

Gilada Avissar stresses that there is an obstacle to comprehensive practices in Israel, leading to questions about: how students with difficulty in learning are identified as having a disability; how far students with severe disabilities can be included in general education classes; how to teach the content of common curricula for students with disabilities⁵. Issues such as curriculum guidelines for students with special needs have not been addressed, and Avissar noted that the Ministry of Education of Israel implemented a plan in 1998 to reduce the number of students in special classes and private schools and raise the integration rates for special education students in schools and regular classes. The main principles of the plan included:

[...] differential services in accordance with individual needs, placement in a mainstreamed education facility following the principal of the least restrictive environment, and organizational flexibility in service delivery⁶.

³ G. Avissar, *Inclusive Education in Israel from a Curriculum Perspective: an Exploratory Study*, "European Journal of Special Needs Education" 2012, 27 (1), p. 35–49.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 38.

By 1999, the law of the State of Israel made it compulsory for all schools to include students with disabilities. According to Al-Yagon and Margalit, the law has resulted in non-exhaustive settings separate from general education students or self-contained special education classes in regular schools⁷. In 2002, the amendment to the Special Education Law [Amendment No. 7] led to the withdrawal program for children with special needs for additional educational services within the framework of public education⁸.

With regard to children with disabilities, the law must be reflected in formal and informal education frameworks. In Israel, the local authority framework is the main public service that provides non-formal education and leisure-related activities for young people in general; therefore, the local authority plays an important role in opening the doors of the community to persons with disabilities. However, as the regulation of leisure time for residents with special needs is still not organized, there is no formal framework to guide the work of local and municipal frameworks. Consequently, there are significant differences between the different local authorities in terms of the degree of their involvement in this endeavor⁹.

Although the law in Israel evolves into direction of social inclusion of individuals with disabilities – their participation in all areas of life, including education, it is not smooth process, especially regarding the social and cultural diversity in Israel.

Kasler & Jabareen conceptualize “triple jeopardy”¹⁰. According to them, this concept refers to a condition in which Israel’s most vulnerable societies are faced with difficult barriers. Accordingly, in addition to disabilities, the weakened group suffers from the placement in the periphery of society, governmental and institutionalized segregation, poverty, and inequality. Nonetheless, although equality before the law has been made more attainable due to the legislations, governmental and non-governmental reports show that this law has not been entirely realized¹¹.

⁷ M. Al-Yagon, M. Margalit, *Special and Inclusive Education in Israel*, “Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies” 2001, 6 (2), p. 93–112.

⁸ *Special Education Law of 4358, 15.10.88*, Laws-Records, Israel 1988.

⁹ E. Weissblei, *The Availability of Resources for the Community of Children with Special Needs. Israel Knesset Report*, Knesset Research and Information Center, Jerusalem 2011.

¹⁰ J. Kasler, Y.T. Jabareen, *Triple Jeopardy: Special education for Palestinians in Israel*, “International Journal of Inclusive Education” 2017, 21 (12), p. 1261–1275.

¹¹ D. Naon, B. Morginstin, M. Schimmel, G. Rivlis, *Children with Special Needs: Evaluation of Needs and Provision By Service Providers*, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem 2000; Israel National Council for the Child, *Children in Israel. Annual Report*, 2013; A.K. Agbaria, M. Mustafa, *The Case of Palestinian Civil Society in Israel: Islam, Civil Society, and Educational Activism*, “Critical Studies in Education” 2014, 55 (1), p. 44–57; E. Weissblei, *The Availability of Resources...*, op. cit.

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
FROM THE PALESTINIAN-ARAB COMMUNITY

Whereas in general, disabled people face many hardships and constraints, people with disabilities from minority groups suffer from additional barriers. Within the article the focus is on the barriers and disadvantages particular to or triggered by the Arab socio-cultural case. Due to the changes in legislation and the improvements of services for people with disabilities in Israel, the general status of people with disabilities has undergone notable improvements, which are also manifested in the Arab context¹². However, the lack of knowledge and help, poor provision of services, poor communication between the organizations that deal with disabilities, and a negative societal outlook on people with disabilities, are all factors that hurdle the process of the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Arab culture. It is manifested within the educational system.

