

Haigazian University

Regular Classroom Teachers' Perception towards Inclusion in Private  
Schools in Lebanon

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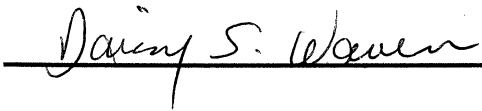
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Approved by:

Dr. Daisy Warren, Ed. D., Advisor



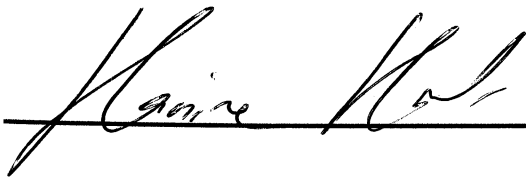
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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this exploratory study was to analyze the perception of 60 elementary and middle school regular classroom teachers, from four selected Lebanese Private Schools that have an inclusion program, towards inclusion. A survey, consisting of eleven close-ended research questions was used to assess teachers' perception of inclusion in general, their theoretical and practical preparedness for inclusion, the administrative and academic support being made available to them, and the different challenges that face inclusion. In addition, ten of the 60 participants were selected to answer a seven-question semi-structured interview related to their everyday experience of inclusion. Participants' responses were analyzed using a thematic analysis in which four organizing themes were delineated (perception of inclusion, support, potentials and challenges), allowing for the further emergence of several recurrent basic themes. The overall analysis revealed that the majority of regular classroom teachers supported the idea of inclusion but their responses varied according to the nature of the disability. The analysis also revealed that class size, lack of resources, lack of practical experience with students with special educational needs prior to the implementation of inclusion, insufficient time for planning and inappropriate administrative support were identified by all participants as important issues to be taken into consideration for a successful implementation of inclusion. Based on the findings, recommendations are discussed in order to improve regular classroom teachers' perception of inclusion.

## INTRODUCTION

Education for students with special educational needs (SEN) has changed since the first time it appeared in the USA in 1893. At first, students with SEN were served in a separate special education class (Snyder, 1999). The major change happened after 1970. In 1975, Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Child Act was issued and allowed students with SEN to be placed in regular education classes but in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (Bahn, 2009). The Least Restrictive Environment is when the education needed is individualized to meet the needs of special students in regular classrooms to the most extent possible (Hatchel, 2009). Later in 1990, Public Law 94-1990 was reauthorized and it was changed to the Individuals with Disability Act (IDEA). According to the World Health Organization (1976), a disability is defined as any restriction or lack (resulting from any impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner within the range considered normal for a human being. Even though the terms disability and special needs are used interchangeably, the term special needs will be used throughout this study. According to Individuals with Disability Educational Act (1997), Special Education is “specifically designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals, and in other settings, and instruction to physical education” (p.12).

Inclusion, the practice of providing students with SEN their education in a regular classroom setting with the maximum support and accommodation needed (McCann, 2008), is not a new concept in special education. In fact, it has been part of education for many years (Familia-Garcia, 2001). Inclusion came under different terms: least restrictive environment, integration, and mainstreaming (Deloney & Thompkins, 1995). These are interchangeable terms and what they have in common is that students with SEN have the right to be included in a

regular school which is the natural setting for education and activities. Mainstreaming and integration refer to students with SEN attending a regular education class for specific school activities while spending the rest of their school time in a special education setting (Gu, 2009). Gu also stated “that integration and mainstreaming suggest that children with disabilities cannot participate full time in general education.” (p. 11)

Officially and legally, the support for inclusion became evident in the USA in the Federal Regulation known as Public Law 105, 17, the Individuals with Disability Educational Act 1997 (IDEA) which mandated a free, appropriate public education for all children with special needs regardless of the disability and its severity (Fried, 2007). According to Olson (2003), inclusion goes beyond just having children with special needs physically in the class to having them participate in the classes’ activities, class work and homework.

In Lebanon, Law 220/2000 is one of the Lebanese government’s significant achievements to ensure the rights and improve the livelihood of people with disabilities. The 220 Law is comprehensive and includes all sectors. It confirms the rights of people with disabilities to proper education, rehabilitation services, employment, medical services, sports and access to public transportation (articles 45 to 48) (Appendix A). This legislation is based on the UN Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities and on the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled persons (LPHU, 2003).

“The concept of inclusive education for persons with disability has yet to be mainstreamed in Lebanon. There have been some initiatives undertaken on the behalf of the government but they lacked the updated data and any official adoption of inclusive policies for children with disability that is needed in order to implement the issue related to Education in

Law220/2000. There is one issue that can be found among all the ministries in Lebanon and that is the lack of a national strategy that takes into consideration national inclusive policies” (Arab NGO Network for Development et al., 2010.p.4).

Placing students with SEN in regular schools and classrooms means that the regular curriculum has to be modified according to students’ educational level and academic standing since students with SEN do not acquire certain required skills as regular students do. This creates an additional workload for the teacher. Chow et al., (2002) found that regular classroom teachers saw that their work overload has increased during inclusion of special students. Since students with SEN need a modified curriculum, more time and effort are required to do this modification to tackle their needs.

Since the focus of this exploratory study is the regular classroom teachers’ perception toward inclusion, the term “perception” should be defined for the purpose of clarity. According to Nelson and Quick (1997), perception is the process of interpreting information about another person. That definition highlights that the opinion one forms depends on the information available about the person. In this same context, Nelson and Quick say that one may possess the same kind of information that other people have on a certain situation, person or group, yet come to various conclusions due to individual differences in the ability to interpret the information one has. Accordingly, Wood (2007) defined teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion as teachers’ thoughts or feelings towards working with students with SEN in a regular education classroom. According to Allport (1967) and Richardson (1966), attitude is used to refer to a mental state that predisposes people to their actions. In the context of inclusion Ostrosky, Laumann, and Hsieh

(2006), stated that attitude is related to the quality and amount of in-service training for inclusion, and the adequate time for planning.

As seen above, the definition of perception highlights that the opinion one forms depends on the information available to the person. Therefore, information about inclusion should be presented to the regular classroom teachers, so that they will not have a problem dealing with students with SEN included in their classrooms. There are four factors that affect the perception of regular classroom teachers towards inclusion: the knowledge, in-service training, administrative support, and resources available (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Olson, 2003; Garcia, 2001). These factors will be thoroughly discussed in the present study.

The first factor that affects regular classroom teachers' perception is having sufficient knowledge in the current movement towards inclusion. Davenport and Prusak (1988) defined knowledge as a fluid mix of framed experience, contextual information, values and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. Olson (2003) reports that regular classroom teachers from a middle school from one school district in the U.S are unprepared and do not possess sufficient knowledge about students with SEN to teach them effectively. Also, Burke and Sutherland (2004) in their study in an elementary public school in Queen Village, New York, reported that even experienced regular classroom teachers might not have the up-to-date knowledge and strategies of how to work with students with SEN because of the lack of training. In that case, teachers have to deal with new issues like modifying and implementing curricula to tackle all students including those with special needs. Regular students have to follow a specific government or state curriculum whereas students with SEN have to have the curriculum modified according to their level and their needs.

For example, easier spelling words, reading from lower level books or even generating sentences instead of paragraphs comprise the mostly used modifications (Anderson & Ward, 2005). The curriculum has to be child-centered which could also be applied to regular students. This means that the regular classroom teacher must know the academic, social, and cultural standing for her students in order to find out how best to facilitate learning (Deloney & Thompkins, 1995). Based on the above, it seems that having the knowledge needed about inclusion plays an important role in regular classroom teachers' perception towards inclusion. The present study will answer the question whether it is also the case in Lebanon

The second factor that affects the perception of regular classroom teachers towards inclusion is training at the in-service and pre-service levels. Extra training is needed in the field of teaching students with special needs (Shade & Stewart, 2001). Leyser and Tappendrof (2001) mentioned that regular classroom teachers need different activities including in-service and pre-service training in this area to teach effectively in an inclusive setting. Parker (2006) stated that most teachers lack the knowledge related to how to deal with students with SEN in their classes. In-service training helps regular classroom teachers because they are exposed to specific teaching strategies that target students with SEN. In another study conducted in England (Avramidis, Bayless and Burden, 2000), regular classroom teachers stated that such training affected their attitude and their readiness to accommodate to students with SEN. After receiving such training, regular classroom teachers go into their classroom and use the instruction taught of how to deal with students with SEN. Eventually, they felt at ease while delivering instruction and were able to facilitate students' teaching (Parker, 2006). Regular classroom teachers have to be granted opportunities to attend each other's classes, workshops that provide a variety of techniques, work with professional people in the field, and of course do their own research about inclusion (Biddle, 2006). When

regular classroom teachers have the knowledge needed about inclusion and are aware of the special techniques, then they will be able to provide various accommodations. In their study, at a South Bronx community school, Familia-Garcia (2001) noted that regular classroom teachers believe in themselves and gain more confidence to successfully implement an inclusion program after participating in in-service trainings and workshops. The studies mentioned above showed the impact of training on regular classroom teachers' perception toward inclusion. The present study will answer the question if regular classroom teachers in Lebanon have the required training for inclusion.

Administrative support is the third factor that affects regular education teachers' perception toward inclusion. It is crucial in building a successful inclusion program (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002). In addition to teachers' attitude, all the school system (academic and non-academic staff) must be supportive. Supportive administration is the key to successful implementation of inclusion and acts as catalyst behind the teachers' acceptance of inclusion. The administration has to provide the rest of the staff with the support and resources needed for teachers to accept students with SEN in their classrooms (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleeuwen, 1997). Hatchell (2009) mentioned that the school administration has to provide relevant staff ongoing improvement and aim at producing a positive change in attitude towards inclusion, advocate and provide support for program development. Levine (2012) noted that if regular classroom teachers do not receive the support needed from the administration, then the inclusion program will not work as expected. The present study will explore whether regular classroom teachers receive the needed administrative support in inclusive practices in Lebanon.

The fourth factor affecting regular classroom teachers' perception of inclusion has to do with the resources available and planning time (Zigmond and Baker, 1996). Bondurant (2004) stated that various obstacles arise when applying inclusion whether in the resources made

available to teachers or with respect to teachers' time availability to modify their instructions and lesson plans. Resources might not be available for the modifications to be done and teachers might find themselves running out of time to do all the required modifications (Avramidis, Bayless, & Burden, 2000). In the same context, Scott, Vitale, & Masten (1998) stated that regular classroom teachers need more time to make the needed modification when students with SEN are enrolled in regular education classes. The present study will explore the extent to which regular education teachers face similar challenges in Lebanon.

In Lebanon, inclusion is defined as a process that culminates in the inclusion of a person in his or her natural environment according to his or her capacities and needs (CDR, Project, 2005). In an interview with Mrs. Hala Raad, Community Development Specialist at the American University of Beirut Medical Center, disabilities in Lebanon include students with learning disabilities, internal diseases, physical diseases, disorders like ADHD, ADD, and medical problems like cancer, epilepsy, and HIV who might have special educational needs.

Today, strong efforts are being exerted in Lebanon to include students with SEN in a regular education setting in private schools as well as in public schools (Fayyad & Klink, 2012). According to the Center of Educational Research and Development (CERD, 2012), not many private schools in Lebanon have an inclusion program. Some have started inclusion as a pull-out program where students with SEN are pulled-out of the classroom to be given one-on-one support by a special education teacher. The Law 220/2000 recognizes the rights of people with disability to have access to education at all institutions (articles 59 & 60), but the public sector still lacks the mechanism to ensure that the system has all the necessary recourses and means to



implement these rights (Mansour, 2001). However, CERD set a plan to include students with SEN in public schools in Lebanon.

No research has been done in Lebanon to examine regular classroom teachers' perception toward inclusion in private or public schools that have an inclusion program. However, one such study was conducted in the United Arab Emirates, another Arab country, by Alghazo and Gaad (2004) on 160 teachers from public schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. The results revealed that teachers in UAE had less than encouraging attitudes toward inclusion of students with disabilities in their classroom. This study is significant because it would enable the comparison of results in regular classroom teachers' perception toward inclusion between Lebanon and UAE

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study attempted to explore the four specific factors that affect regular classroom teachers' perception towards inclusion in Lebanese schools: the knowledge of inclusion, the in-service training, the administrative support and the availability of time and resources.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of regular classroom teachers toward inclusion in selected private schools in Lebanon. For the purpose of this study, regular classroom teachers understand inclusion as the rights for all students to be in regular education classroom and that the classroom should be modified to meet the special students' needs (Fiorella, 2001). It is hoped that the present study will provoke further research in this field to gain insight about regular classroom teachers' perception of inclusion and the factors that need to be improved for inclusion to be successfully implemented.

### Research Questions

The following major research questions were explored:

**RQ1:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive the **knowledge** they have to work with students with SEN in their classroom?

**RQ2:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive **training** to work with students with SEN included in their classrooms?

**RQ3:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive the **support** they have (academic and administrative) in their classrooms to work with students with SEN?

**RQ4:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive the **challenges** they face to have a successful inclusion program?

### Method

This is an exploratory qualitative research study that includes a series of questions related to regular classroom teachers' perception towards inclusion in Lebanon. First, there is the broad research question that directs the study, and then narrower research questions follow (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Exploratory studies are usually carried out when little or no information is available on similar problems solved in the past (Sekaran, 2003). Exploratory studies are important when some facts are known but more knowledge is needed for developing a viable theoretical framework. Exploratory studies are also used for gaining new insight, discovering new ideas and increasing knowledge of the topic under study (The Free Dictionary, 2013). Since there is no significant research available about regular classroom teachers' perception towards

inclusion in Lebanon, an exploratory study is used to better understand the perception of regular classroom teachers' about inclusion, and maybe the results will shed light on how to help teachers develop efficient teaching skills in an inclusive setting.

The participants of this study were 60 regular classroom teachers in four selected private schools that have an inclusion program for students with special needs. Permission was obtained from the schools' administration to conduct the pilot and the actual study.

To find answers for the researchable questions, the present researcher designed a questionnaire of 11 close-ended Likert Scale statements "not at all" to "very well" and 7 subjective questions by studying different surveys used in similar studies (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004; Kelly 2010; Hatchell, 2009).

The 11 close-ended statements are divided as follows: The first four statements target the first research question. The second three statements target the second research question. The eighth and ninth statements target the third research question and the last two statements target the last research question.

The 7 interview questions are more descriptive of the participants' perceptions since they can elaborate more in their own language on the knowledge and the level of special education training they have, administrative support, and challenges about implementing inclusion in their classrooms. A semi-structured interview will be conducted on a representative convenient sample from the participants in the study.

The regular classroom teachers' responses to the questionnaire and interview will be grouped to correspond to the research questions and then categorized into themes for analyzing and interpreting data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

### **Significance of the Study**

Little research has been done so far to explore regular classroom teachers' perception toward inclusion in Lebanon. This exploratory study examined regular classroom teachers' perception regarding inclusion, and the findings shed light on the support that teachers should have from the administration of the school. It also revealed the necessity to have in-service training and prior practice experience with students with SEN before the start of implementation of inclusion. This study also provided information about the quality of the training so far provided, as well as the inclusion program adopted by the different schools. Based on the perceived challenges, this study offers practical and realistic suggestions to overcome barriers against inclusion.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The study focused on a single data source which is the perception of regular classroom teachers and not that of administration, parents or even students. If the latter were included, it would have been interesting to compare the perceptions of different groups towards inclusion.

The second delimitation was the small number of schools that have inclusion programs and are accessible to the researcher. This was due to the reluctance of some of the school administrators to permit conducting the study, and the teachers to fill the questionnaire.

The third delimitation was due to the fact that since this is an exploratory, qualitative study, the results obtained might not be useful for decision-making, but they might provide significant insight about the perception of regular classroom teachers about inclusion and the inclusion program in general.

The fourth delimitation was that all participants were females. This is due, to a great extent, to the fact that in the Lebanese culture, teaching occupations are more acceptable for women than for men, especially in the Preschool, Elementary and Middle schools.

### **Definition of Terms**

Perception: Perception has been defined as the process of interpreting information about another person, and the conclusions reached, due to individual differences in the ability to interpret the information one has. Narayan and Rao (1998) drew attention to the fact that because there are no particular strategies to understand the perceptions of others, everyone is “left with his own inventiveness, innovative ability, sensitiveness and introspective skills to deal with perception” (p.329-330).

Attitude: Attitude is defined as teacher’s attitudes towards inclusion and their thoughts or feelings towards working with students with SEN in regular education classroom (Wood, 2007).

Inclusion: In Lebanon and for the sake of this study, inclusion means that students with SEN have the right to be in regular education classrooms and that the classrooms and the curricula should be modified to meet their needs. (Fiorella, 2001)

Least Restrictive Environment: Is the academic placement of students with disabilities where they receive their education with their peers to the most extent appropriate (IDEA, 1997).

Mainstreaming: Generally, mainstreaming is a selective placement of special education students to receive their education with age appropriate students in general education setting without support (IDEA, 1997).

Special Needs: is defined as the individual's educational requirements due to a disadvantaged background whether mental, physical or emotional (IDEA, 1997).

In-service training: In-service training is training given to teachers for the purpose of continuing education after their completion of a certain degree in education. Such training exposes teachers to new instructional strategies and keeps them up- to- date in the field of education (Kelly, 2010).

## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Historical Background of Inclusion**

Although the U. S. Constitution made it a law to provide equal educational opportunities for all students in the nineteenth century, in practice it was not applied as it was meant to be (Stewart and Kluwin, 2000). It was not until the 1970's and 1980's that the students with disabilities received their right for appropriate education (Murdick, Gartin, and Crabtree, 2007). In 1975, the USA Congress passed the PL. 94-142, known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. The Act mentioned that all students with SEN should be placed in an educational setting in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) where students can act or perform according to their abilities (Daniel & King, 1997). This law went further and stated that students with SEN have to remain in LRE with regular students as long as their needs are met by applying modifications to the curriculum, accommodations to the environment where they are being taught, and related services such as Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy (Dickens & Smith, 1995).

The education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was revised and modified by Congress in 1991 and was renamed to become the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA). IDEA stated that all students with disability have the right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) by law (Kelly, 2010).

In 1997, IDEA emphasized, first, that special need students receive their education in the same educational setting as their peers who have no special needs, and if possible to study the same general educational curriculum (Strong and Sandoval, 1999). Second, whenever possible,

assessments should also be the same as their peers, provided that these assessments are also accountable (Lipsky and Gartner, 1998). These two principles ensure that students with SEN have a much better chance to successfully go to universities if they are placed in a regular educational setting, studied the same curriculum, and sat for the same assessments (Luster & Durrett, 2003). Later, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 based on the fundamental principles of IDEA, went further and mandated that students are included in all areas of educational instruction and accountability (Kelly, 2010).

In 2004, a revision of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) identified that it is not appropriate or feasible to educate all students in the regular education classroom. Therefore, the entailed school districts have to have a continuum of placement accessible from the regular educational settings to domestic settings, so that the needs of all students with SEN will be accommodated. This continuum concept ensured that each student would be placed in the needed environment that explicitly matches his/her related needs (IDEA, 2004).

The concept of inclusive education which was first termed “mainstreaming” then transformed into “integration” became internationally and significantly recognized when the United Nations “promoted the idea of Education for All at the World Conference in Thailand in 1990” (Kuyini & Desai, 2007). At the same time came The Salamanca Statement of 1994 challenging educators and schools to give an appropriate education not only for all students, but also for the students with special educational needs (UNESCO, 2001).

One of the fundamentals of inclusion is having students with SEN in a regular classroom for a complete instructional day if possible (Friend & Bursuck, 1996). It allows students with SEN to share same learning areas and opportunities. According to Friend and Pope (2005),



inclusion is a practice where all students with SEN, regardless of their needs, should be warmly welcomed as part of the school community, meaning that all the classroom environment and principles should be based on inclusion.

In inclusion, all services, support and resources should be available in the regular classroom as needed. This movement of inclusion urges educators to move beyond mainstreaming to inclusive strategies to meet the needs of students with SEN (Lewis, 2006). This has created a new challenge to regular classroom teachers as it urged them to adopt new roles and responsibilities (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004). Chow and Winzer (1992) claimed that for inclusion to be successful, regular classroom teachers should reveal positive attitudes towards students with SEN. However, it is important to note that the regular classroom teachers' personalities and the way they defined their roles shaped their attitudes, and the success of inclusion is determined to a significant level by the regular classroom teachers' skills and perceptions (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004).

### **Historical background of Inclusion in Lebanon**

International conferences and declarations have advocated the necessity to embrace the need to agree on official policies to include students with SEN in the mainstream educational system. The Salamanca statement of 1994 (UNESCO) and the World Education Meeting in Dakar in 2000 identified the same need of inclusive education for students with SEN. In its Arab regional conference on the formal educational system for persons with special needs held in 2001, the UNESCO emphasized the need of inclusion for students with SEN in the regular education system (CDR, 2005).

In Lebanon, the trend towards inclusion started early in 1980s with civil society actors. This effort continued when the Ministry of Education in collaboration with UNESCO, requested a professional report on teaching students with SEN in Lebanon (Wehbi, 2006). To be consistent with the worldwide movement toward inclusion, a significant milestone was met when legislation known as Law 220/2000 was issued (Wehbi, 2006). Article 59 of the Law ensured the right to equal educational and learning opportunities for people with disabilities (Wehbi, 2006). Article 60 affirmed that any disability should not prohibit access to any educational institution or setting in Lebanon (Wehbi, 2006), and Article 62 stated that examinations needed to be modified and revised to meet their needs. In short, this law stated that the best way to educate these students is to integrate them in the community and provide them an equal opportunity of education in the mainstreaming setting (Khochen, & Radford, 2012).

The Lebanese legislation known as Law 220 that ensures the rights of people with disability has not been implemented yet as it should be due to the absence of empirical information related to the past and present situation of inclusive practices in Lebanon (Wehbi, 2006). Unfortunately, the majority of children with disabilities attend special care institutions run by non-governmental organization and supervised by the Ministry of Social Affairs (Lakkis & Thomas, 2003).

As a matter of fact, inclusion in Lebanon is still at its first stages, and there is no legislation related to include students with SEN into regular classroom, except for some private schools and non-governmental organizations who have taken the initiative to include students with SEN into regular classrooms (Ismail, 2004). Many obstacles faced schools in including students with SEN in their classrooms. Lack of awareness about educational needs of children

with disabilities is one of the major challenges that hinder the implementation of inclusion in schools. Most of the children with disabilities attend specialized institutions; hence, their needs remain unknown to the mainstream society (CDR, 2005). Moreover, the Lebanese comprehensive Law 220/2000 has yet to be ratified because it lacks many implementation mechanisms that are needed to make all articles of the law more effective( Arab NGO et al., 2010).

A study conducted by Mac Bride, Dirani and Mukalid for “UNESCO” (1999) assessed the status of special education in the Lebanese educational system and concluded that almost 310,118 could benefit from special education in Lebanon. This was followed by another study conducted by the Pilot Experiences Commission (2000). The findings from this study revealed that most schools are not yet ready to accept all types of disabilities and this is due to the fact that they still lack the necessary resources and trained staff to meet the needs of the various types of disabilities (Brousse-Chamichian et al., 2000).

In 2004, the Inclusion Network which groups parents, people with disabilities, professionals, educators and national and international NGOs examined inclusive education in all Lebanese schools that have adopted inclusion programs irrespective of the way they defined inclusion to provide a description of inclusion for The National Inclusion Project, a project managed by a consortium of four organizations aimed at addressing the exclusion experienced by people with disability. Nineteen schools took part in the study by filling a survey during a meeting with a resource person who could be director, teacher, special educator, etc. This project was considered as a keystone to build on an inclusive society. The finding revealed that inclusion programs are to provide special students an opportunity to integrate into society. Besides, they

developed the framework needed in building communication with related stakeholders and offered a complete inclusion model. Moreover, the schools felt that their teachers had the adequate training, yet the findings showed the need for vocational training for students, qualified human resources and more funding (CDR, 2005).

A study conducted by Khochen and Radford (2012) explored teachers and head teachers' attitude towards people with disability in mainstream in primary schools in Lebanon. Forty teachers from mainstream schools within the National Inclusion Project completed a questionnaire, and five head teachers and consortium managers were interviewed. The findings showed that teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion but most of the teachers said that they still need training in the field of special education and inclusion. Besides, they were not in favor of including all students with SEN in the classes especially those with social, behavioral and emotional problems.

### **Perception towards Inclusion**

As inclusion of students with SEN into regular classrooms in most of the private schools in Lebanon is turning to be a reality, it becomes mandatory to determine the perception of regular classroom teachers towards inclusion. With such an implementation, a variety of attitudes sprung up. According to Brazil, Ford and Ford (2001), many of regular classroom teachers' worries are liable and accountable. These worries are crucial factors behind regular classroom teachers' perceptions that can aid schools to work on and enhance their inclusion experiences. A crucial part of inclusion is that everyone in the school should share responsibilities to meet and support the needs of all students (Brazil, Ford & Ford, 2001). According to Jones et al. (2002), as

inclusion becomes more implemented in schools, regular classroom teachers' perception would become more positive.

Several studies (Villa, Thousand, Myers & Nevin, 1996; York, Vandercook, Macdonald, Heise –Neff, & Caughey, 1992) had been carried out to see what are the regular education teachers' perceptions towards including students with SEN in their classroom (Coates, 1989). Coates described regular classroom teachers as either being against the idea of inclusion or supportive to it. Regular classroom teachers neither agree on the basic principles of inclusive setting nor against the pull-out programs. But, according to Villa, Thousand, et al, (1996) regular classroom teachers' attitude toward inclusion was negative because they lacked the training to handle students with SEN, and because inclusion required an excessive amount of work.

Cochran (1998) stated that attitudes of regular classroom teachers towards inclusion have a crucial role in the improvement of students with SEN' education if they are to receive their education in a regular education classroom. To successfully educate students with SEN in a regular classroom, regular classroom teachers should be aware of the areas that contribute to this success. That is why regular classroom teachers should know about and are in charge for the accommodations and modifications needed for students with SEN and how to implement them (Mclesky, Hoppey, Williamson, & Rentz, 2004). To be able to do this, more things are added to their responsibilities, hence, creating more workload as well as taking efficient time from the regular education students. Similarly, Forness and Kavale (2000) noted that regular education teachers tend to lose too much of their already overworked attention if students with SEN are included in their classes. Nonetheless, Bicker (2000) mentioned that regular education students

can benefit from the accommodations done and the modifications carried out are not limited to students with SEN, but can be useful for all students.

Moreover, according to McLeskey and Waldron (2002), regular classroom teachers are worried about the whole academic performance of their students and they feel that the class academic performance will decrease. Hence, more pressure is placed on the teacher to do more work to modify the curriculum so that it tackles all the students enrolled. Such changes have an impact on regular classroom teachers' perception towards inclusion.

Another study by Vitale and Masten (1998) showed that regular classroom teachers are not always ready to adjust or modify their teaching strategies and the students' learning styles if students with SEN are included in their classroom. In an inclusive classroom, regular classroom teachers must deliver academic instructions in various ways to fit the students' different learning styles. Baglieri and Knopf (2004) stated that most regular classroom teachers believe that differentiating instructions is only for students with SEN and are not aware that in the same classroom, a variety of styles is present. For that reason, regular teachers must change their ideas regarding differentiation. The research reviewed showed that the negative perceptions held by regular classroom teachers towards inclusion can be changed to more positive ones if some of these factors are reflected upon (Olson, 2003).

### **Knowledge of Inclusion**

The first factor that affects regular classroom teachers' perception towards inclusion is how much knowledge teachers have about inclusion. Regular classroom teachers are unaware and/or do not have the knowledge of how to effectively teach students with SEN (Olson, 2003).

In inclusion, regular classroom teachers are not only responsible to meet the needs of the regular education students, but also responsible to meet the needs of special need students. That means taking the role of special education teachers (Cochran, 1998). Patterson (2005) noted that regular classroom teachers repetitively say that they are not prepared for such challenges to meet the needs of students with SEN. A study by Olson (2003) also revealed that only 50% of the surveyed regular classroom teachers somewhat agreed that they have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of students with SEN in their classes. Another study by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) on 10,560 respondents including teachers and other school personnel from rural, urban and suburban or combined school districts in the United States, Australia, and Canada revealed that regular classroom teachers were cooperative, supportive, and enthusiastic to work in an inclusion program. Yet, they stated that they do not have the knowledge to create a successful inclusion classroom.

### **Training Needed**

The second factor that affects the perception of the regular classroom teachers' towards inclusion is the lack of training needed. The majority of literature reviewed (Olson, 2003; Kelly, 2010; Biddle, 2006; Burden, 2000) stated that regular classroom teachers needed more training to be efficiently prepared to teach students with SEN. Such training services were shown by Leyser and Tappendorf (2001) to include in-service or pre-service training like presentations, discussions, models and applicable information about disabilities.

Freytag (2001) noted that the shortage of pre-service trainings plays a significant role in the implementation of inclusion in the classroom. Teachers feel less confident because they do not have the experience needed to instruct a wide variety of students with SEN. Several studies

(Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001, Avramidis, Bayless & Burden, 2000) show that regular classroom teachers with no prior training display less confidence in their ability to teach students with SEN and successfully meet their needs. Yet, they felt that appropriate training helps them to elaborate the essential skills to meet such challenges (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

A study Burke & Sutherland (2004) indicated that regular classroom teachers with pre-service training have stronger knowledge about inclusion practices than teachers with in-service training. The researchers concluded that experienced regular education teachers, due to the lack of training, might not have an idea about the current knowledge and strategies of how to work with students with SEN. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) also found that many regular classroom teachers are ready to master the necessary skills with appropriate training to successfully implement inclusion in their classrooms. These skills are further elaborated by Biddle (2006) who found that regular classroom teachers need workshops, observations of other classrooms and review some research on inclusion. Lyser and Tappendrof (2001) supported Biddle's findings that regular classroom teachers need more professional developmental opportunities like attending workshops and in-service training to learn more about students with SEN and inclusion. If regular classroom teachers receive the needed training and are adequately prepared, then, they will be at ease working with students with SEN.

For regular classroom teachers to change their attitudes, they should have a continuum of services for students with SEN (Olson, 2003). Studies have reported that regular classroom teachers' attitude towards inclusion were more positive after receiving special education training. Van Rusen, Shoho, and Baker (2001) administered an Inclusion Survey that measures regular



classroom teachers' attitude in a large suburban high school. Results showed that teachers held more positive attitude after the completion of higher levels of special education training.

Similarly, Avramidis, Bailey and Burden (2000) surveyed a number of primary and secondary regular classroom teachers and found out that regular classroom teachers who had advanced special education training had higher positive perceptions than those with little or no training in inclusion practices. All the above findings revealed that providing opportunities for training regular classroom teachers favorably influence their perceptions and, as a result, they may positively change their perceptions after receiving pre-service and in-service training in the field of inclusive practices and special education.