The majority of the Arabs reside in the Northern district in the Galilee area. They mainly live in villages that are either Christian, Muslim, or Druze. Nonetheless, there are also comprehensive and mixed villages in which they reside. During 2014⁷, 450,000 out of 1.5 million Israelis who were classified as having disabilities, were Arabs. In a more recent report by Israel's Ministry of Justice on disabled people, Ben-Moshe, Roffman, and Yisrael¹³ offered comparative data regarding disabilities among Israeli Jews and Arabs. According to the data, 26% of the Arab population and 17% of the Jewish population were classified as having disabilities. Among the Jewish population, 5% in the Jewish sector was classified as having severe disabilities, compared to 14% in the Arab sector. Nonetheless, the authors acknowledged that many Arabs were excluded from the data, due to the fact that the Arab-Bedouins in the Negev were excluded from the findings. Moreover, the high percentage of classified people with disabilities in the Arab society reflects their low socio-economic status¹⁴, and their poor health care services, in comparison to the Israeli-Jews¹⁵. The exalted percentages also result from their consanguineous marriages, which often lead to hereditary illness¹⁶.

¹² A. Sandler-Loeff, Y. Shahak, *People with Disabilities in Arab Society in Israel: An Opportunity for Social Change*, JDC Israel: The Unit for Disabilities and Rehabilitation, Jerusalem 2006.

¹³ E. Ben-Moshe, L. Roffman, H. Yisrael (eds.), *People with Disabilities in Israel: Disability and Inclusion in Israeli Society: A Comparative Multi-Year Overview*, Commission for Equal Rights for People with Disabilities, Justice Ministry State of Israel, Jerusalem 2011.

¹⁴ Y. Haj, *Special Education and Inclusion in Arab Society in Israel: Opportunities and Obstacles*, [in:] *Inclusion: Educational and Social Systems*, eds. G. Avissar, Y. Leyser, S. Reiter, Ahva, Haifa 2011, p. 55–85.

¹⁵ J. Habib, *The Arab Population of Israel: Selected Characteristics in Education, Economic, Health and Social Indicators*, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem 2008.

¹⁶ L. Jaber, G. Halpern, T. Shohat, *Trends in the Frequencies of Consanguineous Marriages in the Israeli Arab Community*, "Clinical Genetics" 2000, 58 (2), p. 106–110.

The new laws regarding situation of people with disability in Israel influenced on the educational system, the status of students with disabilities and their educational opportunities. Nonetheless, despite this law, the status of special education in Arab society was not as improved like that of Jewish society. This setback hails to the poor provision of training, services, materials, and competent personnel, to the Palestinian students. Furthermore, this unwanted condition was also worsened by the lack of knowledge and awareness towards SEN pupils in Arab society. However, Abu-Asbah¹⁷ noted the continuous efforts to spread awareness of disabilities for the bodies in charge. In addition, the educational setback in the Arab society can also be attributed to poverty, which is also enhanced the Arab welfare departments' administrative incompetence, which harms their capacity to utilize the government's funds¹⁸.

The special education in the Palestinian-Israeli Arabs' society, poses severe socio-political demands on the governmental agencies allocated for the support of people with special needs. Moreover, the amelioration in the status quo is contingent on various factors, which include utilization of available governmental funds, beneficial management, the provision of local leaders with the necessary knowledge of the inclusion of special needs children¹⁹, fair provision of resources, training, professional personnel, and legal action taking by the non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the grassroots activists. This change can also yield higher education levels in the Palestinian-Arab community. Nevertheless, the change will not be attained with the persistent existence of poverty.

Furthermore, when it comes to the Palestinian- Arabs in Israel, the improvement of general education achievements is a conflict that cannot be resolved under poverty²⁰. The described of schools are located in poor peripheries, and foster a negative outlook of people with disabilities, due to the stigmas that accompany this subject. Thus, this leads to the isolation of the SEND students in special schools, or their placement in separate classes in regular schools. These findings show that the Ministry of Education's call for the placement of SEN children in regular classrooms is not fully implemented²¹.

¹⁷ K. Abu-Asbah, *The Arab Education System...*, op. cit., p. 43–50.

¹⁸ Y. Haj, *Special Education and Inclusion...*, op. cit., p. 55–85.

¹⁹ A. Abbas (eds.), *Battered Twice: Persons with Disabilities in the Arab Society in Israel. Position paper prepared for Al-Manarah – Association for the Advancement of Persons with Disabilities in the Arab Society in Israel*, Nazareth 2013.

²⁰ J. Magnet, *Israel's Education System: Its Place in the Conflict*, Ottawa Faculty of Law Working Paper, University of Ottawa, Ottawa 2015.

²¹ A. Abbas (eds.), *Battered Twice: Persons...*, op. cit.