### **Administrative Support**

According to Olson (2003), a supportive school system is a primary factor to promote positive attitudes towards inclusion. If administrators are supportive in offering their regular classroom teachers the extra time needed for planning and cooperation, then teachers will have less work load and hence develop positive perception towards inclusion. School administration must provide regular classroom teachers with the resources and support needed to develop an inclusive setting within the school environment, and grant relevant professional development to help teachers have a more positive attitude (Mcleskey & Waldron, 2002). According to Kochhar, West, and Taymans (2002), schools should offer essential planning, needed support and practices for their staff to grant successful inclusive practices for students with SEN.

Regular classroom teachers should be reassured that a support system is available in the school. That means that the whole school system is supportive. Special education teachers and regular classroom teachers must cooperate together for the well-being of the students with SEN.

In class, support such as co-teaching or teachers' assistance must be provided in addition to sufficient time for planning and in-service training (Mcleskey & Waldron, 2002). It is only then that regular classroom teachers will demonstrate a powerful feeling of how to control their classes after being afraid to take such responsibilities and challenges (Olson, 2003).

In a study to examine the educational change in secondary schools towards inclusion, Mackinnon and Brown (1994) used two secondary schools in Nova Scotia, Canada. They studied the relevant policy documents of the chosen schools, using observation of school and classroom practices, and semi-structured interviews with administrators and teachers. The focus of the study was mainly on the professionals (regular classroom teachers and resource teachers), and paraprofessionals (school administrators and educational assistants) who had direct involvement with students with SEN who were in an inclusion program for the first time. As a result of this study, the regular classroom teachers reported that they did not receive enough support from the school administration.

School support can take different forms and come in various ways. Academic support, community school support, peer support and discipline awareness are examples of the support that schools can provide for their teachers. Academic support stems from collective learning groups, in-service trainings on applying new learning methods and gaining relevant knowledge about disabilities. Discipline awareness is another way that provides regular classroom teachers with new strategies on classroom management. Peer support is when peers act as facilitators and community school support can be established when parents volunteer or have groups such as scouts to support regular classroom teachers (Wood, 2007). Acton, Ellenburg, and Katsiyannis (2000) stated that many regular classroom teachers saw that the support and extra resources

provided helped change their perceptions towards teaching both students with SEN and regular students.

### **Resources Available and Planning Time**

Availability of resources and having the time and material needed to prepare lessons make inclusion more successful. Available resources help regular classroom teachers' work with small groups of students with SEN for supplementary instructions to help strengthen the skills taught (Zigmond & Baker, 1996).

In short, an essential condition for successful inclusion is that regular classroom teachers get the resources needed; when such support is available, teachers will happily agree to have students with SEN in their classes (Talmor et al, 2005, Gash 2007).

For inclusion to work out successfully, Bondurant (2004) stated that more time is needed for planning. Many regular classroom teachers do not have the time to adequately prepare for their inclusive students because they are already busy with their everyday work. Another way that serves in changing regular classroom teachers' perception towards inclusion is when administrators give their teachers additional sufficient planning time. Regular classroom teachers complain about their additional work load. They are too busy to finish up with the work they have. If this extra time is granted, then regular classroom teachers will experience a decrease in their work load (Olson, 2003).

Zigmond and Baker (1996), using three schools with full inclusion programs to determine the efficacy of the program, found that inclusion will work out successfully and as required if a sufficient amount of time is given for planning. This additional time will help

regular classroom teachers to look for the appropriate modifications required for all students and not only students with SEN.

### **Conclusion**

Regular classroom teachers are mostly worried that they do not have the skills or knowledge to teach students with SEN effectively in their classroom. All related research shows that it is extremely beneficial for regular classroom teachers to receive ongoing training in the different areas of disabilities and the relevant teaching strategies. Above all, what lead to a successful inclusion program is the school-wide and administrative support, as well as the provision of a continuum of resources and a sufficient planning time for teachers.

Regular classroom teachers' perceptions towards inclusion are shaped by the extent to which they had knowledge, training, administrative support, resources and time needed to plan and modify or accommodate for students with SEN in their class.

In the light of the literature reviewed in this chapter, this thesis will attempt to explore regular classroom teachers' perception toward inclusion in private schools in Lebanon. More specifically, it will explore these four research questions:

**RQ1:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive the **knowledge** they have to work with students with SEN in their classroom?

**RQ2:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive **training** to work with students with SEN included in their classrooms?

**RQ3:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive the **support** they have (academic and administration) in their classrooms to work with students with SEN?

**RQ4:** How do regular classroom teachers perceive the **challenges** they face to have a successful inclusion program?

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

This section describes the schools that were used for the study, the participants who responded to the survey, the tools designed by the researcher, the procedure of the study, and the approach used for data analysis.

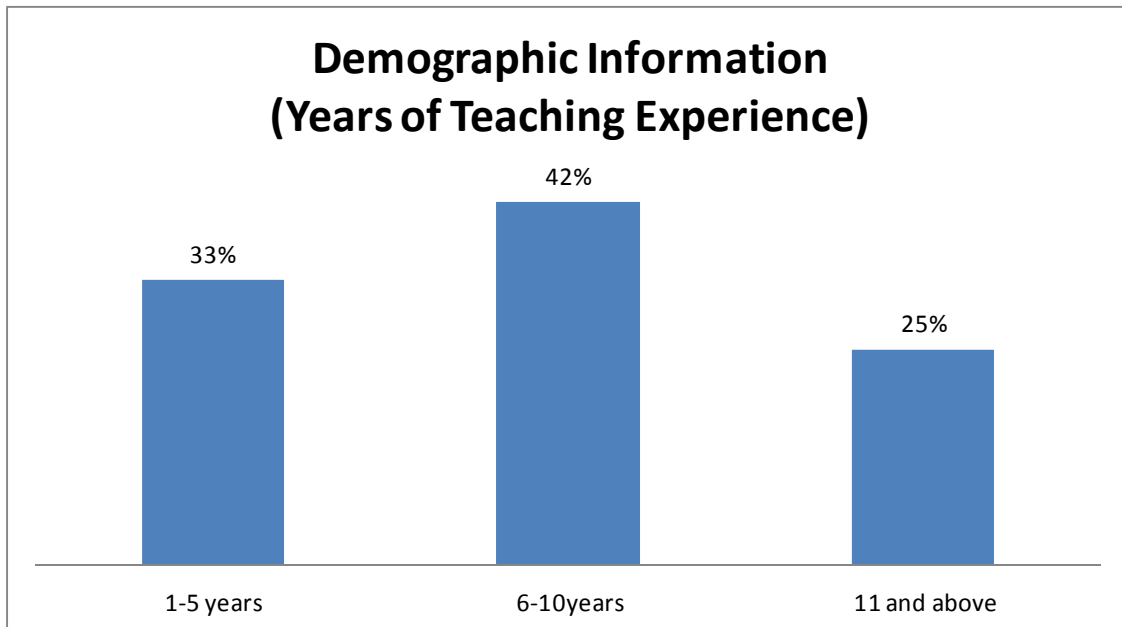
#### **3.1 Schools**

Four private regular schools were used in this exploratory study. Students with Learning Disabilities, mild Mental Retardation, mild Autism, Learning Disabilities and Medical problems are admitted in their inclusion program. The inclusion model adopted in all four schools consisted of having SEN in the regular classroom 80% of the school day, and pulled-out for extra individual support by a special education teacher for the remaining 20% of the day. Students attend certain special subjects such as music, art, computer, and physical education in the regular classroom. The rest of the day, they are pulled-out of the regular classroom to receive their education with the special education teacher. The four schools were chosen for this study because they have an inclusion program that has been operational for over three years. Two schools are located in the Beirut area, one in North Lebanon, and one in Mount Lebanon. The four schools are K through 12 grades. All schools served a middle class economic population. The two schools in Beirut are religious schools, where they teach religion; while the schools in North Lebanon and Mount Lebanon are not. Each of the four schools has a head of school, principals for each section (KG, Elementary, Middle School and Secondary School), and a Special Education Coordinator for the Special Education Department who holds MA in Special education and has a minimum of three years of experience. The coordinators are responsible for

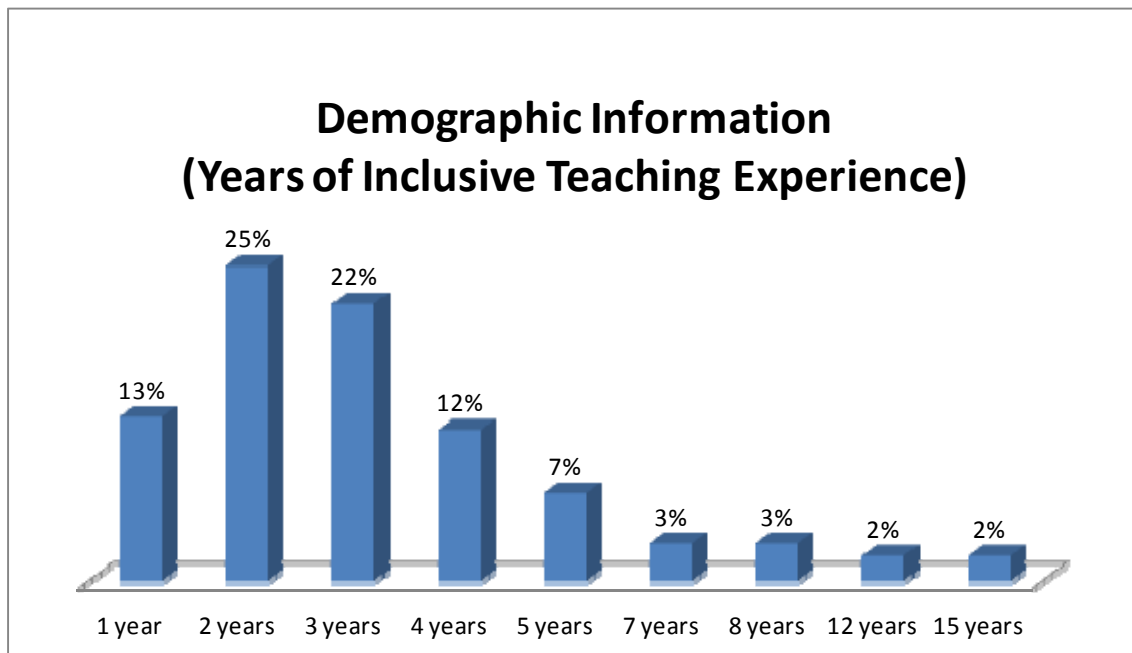
the coordination, modifications, and accommodations required in terms of instructional methods, tests, curriculum design, etc., and to coordinate with the regular education teachers of the different subject areas, namely, English, Math, Science, and Arabic. (See Appendix B for the summary of the information related to the schools)

### **3.2 Participants**

The participants of this exploratory study were 60 Elementary and Middle regular classroom teachers. All the 60 participants answered the survey. The teachers were all females, and their ages ranged between 24 and 55 years. The years of teaching ranged from one to above twelve years of experience. All the regular classroom teachers who responded to the survey had at least Bachelors of Art degree in Education with a teaching specialization in English, Math, Science, Arabic, Music or Art. Three out of the 60 participants who responded to the survey teach Music and Art. Figure 1 shows that twenty teachers (33%) have 1-5 years of experience, twenty-five teachers (42%) have 6-10 years and fifteen teachers (25%) have 11 and above years of teaching experience. Figure 2 shows that 60% of the regular classroom teachers have an inclusive teaching experience between 1 and 3 years, while only 7% had such an experience for more than 8 years.



*Figure 1: Demographic Information about Years of Teaching Experience*



*Figure 2: Demographic Information about Years of Teaching in an Inclusive Setting.*



### 3.3 Study Tools

The researcher designed a questionnaire of 11 close-ended Likert Scale statements ranging from “not at all” to “very well” and of an open-ended interview consisting of 7 subjective questions. Both tools were created after studying different surveys used in similar studies (Alghazo & Gaad, 2004; Kelly 2010; Hatchell, 2009), and after doing the necessary modifications to exclude all items related to cases of disabilities other than Learning Disability, namely Down Syndrome, physical handicap, severe mental retardation, blindness, and severe autism, because it was obvious that the four schools surveyed did not include these kinds of disabilities in their classrooms. Similarly, all items that provided comparison between regular and special education teacher’s perception were excluded. The present questionnaire was constructed to identify the perception of regular classroom teachers toward inclusion in private schools in Lebanon that have an inclusion program. The first item of the questionnaire asked for demographic information about the respondents followed by 11 close-ended statements presented as follows: (See appendix C)

#### **1. How do regular classroom teachers perceive the knowledge they have to work with students with SEN in their classroom?**

The statements of the survey that related to this question are:

- a.** I believe myself to be knowledgeable about inclusion
- b.** I have read literature about inclusion
- c.** I have the educational background and instructional skills to effectively teach students with SEN in my class

d. I know how to modify or adapt curriculum/instruction for students with SEN

**2. How do regular classroom teachers perceive training to work with students with SEN included in their classrooms?**

The statements of the survey that related to this question are:

- a. I have the training and in-service workshops to teach and include students with SEN into the regular classroom
- b. I believe that if teachers are provided with ongoing training and in-services, it will prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with SEN
- c. I believe that a continuum of services (resource room, pull-out, and team teaching etc..) needs to be provided in order to effectively meet the needs of students with SEN

**3. How do regular classroom teachers perceive the support they have (academic and administrative) in their classrooms to work with students with SEN?**

The statements of the survey that related to this question are:

- a. I believe with suitable in class support teaching regular and students with SEN is completely feasible in the regular classroom
- b. I have the administrative support in planning to meet the needs of students with SEN

**4. How do regular classroom teachers perceive the challenges they face to have a successful inclusion program?**

The statements of the survey that related to this question are:

- a. I know inclusion of students with SEN is important, but I don't have the necessary resources for it to succeed

- b. I have been provided with sufficient time for planning to implement inclusion effectively

The second tool used for this exploratory study was an interview consisting of seven subjective questions that were more descriptive of the participants' perceptions, since they could elaborate more about their level of knowledge in inclusive education, the special education training they have, the available administrative support, and the challenges about implementing inclusion in their classrooms. This semi-structured interview was conducted with 10 regular classroom teachers from the 60 participants in the study according to a schedule set by the schools' administration.

The interview consisted of the following seven subjective questions:

- 1- What do you think of the idea of inclusion?
- 2- Drawing from your experience, what kind of knowledge do you think regular classroom teachers need to prepare them to teach in an inclusive setting?
- 3- Elaborate on any kind of training you have attended. (types, focus area, benefits)
- 4- Based on your experience, what kind of in-service training and ongoing professional development would you recommend for preparing teachers for inclusion?
- 5- Explain the kind of modifications you use in your classroom.
  - How are instructions delivered?
  - What about the learning outcomes?
  - Do you modify contents?
  - How do you prepare and evaluate the content?

- What about modifying tests?
- 6- In your opinion, what administrative support needs to be in place to achieve successful inclusion?
- 7- What kinds of challenges are you currently experiencing or have experienced to include students with SEN in your classroom?

### **3.4 Procedure**

Approval of the ethics and purpose of the present exploratory study was obtained from the University's Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences. The consent form also included an explanation of the exploratory study and its purpose. This departmental consent-form was given to the principals of the schools, and upon their approval, the surveys were distributed by the researcher, and interviews were conducted with regular classroom teachers who have direct involvement with inclusion. The schools' administrations, as well as the regular classroom teachers, were told that the information will be used for an exploratory study about the perception of regular classroom teachers' toward inclusion. Anonymity of their participation was emphasized by the researcher, and the participants were told that neither the name of the school nor their name will be mentioned in the study.