The representation of minorities in special education is affected by teachers' behavior ratings²². As such, educators' demeanors and beliefs towards special education for minorities can affect their judgment since they are usually the first to recommend special education services. Moreover, the provision of children with special education is also based on the child's educational accomplishments²³. Though, according to Hibel, Farkas, and Morgan's²⁴ "pond effect", the provision of special education was more likely to happen when general academic achievements were higher. That is to say that when with the raising of the academic achievement bar, the children will most likely be identified as special education students.

In comparison to the Jewish education system, the Arab education system in general, and the issue of special needs education, in particular, is much worse in the Arab schooling system²⁵. This is also manifested in the fact that in Arab schools, many special education students are placed in either special or regular education classes that do not provide them with their needs.

A study by Karni, Reiter & Bryen²⁶ reported that the success of the educational inclusion of students with special needs in middle schools in northern Israeli Arab schools depends heavily on the support of the school principals, the provided teacher training programs for special education, and the educators' positive attitudes towards inclusion. Thus, from these findings, it is obvious that the provision of teacher training and the support of the principals are necessary for the improvement of the educational status of people with disabilities.

THE ATTITUDES OF ARAB TEACHERS TOWARD THE INCLUSION AND DISABILITY

The development of the special education and implementation of inclusion of children with disabilities in Arab educational system is determined with many fac-

²² C.D. Peters, J.H. Kranzler, J. Algina, S.W. Smith, A.P. Daunic, *Understanding Disproportionate Representation in Special Education by Examining Group Differences in Behavior Ratings*, "Psychology in the Schools" 2014, 51 (5), p. 452–465.

²³ J. Hosp, D.J. Reschly, *Disproportionate Representation of Minority Students in Special Education: Academic, Demographic, and Economic Predictors*, "Exceptional Children" 2004, 70 (2), p. 185–199.

²⁴ J. Hibel, G. Farkas, P.L. Morgan, *Who is Placed Into Special Education?*, "Sociology of Education" 2010, 83 (4), p. 312–332.

²⁵ *State Comptroller*, State Comptroller Office, Israel 1992; H. Lahav, *The Role of the Family in Coping with the Crisis in the Arab Education System*, Shining Publishing, Jerusalem 1995.

²⁶ N. Karni, S. Reiter, D.N. Bryen, *Israeli Arab Teachers' Attitudes on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities*, "The British Journal of Development Disabilities" 2011, 57 (113), p. 123–132.

tors associated with socio-cultural and economical context. The Arab educators' attitudes towards disability and inclusion are the factor worth deeper analysis.

According to Groce²⁷, different cultures hold different beliefs and attitudes toward people with disabilities. In Ghana, for instance, religious (or magical) and traditional models have caused people to regard disabilities as demonic, as they believe that this is a curse from the gods, devils, and evil spirits²⁸. They also believe that disabilities are the works of witches, ghosts, or the punishments from the gods²⁹. Moreover, such attitudes are most prevailing in sub-Saharan African countries³⁰. Additionally, findings of studies conducted in Asian and Middle Eastern countries such as Israel³¹, United Arab Emirates³², and Nepal³³, have reported that in these areas disabilities are perceived as a curse from the God, a punishment for one's sins and his family in general, and is a fearful concept. Furthermore, they believe that disabilities are inherent, and are ominous and sinister, which is why people with disabilities should be excluded from family functions and religious ceremonies.

There is a lack of studies that address Arab's attitudes and beliefs towards people with disabilities. The existing studies, however, stress on the negative attitudes towards disabilities. Arab families demonstrated a sense of disgrace and shame towards girls with disabilities. Thus, the family's esteem and dignity can be vindicated by hiding people with disabilities from the public space³⁴. Addition-

²⁷ N.E. Groce, *Disability in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Rethinking Disability*, "The Lancet" 1999, 354 (9180), p. 756–757.

²⁸ M. Avoke, *Models of Disability in the Labelling and Attitudinal Discourse in Ghana*, "Disability & Society" 2002, 17, p. 769–777; J.S. Agbenyega, *The Power of Labeling Discourse in the Construction of Disability in Ghana*, Educational Research, Risks and Dilemmas, Australian Association for Research in Education, Auckland 2003; J. Anthony, *Conceptualising Disability in Ghana: Implications for EFA and Inclusive Education*, "International Journal of Inclusive Education" 2011, 15, p. 1073–1086.

²⁹ B.H. Botts, N.A. Owusu, *The State of Inclusive Education in Ghana*, "West Africa. Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth" 2013, 57, p. 135–143.

³⁰ G. Dart, 'My Eyes Went Wide Open' – An Evaluation of the Special Needs Education Awareness Course at Molepolole College of Education Botswana, "British Journal of Special Education" 2006, 33, p. 130–138; E. Gaad, *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Effect of Cultural Attitudes Towards Inclusion for Children with Intellectual Disabilities*, "International Journal of Inclusive Education" 2004, 8 (3), p. 311–328.