A pilot study was conducted on ten regular classroom teachers prior to conducting the actual study. The purpose of the pilot study was to make sure of the participants' understanding of the wording of the survey, as well as to identify any difficulty they might have in following instructions to complete it. The ten regular classroom teachers were not part of the actual study. Minor changes were made to the survey statements and interview questions based on the feedback of the pilot study.

### **Data Analysis**

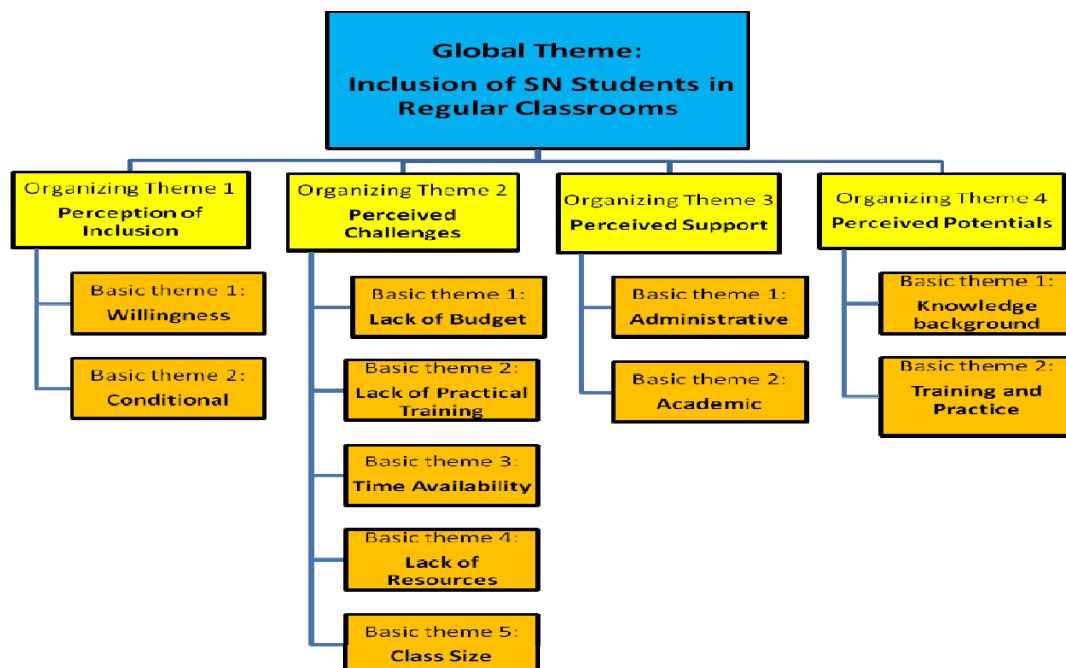
A qualitative approach was used in the data collection. For the survey, the present researcher collected the surveys and grouped the responses according to the Likert Scale. Then the result of each statement from the survey was tabulated and the final percentage was reported using graphs to describe the results (Jupp & Sapsford, 2006).

As for the interviews with the 10 participants, all of them, except two, were tape-recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The interview responses were analyzed using the Thematic Analysis Method which is known for its flexibility in using different frameworks as well as manipulating data within these frameworks. It offers an easy form of analysis and allows for the emergence of themes from the data given during analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) used Boyatzis' definition (1998) to describe it as a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data and interpreting different features of the research topic. Thematic Analysis can be a realistic method (reporting experiences of the participants) or constructivist method (examining ways in which these experiences are the results of social disclosure). It can also be used to reflect reality as well as to explain reality. In the present study, the data was analyzed using both the realistic and constructionist methods since it reported experiences and realities of the participants and how these experiences might affect their perceptions. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes attract important issues about data related to the overall research question and symbolize a level of patterned responses within data. The researcher's judgments and flexibility play a role in determining what counts as a theme. Themes can be identified by using either the inductive "bottom up" approach (themes are linked to the data themselves) or a deductive "top down" approach (less description of the

overall data and more detailed analysis on some aspect of the data). A merge of the two approaches is used in this study. However, themes can be identified at a semantic or explicit level (themes are identified at the surface and the researcher does not have to go beyond what has been said or written) or at a latent or interpretative level (the researcher goes beyond the semantic content and examines the underlying ideas). In the present study, themes were identified using both levels to reach a better understanding of the findings.

Based on the above description, The Thematic Analysis Method was used to analyze the data. Themes were identified and organized into a “Thematic Hierarchy” similar to what Attride-Stirling (2001) calls a “Thematic Network”. Figure 3 presents the thematic hierarchy of the present study with the identified themes.

**Figure 3: Thematic Hierarchy of Identified Themes**



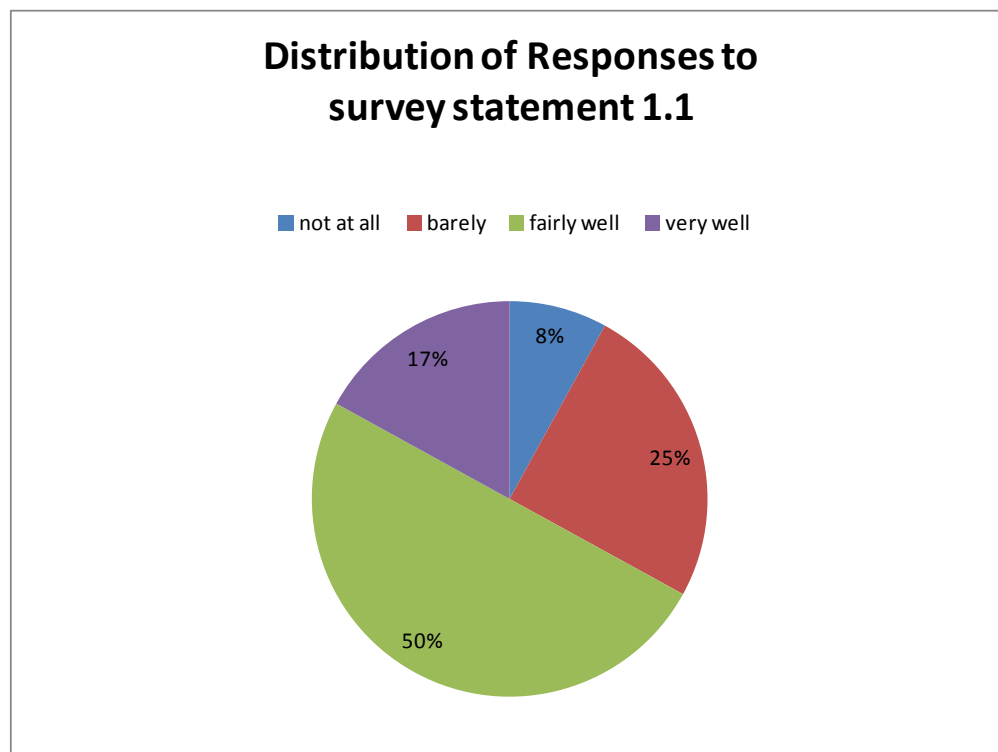
## Chapter 4

### Results

This chapter presents the findings related to the responses of the 60 regular classroom teachers to the four research questions as well as an analysis to the responses of the 10 regular classroom teachers to the open-ended interview using the thematic analysis method.

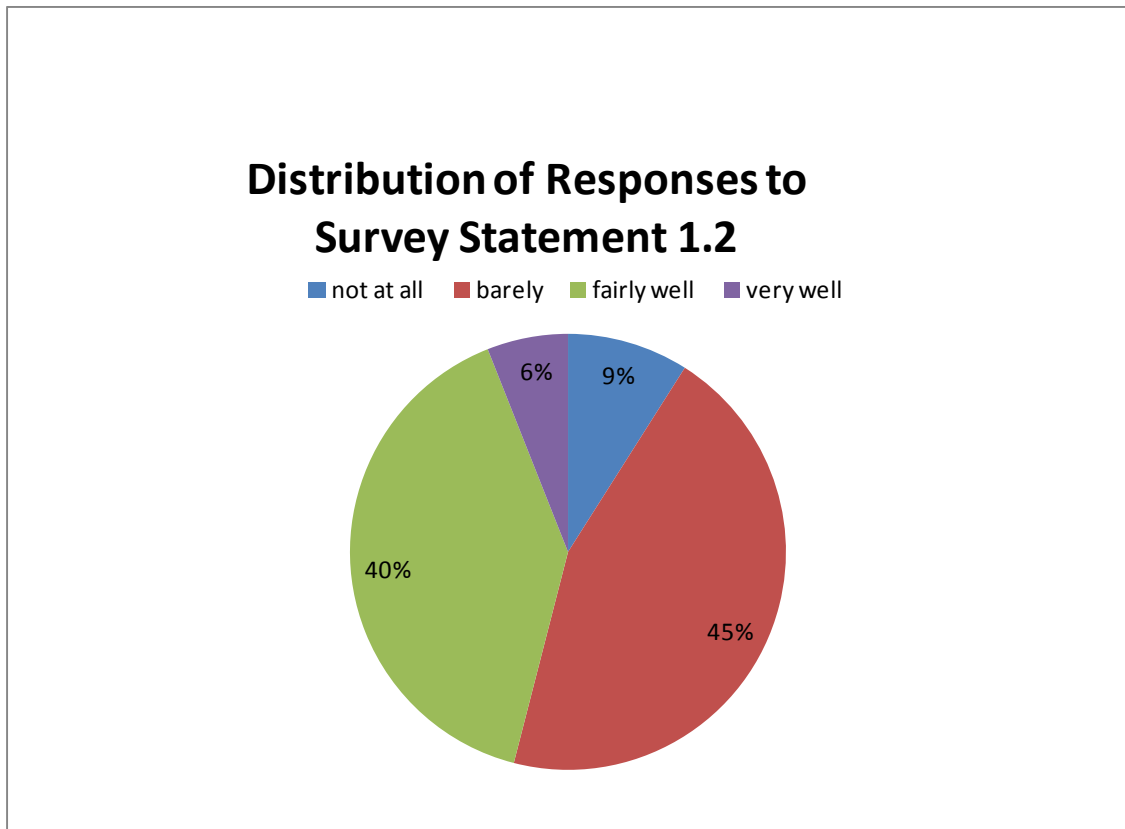
#### 4.1 Analysis and Discussion of Research Question 1

**How Do Regular Classroom Teachers Perceive the Knowledge They Have to Work with Students with SEN in Their Classroom?** (Survey Statements 1.1 to 1.4)



*Figure 4:* Distribution of Responses to Survey Statement 1.1: “I believe myself to be knowledgeable about inclusion”

Figure 4 shows that 67% of the regular classroom teachers considered themselves knowledgeable about inclusion. However, 33% of the regular classroom teachers surveyed barely or did not consider themselves to be knowledgeable. Checking this finding with demographic information (see fig.2) where we note that the majority (60%) of the teachers say they had an inclusive teaching experience ranging between 1 and 3 years while only 7% of them had such experience for more than 8 years, one might wonder about the accuracy of the regular classroom teachers' perception of their "knowledge about inclusion", and ask whether they consider 3 years of inclusive teaching practices sufficient to accumulate the right kind of knowledge in this field.

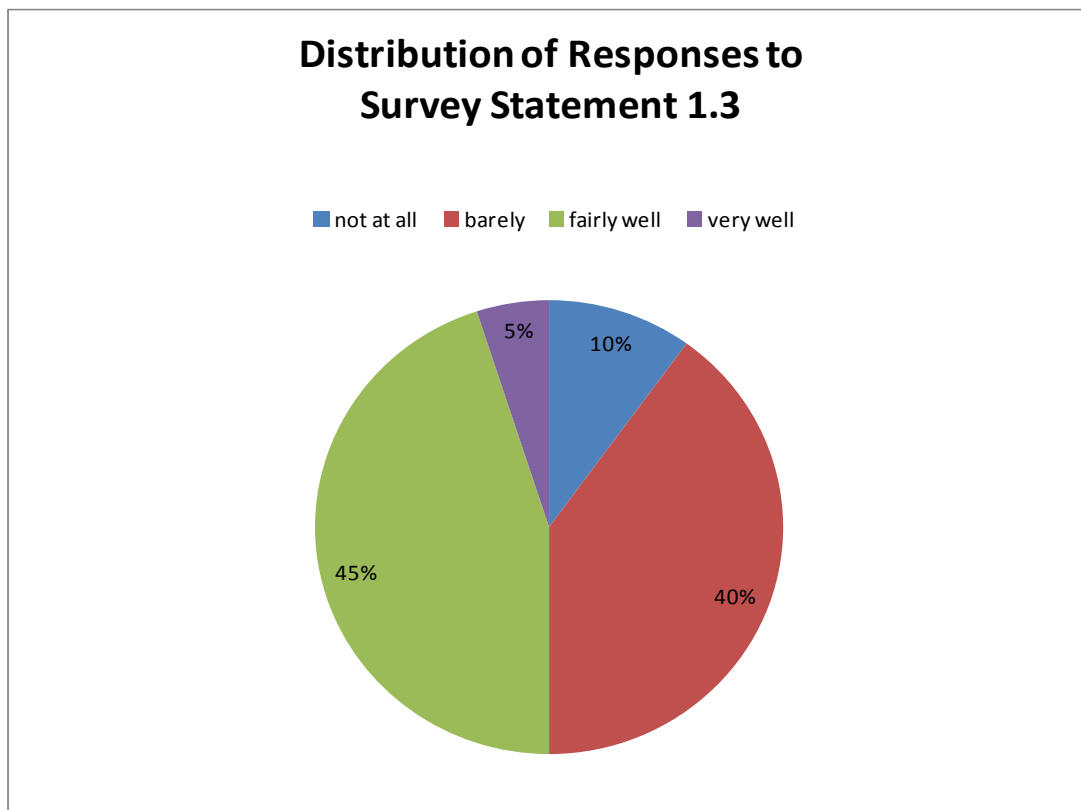


*Figure 5:* Distribution of Responses to survey statement 1.2: "I have read literature about inclusion"



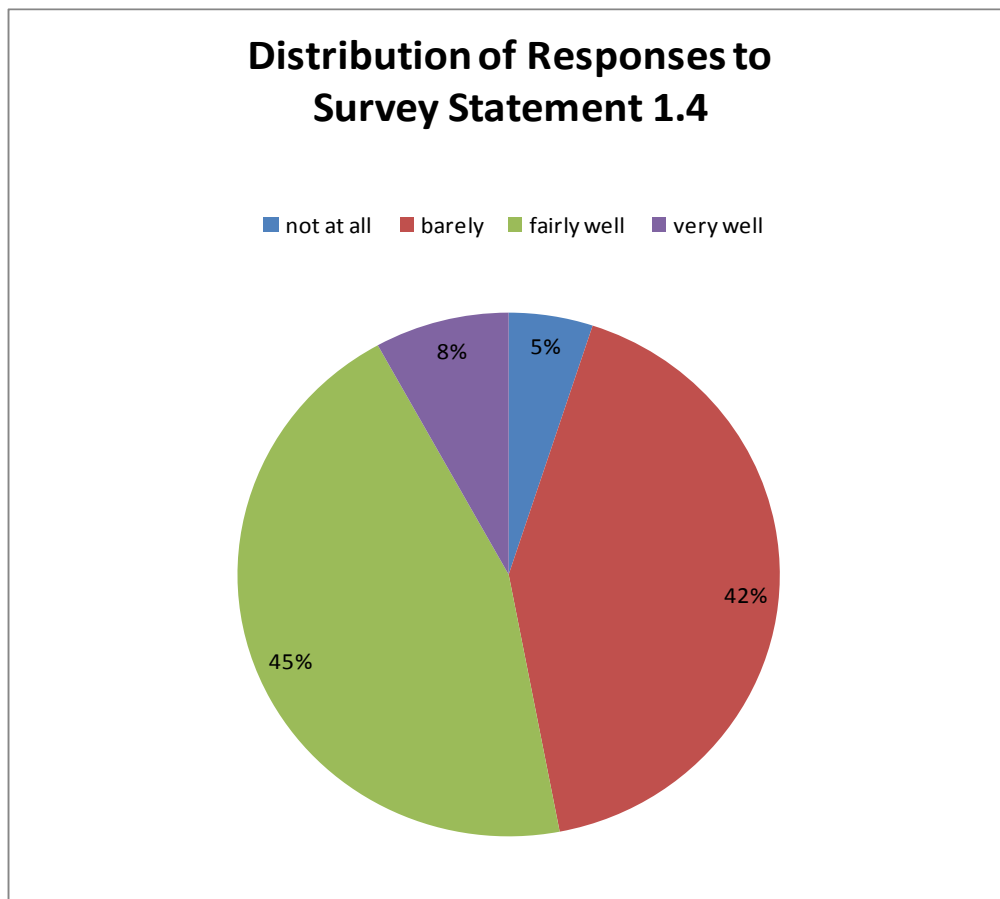
The second survey statement is more specific than the first survey statement in that it inquires about the “theoretical” component of the teachers’ inclusion knowledge. As shown in figure 5, 54% of the regular classroom teachers did not agree to have read literature about inclusion while 46% of the participants fairly or very well agreed that they have read literature about inclusion.

Keeping in mind the first survey statement where the majority (67%) of the respondents say they consider themselves to be knowledgeable, it is not clear at this point whether the “knowledge” they say they have is a theoretical knowledge or a more practical one.



*Figure 6:* Distribution of Responses to survey statement 1.3: “I have the educational background and instructional skills to effectively teach students with SEN in my class”

Interestingly enough, the third survey statement which introduces a practical dimension to “knowledge” (e.g having the instructional skills to effectively teach students with SEN), reveals that 50% of the respondents agreed well and fairly well that they had the educational background and instructional skills for effectively teaching students with SEN while the other 50% did not or barely agreed that they had the educational backgrounds and instructional skills. Thus, it is noted that as the survey questions required the respondents to be more specific in their perceptions of the knowledge about inclusion, the percentage of positive respondents (“fairly well and very well”) dropped from 67% (question 1) to 46% (question 2) and 50% (question 3).



*Figure 7:* Distribution of responses to Survey Statement 1.4: “I know how to modify or adapt curriculum/instruction for students with SEN”

As for the fourth survey question, 47 % of the participants responded that they barely knew or did not know at all how to modify or adapt curriculum/instruction for students with SEN while 53% of them said they knew well or fairly well how to modify or adapt curriculum/instruction for students with SN students.

These figures are consistent with figures obtained from the previous three questions, implying that half of the regular classroom teachers who have experience and maybe a background in special education knew how to modify and adapt curriculum, while the other half who lacked this experience did not know how to modify and adapt curriculum.

The second question of the interview that was administered to ten of the participants consolidates the four survey statements related to knowing about inclusion. In answering the question: “Drawing from your experience, what kind of knowledge do you think regular classroom teachers need to prepare them to teach in an inclusive setting?” Teacher #2 stated:

*“I think most of the teachers if not all should have an idea about all the cases like what MR, LD, ADHD , Autistic cases, and even Down Syndrome are. Because if we don’t know about them, we cannot help them.”*

Teacher #3 said:

*“Regular classroom teachers should be trained for managing his/her time inside the classroom since students with special needs need more time in test and in understanding the material. They should know about the cases of special students presence in their class.”*

A third teacher, #4, summarized it by saying:

*“Teachers need managing skills because teaching and regulations of students with SEN need special tasks. It is not an easy task. And they also need to know the difficulties of the student and the different strategies they need because usually in an inclusive setting or situation the students with SEN are different from others. The activities will vary according to their needs. Teachers should have knowledge and skills to teach students with SEN.”*

Teacher # 10 said:

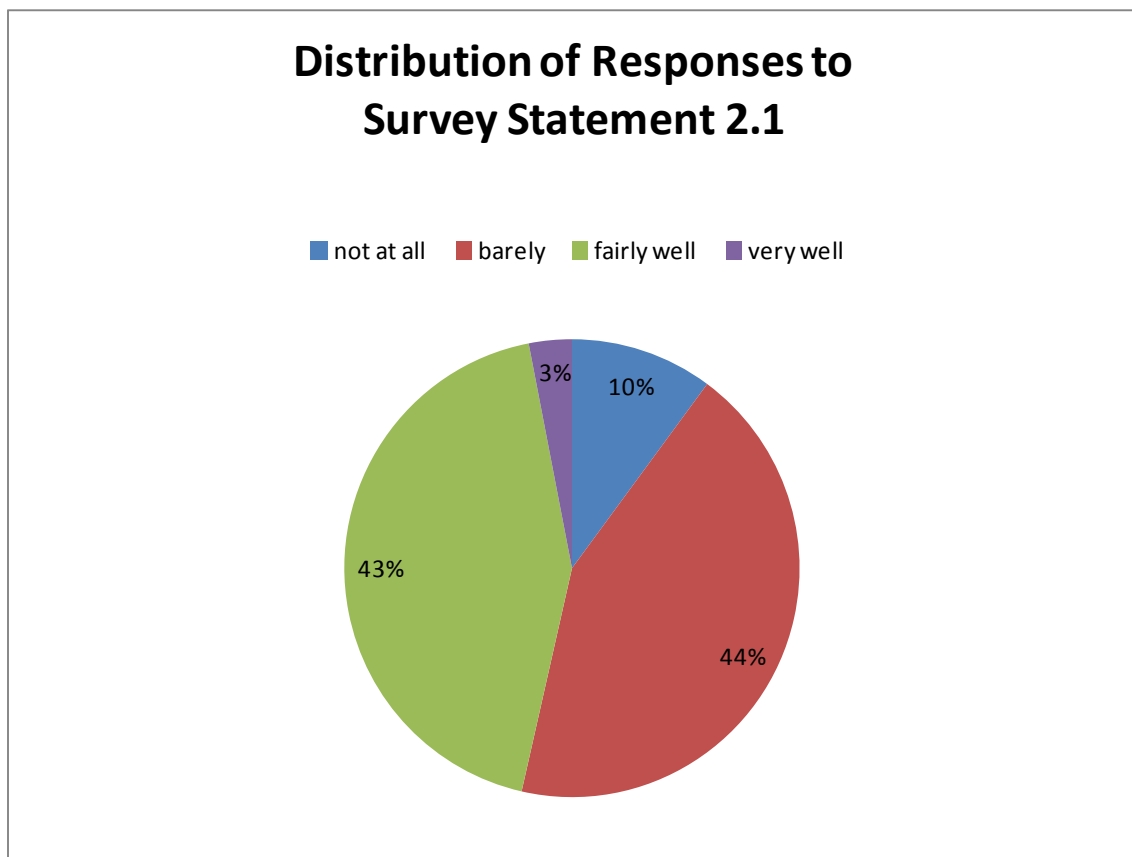
*“I think regular classroom teachers should be aware of the different types of students’ disabilities, the exact nature of their conditions characteristics, causes and behaviors’ or behaviors problems that accompany each type. They should be aware of the remediation programs that can best help them accommodate and modify the regular program to be able to benefit those students. Teachers should be aware of the different strategies that most successful educational materials and methods to help get the best of the students with special needs. Teachers should also be flexible and understanding in dealing with those students.”*

In summary, both the results of the survey, and the interview responses to the Research Question 1: “How do regular classroom teachers perceive the knowledge they have to work with students with SEN in their classroom?” showed that 53% of the regular classroom teachers surveyed felt they had enough theoretical and practical background information about inclusion.

Moreover, the interview responses revealed a new theme in the data which is the need for more knowledge about the social, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of disabilities.

## 4.2 Analysis and Discussion of Research Question 2

### How Do Regular Classroom Teachers Perceive Training to Work with Students with SEN Included in Their Classrooms? (Survey Statements 2.1 to 2.3)

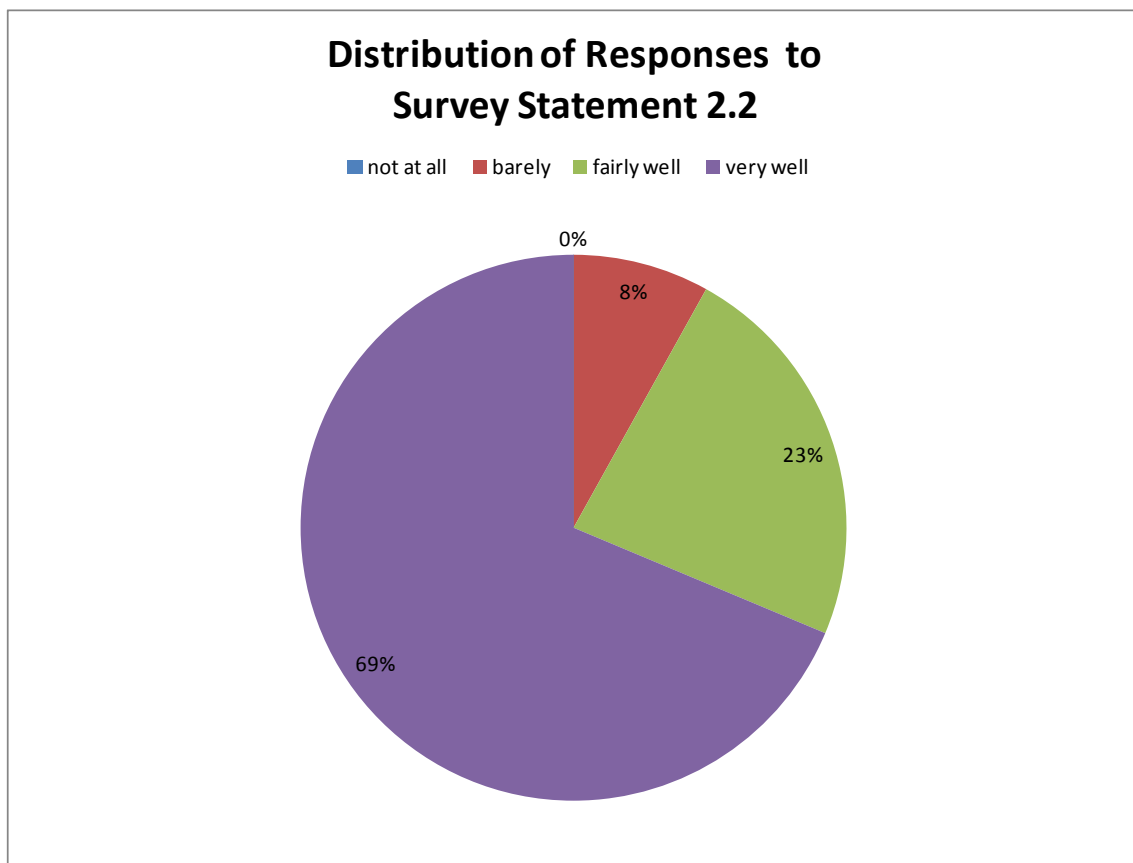


*Figure 8:* Distribution of Responses to Survey Statement 2.1 “I have the training and in-service workshops to teach and include students with special needs into the regular classroom”

As shown in Figure 8, more than half of the participants (53%) barely agreed that they had the training and in-service workshops to include students with SEN into the regular

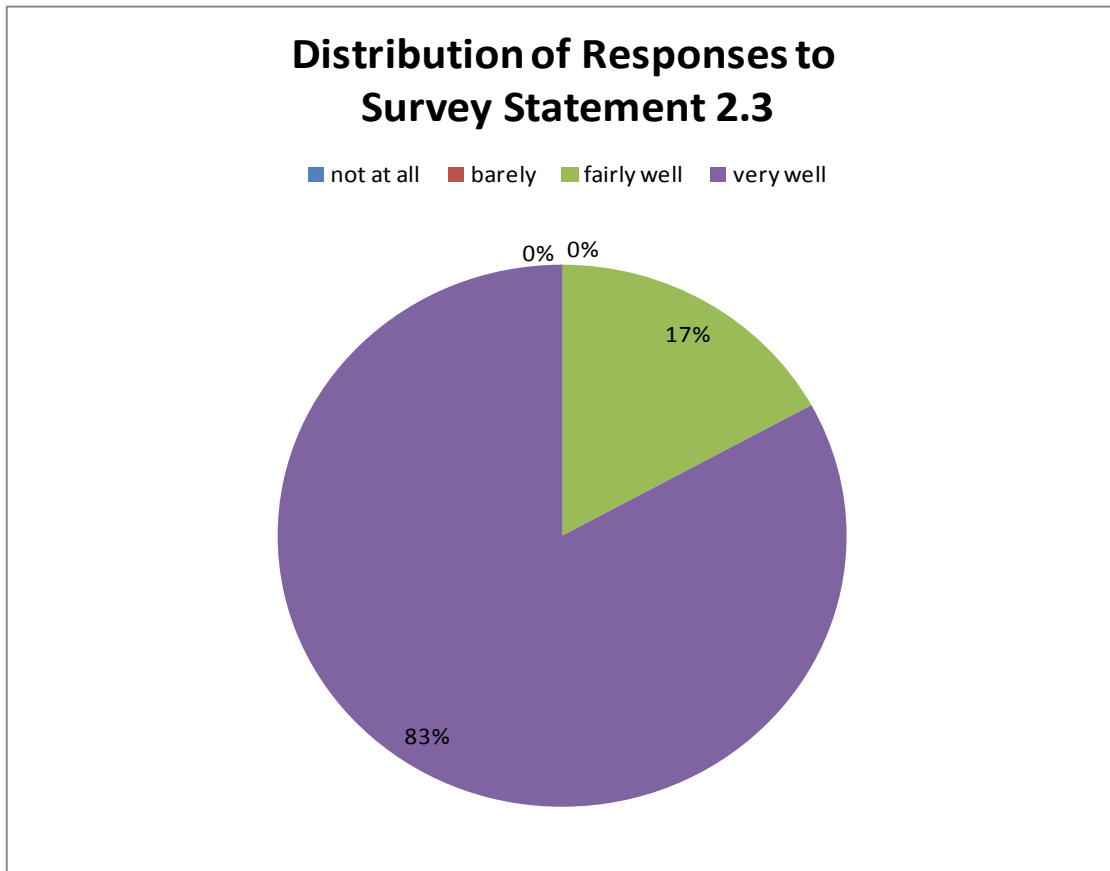
classroom, while 46% of the regular classroom teachers fairly or very well agreed with the statement.

If we relate percentages in figure 8 to the percentages obtained in response to the first Research question in general and to the first survey statement in specific where 67% of the respondents say they consider themselves knowledgeable about inclusion, it confirms that regular classroom teachers' "knowledge" is still theoretical and lacks the practical aspects of inclusion.



*Figure 9:* Distribution of Responses to Survey Statement 2.2: "I believe that if teachers are provided with ongoing training and in-services, it will prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with SEN"

As expected, the vast majority of regular classroom teachers (92%) agreed that if regular classroom teachers are provided with ongoing training, it will prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with SEN. This large percentage compared to the previous lower percentages obtained in the previous survey statement is due to the fact that the survey statement 2.2 is very general and asks for general opinion, regardless of whether the respondents have had or did not have training in inclusive education. This large percentage also implies, indirectly, a willingness on the part of most of the teachers to commit themselves to inclusive education if they have the necessary ongoing training.



*Figure 10:* Distribution of Responses to Survey statement 2.3: “I believe that a continuum of services (resource room, pull-out, and team teaching etc.) needs to be provided in order to effectively meet the needs of students with SEN.