³¹ V. Florian, S. Katz, *The Impact of Cultural, Ethnic, and National Variables on Attitudes Towards the Disabled in Israel: A Review*, "International Journal of Intercultural Relations" 1983, 7, p. 167–79.

³² E. Gaad, *Cross-Cultural Perspectives...*, op. cit., p. 311–328.

³³ B.M. Dhungana, *The Lives of Disabled Women in Nepal: Vulnerability without Support*, "Disability & Society" 2006, 21, p. 133–146.

³⁴ S. Reiter, S. Mar'i, Y. Rosenberg, *Parental Attitudes Toward the Developmentally Disabled among Arab Communities in Israel: A Cross-Culture Study*, "International Journal of Rehabilitation Research" 1986, 9, p. 355–362.

ally, studies that examined teachers' attitudes on the placement of special needs students in regular classrooms show that female teachers were more in favor of integrating students with mild learning disabilities, compared with students with other severe disabilities. These attitudes are related to the teachers' self-esteem and whether she believes in her ability to educate more challenging students³⁵.

Attitudes of Muslim Arabs towards people with disabilities were more negative compared to members of the Jewish community³⁶. Moreover, according to Westbrook & Legge³⁷, similar negative beliefs on the integration of special needs students in regular schools were also expressed by Arabs in Australia. These authors revealed that Arab society's attitudes on disabilities are based on stigmas that accompany this concept, an attitude imprinted with shame, fear, and the need to conceal the person with disabilities from the public eye.

When it comes to teachers' support for inclusive education for people with disabilities, two recent studies³⁸ revealed that Palestinian Arab teachers were less in favor of the inclusion of SEN students than the Jewish Israeli participants who demonstrated high levels of readiness to do so³⁹. Similarly, Gumpel and Awartani⁴⁰ reported that pre-service and in-service Israeli teachers believed that it is the teachers' duty to include and educate all students regardless of their abilities. The Palestinian teachers and student-teacher however, were not in favor of inclusion.

Additional reports show higher efficiency rates by the Jewish teachers and student-teachers, higher self-esteem, and a strong sense of readiness towards working with SEND kids than Arab (Muslim) teachers and student-teachers. Nevertheless, Arab students scored higher when it comes to personal teaching efficiency. The high level in Arab teachers' scores can result from the participants' choice of

³⁵ T. Haiman, *The Integrated Classroom: Attitudes of Teachers Towards Students with and without Learning Disabilities*, "Dapim" 2004, 38, p. 152–165.

³⁶ V. Florian, *The Association Between Demographic Variables and Attitudes Toward Persons with Disabilities of Secondary Students in Israel*, "Eyunim be'Hanuch" 1977, 14, p. 145–158; V. Florian, S. Katz, *The Impact of Cultural...*, op. cit., p. 167–79.

³⁷ M.T. Westbrook, V. Legge, *Health Practitioners' Perceptions of Family Attitudes Toward Children with Disabilities: A Comparison of six Communities in a Multicultural Society*, "Rehabilitation Psychology" 1993, 38 (3), p. 177–185.

³⁸ T.P. Gumpel, S. Awartani, *A Comparison of Special Education in Israel and Palestine: Surface and Deep Structures*, "The Journal of Special Education" 2003, 37 (1), p. 33–48; H. Lifshitz, R. Glaubman, R. Issawi, *Attitudes Toward Inclusion: The Case of Israeli and Palestinian Regular and Special Education Teachers*, "European Journal of Special Needs Education" 2004, 19 (2), p. 171–190.

³⁹ Y. Leyser, S. Romi, *Religion and Attitudes of College Preservice Teachers Toward Students with Disabilities: Implications for Higher Education*, "Higher Education" 2008, 55 (6), p. 703–717.

⁴⁰ T.P. Gumpel, S. Awartani, *A Comparison of Special Education...*, op. cit., p. 33–48.

profession outside the patriarchal home, which can lead to heightened levels of autonomy followed by modernization and the acceptance of others' differences⁴¹.