Similarly, figure 10 above shows that 100% of the participants agreed that a continuum of services such as work-shops, observations, co-teaching, and training needs to be provided in order to effectively meet the needs students with SEN students. This large percentage (100%) is consistent with the equally high percentage of responses to survey statement 2.2 where 92% of the regular classroom teachers say they would feel more competent if they were provided with on-going training and in-services.

Responses to the third question of the open-ended interview that was administered to the ten participants are consistent with the percentages obtained so far. As seen below, the regular classroom teachers' responses clearly reflect the need for such training. In answering the question "Elaborate on any kind of training you have attended" Teacher #5 stated:

*"I have attended so many workshops. Some were very beneficial, other were not that much. I have been to workshops about the implementation of differentiated instructions. As usual most workshops present definition, cases and strategies that we need."*

Teacher, #4, said:

*"I have attended different workshops regarding special students. They were partly helpful. We need more hands on activities that tackle all type of learners with difficulties. Especially that a dyslexic student is different from a hyperactive student, so activities will vary. So we need such trainings."*



Teacher #1 commented:

*“I haven’t attended any effective workshop, only brief ones but my undergraduate course an introduction to special education was of a great help because I also went to schools for observation while taking that course.”*

Teacher # 9 said:

*“I have been to different workshops related to special education, were helpful as an introduction but they did not dwell in depth. They were just an introduction. But I really benefit from the special education course that was a requirement in my undergraduate program. I think this course was added recently to the education program and it is a must.”*

Furthermore, regular classroom teachers’ responses to the fourth research question in the open-ended interview revealed another new theme in the data: the need to emphasize the practical and applied training in special education in order to successfully implement an inclusive program. Thus, in response to Question #4: “Based on your experience, what kind of in-service training and ongoing professional development would you recommend preparing teachers for inclusion?” Teacher #4 said:

*“As I said before I have attended various workshops, they were not that beneficial. Honestly, I’m fed up with definitions, theories. I need more hands on activities. And the practical part is missing, things done on earth. Sometimes I wonder what do I do when a kid has a tantrum or a behavioral problem occurs in class. I need different strategies to help students with SEN in my class.”*

Teacher #1 stated:

*“Well, I think teachers should attend specific trainings that are dedicated to specific cases. Teachers should be also exposed to specific strategies that suit certain cases and are considered a specialty for the cases, like ABA for Autism. ”*

Teacher #6 commented

*“First of all, practical application is needed. So far most workshops present theoretical case reports. Real experience should be in place. Teachers should be exposed to whatever is new in terms of research, studies, skills and even methods.”*

Teacher #5 said:

*“It is very important to have knowledge of specific skills in order to know how to deal with students with SEN because every student is special in his own ways and we have to tailor to their own way of learning.”*

Teacher # 10 said:

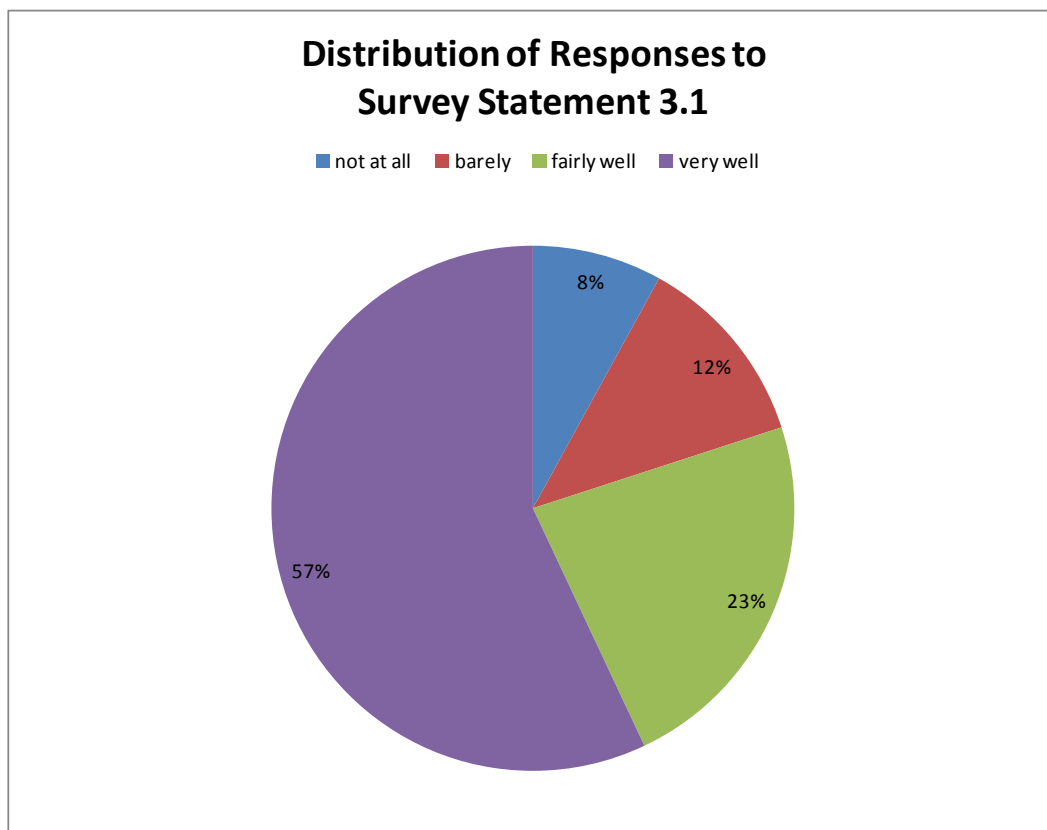
*“To prepare teachers for inclusion, I recommend that they undergo in-service training in real life experience with real cases. Have them look at the special student’s record, observe their special educators and they ways and strategies use to assist them. They should get ongoing training to widen their knowledge, get new ideas, research results; explore skills and methods that can support their instruction in the inclusion environment.”*

In summary, both the results of the survey and the interview responses to the Research Question 2: “How do regular classroom teachers perceive training to work with students with

SEN included in their classrooms” showed that regular classroom teachers agreed that further training, education, and a continuum of in-services would be beneficial to prepare them to teach in an inclusive setting. Furthermore, regular classroom teachers should not only rely on theoretical resources such as the ones delivered in in-service training and workshop; their needs seem to focus on actual training (real experiences) before working with students with SEN in their classroom.

#### 4.3 Analysis and Discussion of Research Question 3

**How Do Regular Classroom Teachers Perceive the support they have (academic and administrative) in Their Classrooms to Work with students with SEN? (Survey Statement 3.1-3.2)**



*Figure 11: Distribution of Responses to Survey Statement 3.1: “I believe with suitable in class support teaching regular and students with SEN is completely feasible in the regular classroom”*

Figure 11 shows that 80% of regular classroom teachers agreed that with suitable classroom support, teaching regular and students with SEN in an inclusive setting is completely feasible.

It is important to specify that in-class support in all of the four schools surveyed operationally means:

- 1- The SEN teacher acts as a shadow person for the special needs student in the class.
- 2- The SEN teacher gives in-class support by observing the student in order to help the teacher make adjustments to the lesson plan.
- 3- The SEN teacher can assess the student in the regular classroom.

The results show that all these kinds of in-class support are important to the regular classroom education teacher.

All of the ten regular classroom teachers interviewed, when asked about Question 5 “Explain the kind of modifications you use in your classroom” were aware of all strategies used in how to modify content and tests. They provided the different strategies, ways, and materials used to do the modification needed. This large percentage (100%) of the interview question 5 as opposed to the lower percentage (53%) on survey statement 4 is due to the fact the survey statement 4 is very general while the interview question asked for specific information related to delivering instructions or modifying tests. It could also be due to that fact the modifications are

done with the help of the special educator (mentioned by two of the regular classroom teachers interviewed). As seen below, the regular classroom teachers' responses clearly reflected their awareness and knowledge of the kind of modifications applied on the curriculum for students with SEN.

Teacher # 5 stated:

*"As an English teacher my students should have good listening skills especially when they are talking about stories and I use repetition a lot, hand gestures, I use images and music. They should acquire the minimum skills taught. Why should I give them so many concepts at the same time? Evaluation of the content depends on the level of the students but they don't need to the skills taught at one time. I modify depending on the case of the student and on the level. I give multiple choices, short answers. I highlight words and make the font bigger. I read the questions, explain the instructions, put images and give extra time for the students."*

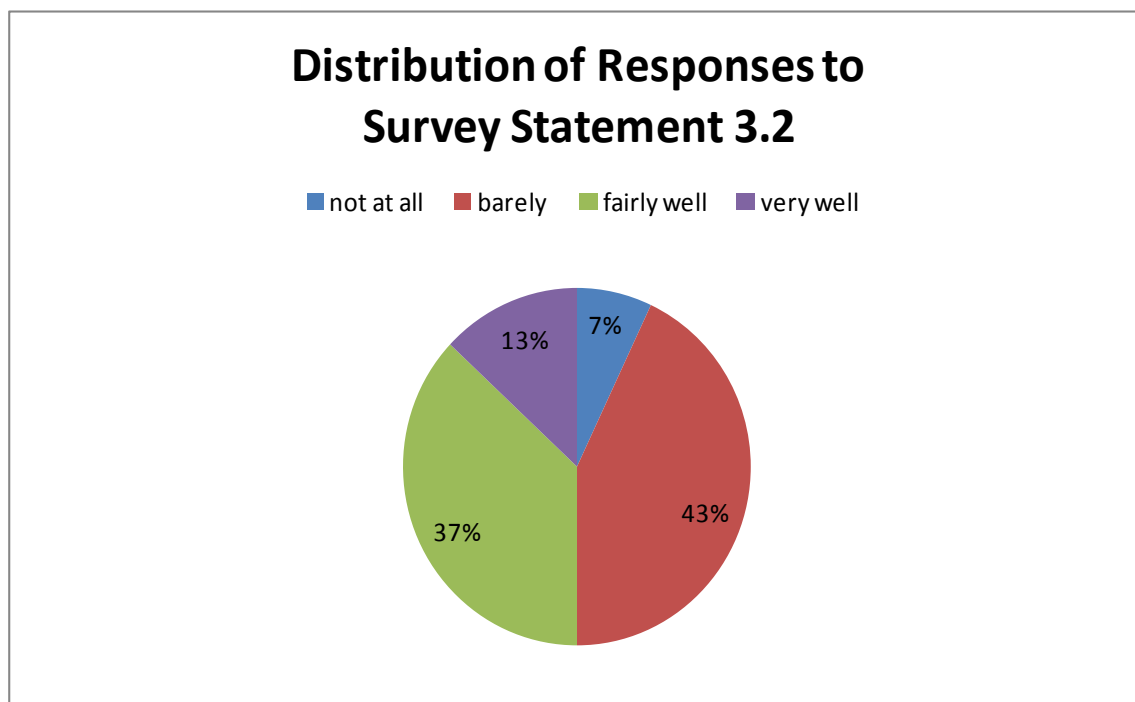
Teacher # 7 said

*"Of course, I use technology, text books, and hands on activities, visual aids and I-pads also. The learning outcome depends on the student. Some need more practice and direct teaching. In modifying content, I do explain the whole lesson to the classroom, but for some cases the special education teachers modifies tests for the students."*

Teacher # 3 declared

*"Sometimes I use prompts, manipulative like when explaining the hundreds and tens. I try to explain in different ways. Modifying contents and outcomes depends on the level of the students. Sometimes, I delete the students some chapters and I even in the same chapter I remove*

*certain exercises. I evaluate the content by using diagnostics, quizzes, tests, graded homework, graded class work, and even projects. For preparing tests, I use several websites and the book content. I put more spaces for the answers and it should be on the answer sheet. I magnify letters and write the instruction of the question in a simpler way. Most of the time in each and every quiz or test, I have direct questioning, the student will first write things that he knows, then, he will elaborate.”*



*Figure 12:* Distribution of Responses to Survey Statement 3.2: “I have the administrative support in planning to meet the needs of students with SEN”

As shown in Figure 12, 50% of regular classroom teachers did not or barely agreed that they have the administrative support in planning to meet the needs of students with SEN while the other 50% of the participants fairly or very well agreed that they have the administrative support in planning to meet the needs students with SEN.

The half- half results could mean that some of the selected schools for our study have implemented an inclusive program for a longer time than the other schools, meaning that the longer the inclusive program running, the more administrative support received. Another factor to consider would be the lack of funding for a proper implementation of inclusion.

Indeed, regular classroom teachers' responses to the sixth question in the open-ended interview: "In your opinion, what administrative support needs to be in place to make successful inclusion," revealed another new theme in the data: the material difficulties which stand in the way of administrative support.

Teacher #6 declared:

*"Schools lack the financial support to ensure everything teachers needs especially resources. So teachers need various materials to modify curriculum and the school should bring whatever is needed. Administration should also grant their teachers more time to plan and do the modification needed, so we lack time."*

Teacher #3 said:

*"I have noticed that most schools will go for inclusion in the years to come. Yet they still lack resources. They need to accommodate for students with SEN. They should also be sensitive to the teachers' worries."*

Another teacher, #8, stated:

*“First of all, this needs a budget from the school. They need to prepare a budget, so they can prepare materials, classes and specialists. It needs a high budget for that. Sometimes the places need to be prepared for that.”*

Teacher # 9 commented:

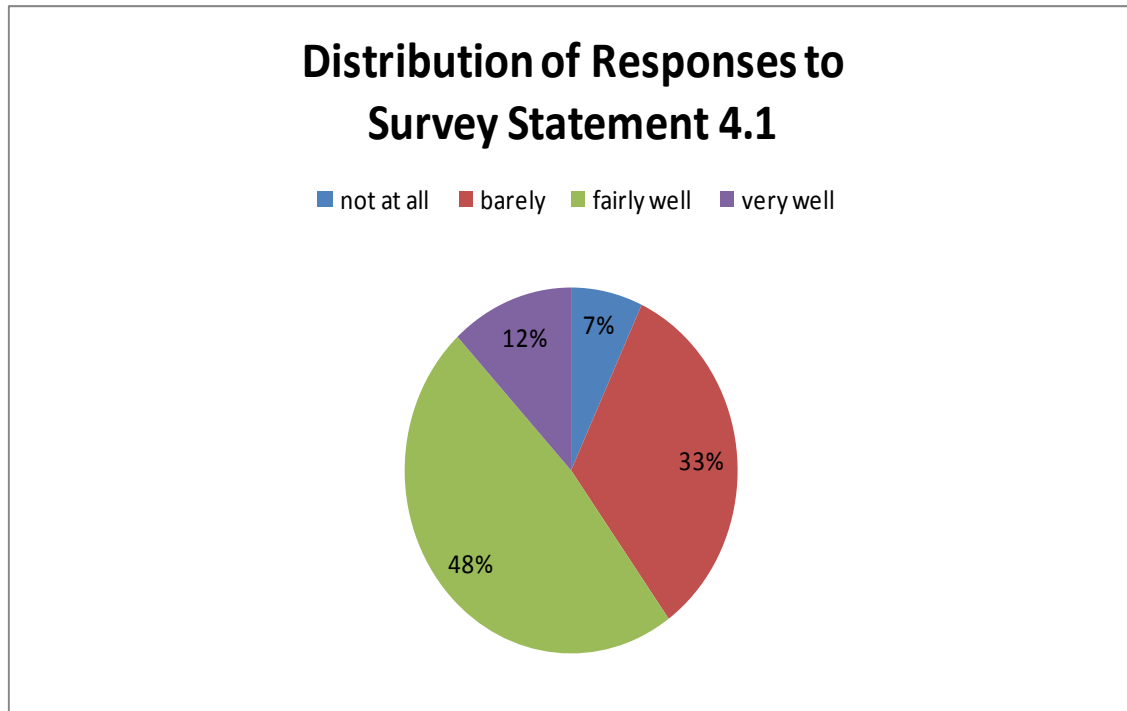
*“To have successful and effective inclusion program, administrative support is very important in having a budget to equip teachers with proper resources and materials need to meet the needs of students with SEN. School should have a proactive plan to have almost all resources and materials needed, not to wait till they face a problem with a special student, then, they hurry up to order what is need and ends up losing time.”*

In summary, both the results of the survey and the interview responses to the Research Question 3: “How do regular classroom teachers perceive the support they have, academic and administrative, in their classroom to work with students with SEN” showed that the majority of regular classroom teachers agreed that if they have suitable in-class support and administrative support, they will be able to teach students with SEN included in their classrooms. Thus, it is clear that schools must allocate the right budget to hire more in-class support teachers as well as to provide the sufficient resources needed to effectively teach and meet the needs of students with SEN in regular classrooms.



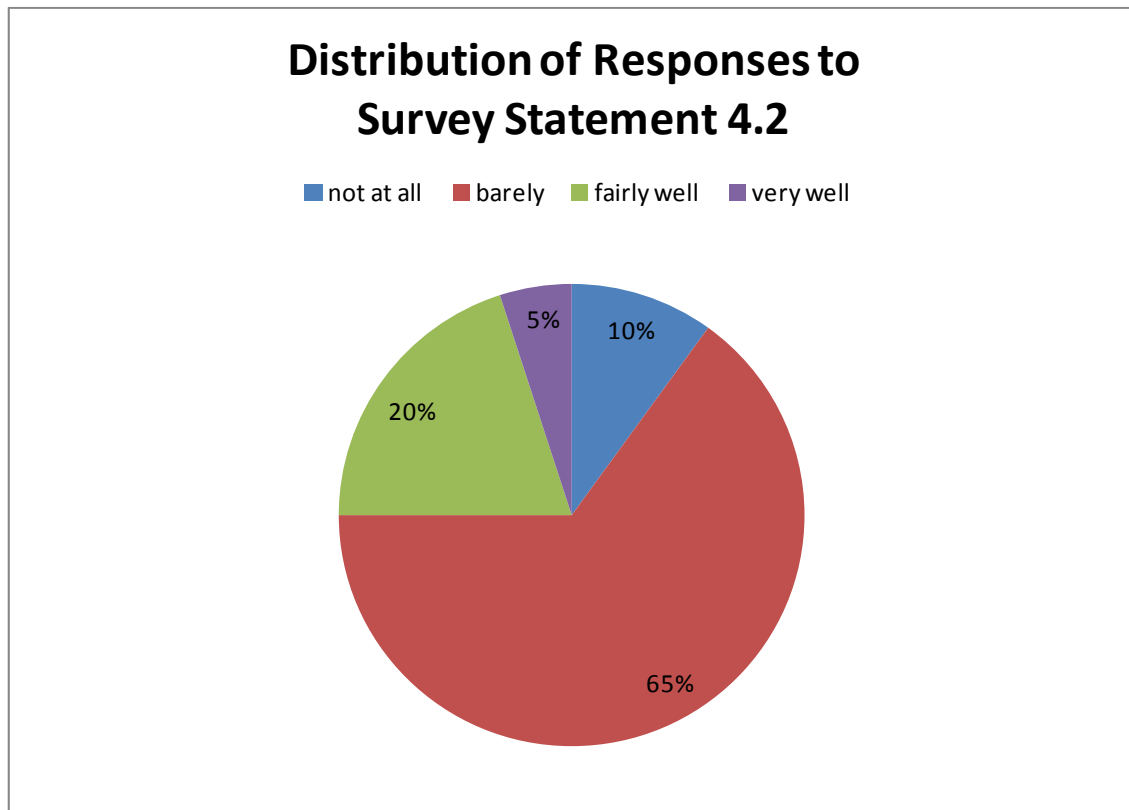
#### 4.4 Analysis and Discussion of Research Question 4

**How Do Regular Classroom Teachers Perceive the Challenges (time and resources) they face to have A Successful Inclusion Program? (Survey Statement 4.1 -4.2)**



*Figure 13:* Distribution of Responses to Survey Statement 4.1: “I know inclusion of students with SEN is important but I don’t have the necessary resources for it to succeed”

Because of the ambivalence in the wording of the statement survey 4.1, the researcher faced confusion in interpreting the obtained percentages. It was not clear whether the respondents agreed, fairly agreed, barely agreed or did not agree at all to the first clause of the statement (“I know inclusion of students with SEN is important”) or to the second clause (“but I don’t have the necessary resources for it to succeed”). Because of this confusion and the misinterpretation it might entail in the data analysis, it was decided to remove this statement from the overall analysis.



*Figure 14:* Distribution of Responses to Survey Statement 4.2: “I have been provided with sufficient time for planning to implement inclusion effectively”.

Figure 14 shows that 75% of the regular classroom teachers surveyed barely or did not agree that they are provided with sufficient time to implement inclusion effectively while only 25% very well or fairly well agreed that they are provided with sufficient time. This large percentage (75%) is interesting to compare with the lower percentage (50%) obtained in responses to survey statement 3.2 where half of the respondents admitted that they had enough administrative support for planning. It is clear that their understanding of “administrative” support was more related to the financial issue as opposed to the time factor. Regardless of this ambiguity in defining “administrative”, the fact that 50% of the respondents admitted they had no administrative support in planning (statement 3.2) and 75% of the respondents admitted they

need more time for planning (statement 4.2) indicates that regular classroom teachers are clearly in need of more administrative support whether in planning time or resources.

In answering the last question of the open-ended interview “What kinds of challenges are you currently experiencing or have experienced to include students with SEN in your classroom?” Teacher # 6 said:

*“To teach students with SEN in regular classes, teachers have to modify curriculum and instructions to meet all the needs. Hence, more time is needed to do the modifications that are required.”*

Teacher #5 stated:

*“There are so many challenges. Students can’t work in groups especially when there are too many students in the class, so that way they can’t follow the instructions all the time and if their motor skills are not developed completely or they have intentional problem. Reducing the class size will be very helpful and it will help me as teachers to meet the needs of all the students in my class whether regular or special students.”*

Teacher # 9 said

*“So many challenges appear when teaching in an inclusive setting. What is really the worst for me is time. We need more time to prepare, plan, and modify our curriculum. We already have to prepare for the various learning styles we have in class, add to it preparing for special needs ones, but sure not time to do all of this. Teachers are already over pressured with their daily paper work; we need no more work to do. We have enough to do.”*

Teacher #2 wrote:

*“When students have severe cases like behavior or emotional problem, it is not fair to the other 23 or maybe 30 students to be in class because this will be distracting somehow to the rest of the students and it is not helpful for those who have problems already.”*

Teacher #3 stated:

*“In my opinion, more time is needed to plan and modify lessons should be given to classroom teachers. Some of the cases have to be treated differently. It is difficult to teach different cases in the same class. Also, it all depends on the number of students in class, how students are mixed and not to forget the work load that teachers already have.”*

In summary, both the results of the survey and the interview responses to the Research Question 4: “What kinds of challenges are you currently experiencing or have experienced to include students with SEN in your classroom?” showed that the majority of regular classroom teachers agreed that they are not provided with sufficient time and resources to teach in an inclusive setting.

However, a new theme emerged from this interview question which is the Class Size. When regular classroom teachers were asked about the various challenges they faced while teaching in an inclusive setting, 70% of the ten participants reported that class size was the major obstacle they faced. Almost all of the 10 regular classroom teachers reported that they have a minimum of 32 students in their classroom. They suggested that the class size should be reduced to 20 students if they are going to be able to teach all students effectively.

Teacher # 1 stated

*“If schools are to have students with SEN in their classes, then, they should change or modify their policies in term of class size. Our classes have many students these days and are not effective for regular students, so having special students is even worse.”*

Teacher # 6 said:

*“The class size is too big. It is already crowded and has different learning styles. Can you imagine adding students with SEN with different cases and levels? This is impossible.”*

Teacher # 10 stated

*“The large size of the class can sometimes prohibit the teacher from being effective in helping those students within the regular classroom. Most of the time he/she will be neglecting the high achievers for the sake of helping the students with SEN or moving the lesson in a slower pace in order not to leave any student behind and this largely affects the high achievers performance.”*

In summary, despite the half-half (50%) results of the survey statement 3.2 about administrative support, all of the ten respondents of the open-ended interview said that they face many challenges. These challenges maybe summarized as follows: more planning time, reduced class size, collateral neglect of high-achieving students, difficulties in preparing an individualized curriculum to fit the different needs of different students with SEN in one group.

The last paragraph of our results section is devoted to the responses obtained from the first interview question: “What do you think of the idea of inclusion?” Most of the regular classroom

teachers interviewed expressed a conditional acceptance of the idea of inclusion. For example some regular classroom, teachers said that they are with inclusion but it all depends on students and cases. They said that sometimes they cannot accept severe students into their classrooms. If they are severe cases they are not with the idea. Regular classroom teachers who were interviewed revealed that they are not yet ready to accept all cases and types of disabilities with the regular students in the classroom.

Teacher # 10 said

*“I think students with special needs have the right to be mainstreamed in the regular classroom as much as often as possible. So I support the idea of inclusion as long as it helps the students improve and acquire the required and targeted objectives and as long as it does not affect him/her nor his/her classmates effectively.”*

Teacher # 6 stated

*“Well inclusion is a new trend in the Lebanese schools. I think it is a difficult job with various challenges. So I’m still with the idea of inclusion if I receive the right support. Placing students with SEN with regular students does no benefit or help regular students, especially when their behavior affects all the students around.”*

Teacher # 8 said

*“It is an important idea but it depends on the case of the student to be inserted into the classroom. Even according to the Lebanese curriculum, they have supported the idea but they did not abide by it, or they have several problems to carry on with this idea. It all depends on the students and cases.”*

Teacher # 5 declared:

*“The idea of inclusion is really very important and not only for students with SEN but for the regular students as well. Students with SEN will learn how to adapt and you know it is not very easy. It takes time and effort. They have to be one step ahead to prepare students to become part of the society. We have to put in all that effort. I do not have the experience needed to teach but I am ready to do so if I have the proper training before getting into the classroom”.*

In summary, the responses leave much room for optimism in spite of the fact that schools do not have the appropriate resources to put inclusive practices in place. Lack of training, lack of time needed to prepare, lack of administrative school support and overloaded class size were considered major barriers for the successful implementation of an inclusion program in Lebanon. However, regular classroom teachers expressed their willingness to teach in an inclusive setting whether the above mentioned barriers are overcome or not.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

This exploratory study examined the regular classroom teachers' perception toward inclusion of students with SEN in Lebanon. It highlighted the overall positive attitude of regular classroom teachers regarding inclusive education but it pinpointed the specific challenges perceived by these teachers in the practical application of inclusion. The thematic analysis of the data allowed the emergence of several themes related to the question of inclusion.

In this chapter, the results of the present study will be compared to results from similar studies and research. The emerging themes will be discussed and discussed and based on that a set of recommendations will follow.

Based on the hierarchical organization of the themes, as shown in Figure 3 in the methodology chapter of the present study, and adopting a top-down approach, it is noted that the global theme, inclusion of students with SEN, allowed for the emergence of four organizing themes:

1-Perception of inclusion: In this context, the majority of the participants reported that they are with the idea of inclusion, yet, the specific nature of the disability affects their perceptions since they are not yet ready to deal with all cases. In other words, it can be described as a conditional acceptance of inclusion. Consistent with the findings of Cook (2001), the type and severity of disability have a significant effect on the overall teachers' perception towards inclusion.

This overall positive perception of inclusion of students with SEN reveals that regular classroom teachers have a right-based approach to the concept of inclusion, as opposed to the



traditional “medicalized” model or the immature “charity” model toward the issue of disability. Furthermore, this mature perception of inclusion, as expressed by Lebanese regular classroom teachers, reflects the quality of training in inclusion that they have had, a training that focuses on the abilities rather than the disabilities of students with SEN, and advocates their rights for education on equal basis as their non-disabled peers. It is worth mentioning that the Lebanese people are somehow aware of Special Education and the overall atmosphere has changed, yet, more awareness is needed to raise the level of acceptance of students with SEN in regular schools. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that none of the regular classroom teachers has expressed any concern, in the interview responses, about the medical issues usually related to disability, thus reflecting a shift toward the social model of disability, in their training which is a model that fights prejudices and stereotypical thinking, fostering the “equal opportunities”. Moreover, it is also important to mention that none of the regular classroom teachers had insinuated in her responses any charity-oriented thought concerning the issue of including students with SEN in regular classrooms. We believe this is an important point to mention in the context of our study because the issue of disability in Lebanon, like in most of the Arab and Third World countries is still heavily influenced by the “charity model” where people with disabilities are still seen as victims deserving of pity, who still need our care and are unable to look after themselves (Bhanushali, 2007).

Two basic themes emerged from the first organizing theme: On one hand, and as it was just explained, there is a general willingness on the part of the regular classroom teachers, to favor including students with SEN in the classroom; on the other hand, a conditional willingness was also noted, as regular classroom teachers expressed their concerns about several issues, such as

the lack of prior practical training, the large number of students in the classroom, the lack of resources for a successful implementation of inclusion, etc.

Thematic analysis, as was explained in the Methodology section, reveals a pattern of recurrent themes, allowing for both a top-down and a bottom-up analysis. This is exactly the path that was followed in the present study, as the analysis of the second organizing theme provides a more in depth inquiry into the challenges faced by the regular classroom teachers.

2. Perceived Challenges: In this context, both the results of the survey and the interview responses showed that the majority of regular classroom teachers agreed that they are not provided with sufficient time and resources to teach in an inclusive setting.

All regular classroom teachers said that they face many challenges. The majority of regular classroom teachers who answered the interview questions said they need more planning time and a reduced class size to effectively teach students with SEN in an inclusive setting. The issue of more planning time contradicts what Delaney (2013) concluded in her study, and that is including students with SEN in the regular classroom does not require more planning time, instead it requires planning for the different learning styles available in their classrooms. This will allow engaging all students in work, and will eventually lead to save time. When it comes to reducing the class size, almost all regular classroom teachers reported that they have a minimum of 32 students in their classroom. They suggested that the class size should be reduced to 20 students if they are going to be able to teach all students effectively. Thus if a school is going to have a good and effective inclusive program, the administration should revamp the class sizes.

This came in accordance with the information given by SKILD (Smart Kids with Individual Learning Differences) in the Directory of Inclusive Education in Lebanon (MEHE, 2014) where

it is mentioned that a maximum of three students with SEN of the same age level should be included in the regular classroom.