Furthermore, according to Florian⁴², Jewish high schoolers regarded people with disabilities more positively than the Arab students. Similarly, in their review, Florian and Katz⁴³ reported that Jewish citizens had a more positive attitude towards people with disabilities, than the Arab citizens. The attitudes of secular and religious Israeli Jews and Muslim youngsters were examined by Wiesel and Zaidman⁴⁴. They revealed that secular students from both groups held more positive perceptions of people with disabilities. However, the level of piety did not foretell attitudes. Moreover, there is a link between piety and the support of drastic means of punishment⁴⁵. In comparison to the study's Muslim and Druze groups, the secular Jewish group was more concerned about the inadequacy of educators' expertise. Hence, the least worried groups were the Arab groups and the ultra-orthodox Jewish group. This disparity between the groups reveals the authoritarian nature of religion, which celebrates the teacher's dominance over his docile students. Moreover, Arab Palestinian pre-and-in-service teachers were more pleased with their vocational status than were their Jewish counterparts⁴⁶.

Therefore, it is mandatory to conduct research that aims to examine the cultural beliefs and attitudes on the teachers' perspectives, attitudes, and implementations of inclusive education. This is a better perception of the educators' attitudes on inclusive education that can improve the quality of the allocated teacher-training programs, the teachers' performance, and attitudes towards special education⁴⁷. Moreover, Shechtman and Or argued that teachers' wronged attitudes towards people with disabilities and towards their ability to educate them can be altered by resorting to extreme modes of interference and mediation⁴⁸. The study they conducted in Israel reveals that teachers' attitudes, stigmas on special education, and rejection of the 'other,' can be changed by the special education teacher training

⁴¹ S. Fogel-Bisawi, S. Bachar, *Family Romantic Utopia and Social Change: Attitudes of Jewish and Arab Students in Teacher Education Toward the Family Institution*, Beit Berl College, Tel-Aviv 2003.

⁴² V. Florian, *The Association Between Demographic...*, op. cit., p. 145–158.

⁴³ V. Florian, S. Katz, *The Impact of Cultural...*, op. cit., p. 167–79.

⁴⁴ A. Weisel, A. Zaidman, *Attitudes of Secular and Religious Israeli Adolescents Toward Persons with Disabilities: A Multidimensional Analysis*, "International Journal of Disability, Development and Education" 2003, 50 (3), p. 309–322.

⁴⁵ R. Shor, *The Significance of Religion in Advancing a Culturally Sensitive Approach Toward Child Maltreatment*, "Families in Society" 1998, 79 (4), p. 400–409.

⁴⁶ T.P. Gumpel, S. Awartani, *A Comparison of Special Education...*, op. cit., p. 33–48.

⁴⁷ E. Gaad, *Cross-Cultural Perspectives...*, op. cit., p. 311–328; Z. Shechtman, A. Or, *Applying Counselling Methods to Challenge Teacher Beliefs with Regard to Classroom Diversity and Mainstreaming: an Empirical Study*, "Teaching and Teacher Education" 1996, vol. 12 (2), p. 137–147.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

programs. This is why teacher-training programs in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East should encompass the pre-service teacher's stigmas on special needs kids and impose modes of intervention that aim to alter their attitudes towards people with disabilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Researchers are well aware that teachers play the most important role in implementing inclusive education. However, researchers (and the teachers) acknowledge that teachers are not sufficiently prepared for this task through current primary education curricula and ongoing professional development projects. Inclusive education is designed to provide quality and equal education to all children. This means that the general class will have a diverse group of children regarding their abilities, needs, educational, medical and therapeutic needs. Logically, it requires teachers to be proficient. However, teachers will not be able to get all the knowledge they need in a particular situation to bring justice to all children in their classrooms. Therefore, education must be considered to include all shared responsibilities.

In recent years, there has been a change between Arab families in Israel with children with intellectual disabilities towards the same standards and values as the Jewish population, where non-normalization and normalization have occurred. The informal family support system remains a very important factor in the Arab family, so it is important to support Arab families who have a child with a developmental disability in order for the child to be included in educational settings, which will teach them to special accommodations and thus help them integrate into regular education.

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Author: Enas Majadley

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Summary

The concept of inclusion is implemented in Israeli educational system with introduction of 1988 Special Education Law (SEL). The political, socio-cultural and economical changes improved the general status of people with disabilities in the Arab and Jewish communities. However, the Jewish education system, and the Arab education system in general differ, that applies also to the issue of special needs education. Students with disabilities representing minority groups suffer from additional barriers.

The main aim of the article is to discuss the issue of integrating students with disabilities into general education in Arab schools in Israel. The situation of children with special educational needs (mainly with intellectual disabilities) in educational system in Israel is discussed, with focus on children from Palestinian-Arab community. The Arab teachers attitudes and behaviors toward the inclusion and disability are analyzed. Although, the research within the topic is limited, the available results indicate rather negative attitudes of Arab teachers towards disabilities. This state might be partly embedded within the socio-cultural context. The further research within the topic is necessary.