Another basic theme derived from the perceived challenges was that regular classroom teachers considered the lack of appropriate materials, equipment and well-trained school personnel in regular education schools as barriers to successful inclusion. This confirms findings by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) where regular classroom teachers believed that not enough resources were available to support inclusion, and that reducing class size to fewer than 20 students would enhance inclusive practices

The thematic analysis used in the present study revealed the presence of a third organizing theme dealing with how the regular classroom teachers perceive the support made available to them

3- Perceived Support: In this context, both the results of the survey and the interview responses showed that the majority of regular classroom teachers agreed that if they have suitable in-class and administrative support, they will be able to teach students with SEN included in their classrooms. This implies that schools have to allocate budgets to hire more in-class support teachers and to provide more resources for effective inclusion of students with SEN. Two types of support were identified by the respondents: Academic support, on the one hand, will be further elaborated in the discussion of the fourth organizing theme (Perceived Potentials). Academic is defined by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) as all personnel whose primary responsibility is to support the academic program of students. It includes all pedagogical support staff as well as other professional support staff employed in tertiary education institution (ISCED, 2001). It may also refer to a wide variety of instructional methods, educational services and school resources. The administrative support on the other

hand was clearly addressed by all of the respondents, and their responses generally confirm findings from previous studies. These findings are consistent with Avramidis and Norwich (2002) who noted that regular classroom teachers felt better about inclusion when they received adequate support from the school administration. MacKinnon and Brown (1994) also reported that regular classroom teachers did not receive enough support from the school administration specifying that such support should include extra planning time with the special education teacher, time to allow for making accommodations and modifications, and from support staff in the classroom. Alghazo and Gaad (2004) mentioned that teachers were less acceptant of the idea of inclusion because they do not have the support, especially in planning time, to implement all the curricular accommodations and modifications.

In order to have a more effective inclusion program, school administrators should educate and raise awareness among all school employees in relation to general and specific inclusive objectives. Costa in (MEHE, 2014) mentioned that schools' administrators should also specify the kind of inclusive program they decide to implement in their schools, and promote awareness among regular students about inclusion and the learning needs of students to be included.

The fourth organizing theme in the present thematic analysis, using the semantic approach as well as the latent approach for a more in-depth inquiry, dealt with the perception of regular classroom teachers of their potentials, both at the knowledge and the practical training levels.

4-Percieved potentials: Both the results of the survey, and the interview responses showed that more than half of the regular classroom teachers felt they had enough theoretical and practical background information about inclusion. However, the interview responses showed that

they need more knowledge about the social, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of disabilities. For example, the characteristics that related to certain types of disabilities such as Autism and Emotional Behavioral Disorder render it difficult for regular classroom teachers to include and manage in their classroom without any prior knowledge or training. Regular classroom teachers might feel overwhelmed because they have to try new teaching strategies and behavior management techniques when working with such students. In other words, special education and inclusive education are not restricted to the management of the learning needs of children with SEN. Other needs, such as social, behavioral and emotional, must be equally addressed. Thus, a higher specific knowledge is required to tackle all the dimensions of the disability (Cassady, 2011).

This study showed that even though many regular classroom teachers expressed a willingness to teach in an inclusive setting, they did not necessarily feel prepared for teaching students with SEN. They consider their insufficiency of training to be a barrier to successful implementation of inclusion. Moreover, they considered their current level of training as inadequate simply because they did not know how to appropriately meet the needs of students with SEN. The training they received was perceived to be more theoretical than practical. In-service training was seen as an important factor in improving their perception and feelings of preparedness. It is important to note, as explained in the discussion of the first organizing theme (Perception of Inclusion) that the quality of training is good, but it can be enriched to equip regular classroom teachers with effective skills to teach students with SEN in their classrooms. Even though all the studies mentioned earlier indicated the importance of training, they did not discuss in depth the kind of needed training. As Thomas and Vaughan (2004) mentioned, the

problem is not in the training itself but rather in the content of the training. In this context, when regular classroom teachers, in the present study, were asked about what areas should be included in the training, they asked for information on specific cases and for more practical strategies that work with various students with SEN included in their classes.

Furthermore, regular classroom teachers agreed that further training, education, and a continuum of in-services would be beneficial to prepare them to teach in an inclusive setting. This means that regular classroom teachers should not only rely upon in-service training and workshops, but they must also have actual training before working with students with SEN. The discussion of the importance of specialized training for teaching students with SEN cannot be complete without highlighting one equally important point: students with SEN also need to feel that their teachers really do care about them and understand them as students who have additional or specific needs. Hence, any regular classroom teacher with enough specialized knowledge and training can do it (MEHE, 2014).

Previous studies showed that training directly influenced teachers' perception towards inclusion (Avramidis, Bayless, & Burden, 2000, Burke & Sutherland, 2004, Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001). Burke and Sutherland (2004) found that the amount of training and a teacher's prior experience in teaching students with SEN influenced regular classroom teacher's perception towards inclusion. Similarly, Alghazo and Gaad (2004) noted that practical workshops rather than theoretical ones are needed for teachers to know more about inclusion of all students in their regular classroom

On the other hand, Burke and Sutherland (2004) found that although experience is needed, regular classroom teachers must have the proper knowledge of strategies needed to make

inclusion successful. Practical training can equip regular classroom teachers with those strategies seems to be the most needed formula to a successful implementation of inclusion (Parker, 2006).

In conclusion, the thematic analysis used in the present study revealed a close interconnection between the global, the organizing and the basic themes derived from the data. These themes constituted a pattern of recurrent inter-related ideas, all of which revolving around the core subject of our analysis: the perception of regular classroom teachers towards inclusion.

### **Conclusion:**

It is clear from this exploratory study of the perception of regular classroom teachers in Lebanon about inclusion, that teachers did not have a problem with inclusion but mainly with the kind of disability included in their classrooms. Overall, the majority of participants agreed that they are not receiving enough ongoing training, in-services, support, or resources to feel competent to teach students with SEN in inclusive setting. Moreover, many regular classroom teachers felt that more time is needed to prepare and work together with the special education teacher for planning, modifications, and accommodations needed for the curriculum and the implementation of strategies to make inclusion successful. Lack of training, lack of preparation and planning time, lack of administrative school support and overloaded class size were considered major barriers for successful inclusion program in Lebanon. However, regular classroom teachers expressed their willingness to teach in an inclusive setting whether the above mentioned barriers are overcome or not.

Law 220/2000 is one of the Lebanese government's significant achievements to ensure the rights and improve the livelihood of people with disabilities. However, the majority of students with SEN are still not given the appropriate attention in our educational system. They are not yet

included in the Lebanese Educational System despite the passing of the Law 220. Timid initiatives have indeed been taken in that direction but the results have not been as satisfactory as expected. In 2012, a bold plan was re-initiated by the Center for Educational Research and Development (CRDP) and their associates and an optimistic outlook is set. For example, April 22<sup>nd</sup> was declared as the National Day for students with Special Educational Needs. In 2014, the Directory of Inclusive Schools in Lebanon was published in order to help parents locate and find schools that have an inclusion program in the area where they live. Although the schools listed in the Directory are all in the private sector, it is still considered as an important awareness-raising step forward, toward a more comprehensive plan, covering both the private and public sectors (MEHE, 2014). Awareness of the rights of education for Students with SEN as well as for their inclusion is rising; therefore schools are working hard to prepare good programs to tackle all the needs of these students as well as giving regular elementary teachers support, in-services, workshops and education to prepare them to educate and include these students in their classrooms.

It is important to note that the inclusive schools listed in the Directory are distributed all over the Lebanese territories, which means that inclusive education is no longer restricted to privileged areas, such as the capital Beirut (See Appendix D).

### **Recommendations:**

The present researcher recommends the following:

1. Universities should include in their teaching program (BA in Education) more special education courses and practicum courses to prepare regular teachers for inclusion.



2. Schools need to take inclusion more seriously and budget for such a program from the beginning of the year to include training to increase the competencies of their teachers, support staff, and resources.
3. Schools should start considering reducing class size.
4. Schools should also consider placement of students with SEN by grouping them, as much as possible, by the disability type and level of needs so that regular classroom teachers will have reduced workload, instead of having to make considerable individualized modifications to fit the particular needs of particular students.

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## APPENDIX A



## اتحاد المقعدين اللبنانيين

" علم و خبر 103 / ا.د. عام 81 "

## قانون 220 يتعلق بحقوق الأشخاص المعوقين

أقر مجلس النواب .

وينشر رئيس الجمهورية القانون نصه :

مادة وحيدة : صدق مشروع القانون الوارد بالمرسوم رقم 1834 تاريخ 3 كانون الأول 1999 والمتعلق

بحقوق الأشخاص المعوقين كما عدلته لجنة الإدارة والعدل ومجلس النواب .

- يعمل بهذا القانون فور نشره في الجريدة الرسمية

بعيدا في : 29 أيار 2000

الإمضاء : اميل لحو

صدر عن رئيس الجمهورية

سليم الحص

رئيس مجلس الوزراء

**المادة 45 : وسائل النقل العامة غير المؤهلة للمعوقين**

أ- تخصص مقاعد قريبة من المداخل في وسائل النقل العامة غير المؤهلة خصيصا للمعوقين ، بنسبة مقعد واحد على الأقل في كل وسيلة نقل عامة ويلصق الشعار العالمي للمعوق على المقعد المحجوز . ويكون لكل صاحب بطاقة شخصية الأولوية بالجلوس عليه والحق بالمطالبة بمقعد مجاور له للكرسي النقال ، أو للشخص المرافق ولا سيما في الطائرات والبواخر .

ب- يسهر السائق أو المساعد على السماح للشخص المزود ببطاقة المعوق الشخصية من استخدام أقرب باب إلى مقعده للخروج إذا طلب ذلك .

**المادة 46 : منافع وحسومات مالية :** يستفيد كل شخص مزود بالبطاقة الشخصية ومرافق واحد من وسائل النقل البرية العامة مجانا ، ويحصل ومرافق واحد على حسم قدره خمسون بالمئة على كل تذكرة سفر على متن شركة طيران أو بواخر تشترك الدولة بملكيتهما مهما كانت نسبة هذا الاشتراك ، شرط أن يكون المرافق فعلا مسافرا مع الشخص المعوق .

**المادة 47 : في عقوبة رفض نقل شخص معوق :** يعتبر كل سائق لأية وسيلة نقل معدة للنقل العمومي أو المشترك يرفض نقل شخص معوق مخالف لقانون السير . وتكون الغرامة على هذه المخالفة مضاعفة لغرامة التوقيف في مكان ممنوع .

**المادة 48 : المواقف العامة المخصصة للمعوقين :**

أ- تخصص مواقف للسيارات التي تنقل الأشخاص المعوقين في المواقف التابعة لكل مبنى عام أو معد للاستخدام العام ، بنسبة واحد ونصف بالمئة من استيعاب هذا الموقف وفقا للمعايير المعتمدة في قانون البناء وتدور هذه النسبة إلى الأعلى لاحتساب عدد الأماكن . ويحجز ثلاثة أمتار ونصف المتر على الأقل لكل سيارة ، وتكون الأقرب إلى مدخل المبنى المقصود .

ب- في حال عدم توافر موقف خاص أو عام للأبنية العامة أو المعدة للاستخدام العام تخصص مواقف للسيارات التي تنقل الأشخاص المعوقين على كافة الطرقات العامة ، شرط أن لا يتعرض ذلك للسلامة العامة ، وذلك على بعد أقصاه خمسون مترا من مدخل المبنى المقصود .

**المادة 59 : مدى الحقوق :** لكل شخص معوق الحق بالتعليم ، بمعنى أن القانون يضمن فرص متكافئة للتربية والتعليم لجميع الأشخاص المعوقين من أطفال وراشدين ضمن جميع المؤسسات التربوية أو التعليمية من أي نوع كانت ، وذلك في صفوفها النظامية وفي صفوف خاصة إذا استدعى الأمر .

**المادة 60 : الانتساب إلى المؤسسات التربوية .**

أ - لا تشكل الإعاقة بحد ذاتها عائقا دون طلب الانتساب أو الدخول إلى أية مؤسسة تربوية أو تعليمية ، رسمية أو خاصة ، من أي نوع كانت . ويعتبر بحكم الملغى كل نص يشترط لأي طلب انتساب أو دخول إلى أية مؤسسة تربوية أو تعليمية رسمية أو خاصة من أي نوع كانت ، سلامة البنية أو الجسد أو عدم الإصابة بإعاقة أو عاهة أو ما شابه ذلك من التعابير والألفاظ .

ب- تعتبر الإجراءات العادية ، مثل الامتحانات المتعلقة بالكفاءة المعمول بها وغيرها ، والمعتمدة لقبول طلبات الدخول أو الانتقال من صف إلى آخر ، كافية لقبول أو رفض طلب الانتساب أو الدخول إلى أية مؤسسة تربوية أو تعليمية رسمية أو خاصة من أي نوع كانت .

ج- يعطى كل طالب انتساب حامل بطاقة المعوق الشخصية فرصة تمكنه من متابعة الدراسة في المؤسسة التربوية أو التعليمية التي يختار ، وذلك بتأمين الشروط الفضلى التي تسمح له من إجراء امتحانات الدخول ، وسائر الامتحانات خلال العام الدراسي في جميع المراحل المدرسية والمهنية والجامعية ، وذلك وفق معايير تحدد بمرسوم يتخذ في مجلس الوزراء .

د- تدرس اللجنة المسؤولة عن منح الإعفاءات في السن القانونية لقبول الأشخاص في المراحل الدراسية كافة ، طلبات الإعفاء التي يقدمها المعنيون ( الأهل أو إدارات المؤسسات التربوية ) والمصحوبة بطاقة المعوق الشخصية ، وفقا لمعايير وتسهيلات أكبر خاصة من الناحية الإجرائية .

هـ- على كافة المدارس والمعاهد والجامعات والمؤسسات التربوية والتعليمية تعميم طلب تأمين المستندات التالية إذا وجدت ، بالإضافة إلى المستندات المطلوبة للتسجيل ، وذلك بهدف اتخاذ الإجراءات الضرورية أثناء العام الدراسي وفي تنظيم الامتحانات الرسمية :

#### 1- صورة عن بطاقة الشخص المعوق الشخصية تضم إلى الملف الرسمي

2 - نسخة عن طلب التسهيلات الخاصة وفقا للطلاب الصادر عن وزارة الشؤون الاجتماعية في هذا الخصوص .

و- تعطي المصالح المكلفة بدراسة المنح المدرسية والجامعية وفي كافة المجالات أولوية مطلقة لطلبات الأشخاص المزودين ببطاقة المعوق الشخصية الذين تقدموا بطلب منحة .

#### المادة 62 : الامتحانات الرسمية:

أ – تؤمن الشروط الفضلى التي تسمح لكل تلميذ معوق حامل البطاقة الشخصية من المشاركة في الحصص التعليمية كافة وفي الامتحانات في جميع المراحل المدرسية والتقنية والجامعية ، وذلك من النواحي الآتية المعدة على سبيل المثال لا الحصر :

1 – تأهيل المداخل والصالات .

2 – تحديد الوقت المخصص للمسابقة إذا توجب ذلك .

3 – تأمين الأسئلة بوسائل مكيفة ( أحرف نافرة ، خط كبير ، وغيرها ) .

4 – مساعدات من قبل الغير ، أو تقنية خاصة ( مكينات برايل ، آلات كاتبة مترجم للغة الإشارة وغيرها ) .

ب – تتضمن القرارات التي تصدر سنويا عن وزارات التربية الوطنية والشباب والرياضة والتعليم المهني والتقني والثقافة والتعليم العالي ، والمتعلقة بتوقيت وتنظيم الامتحانات الرسمية السنوية ، فقرة خاصة متعلقة بالإجراءات الواجب اتباعها من أجل تنظيم هذه الامتحانات كافة حسب المعايير المحددة أعلاه ، كما تتضمن فقرة تحدد المواد الخاصة التي تستوجب تنظيم امتحانات خاصة لبعض الأشخاص المعوقين وفقا لملفاتهم الشخصية .

ج – تعتبر بطاقة المعوق الشخصية مستندا كافيا لإعفاء الأشخاص المعوقين من امتحان الرياضة في الامتحانات الرسمية ، واستبداله وفقا للإجراءات المعمول بها في حالات الإعفاء كافة ، إلا في حال سجل الشخص المعوق رغبته في المشاركة .

## APPENDIX B

## Summary Information on Inclusion Program in Selected Private schools

School	Location	Year of Establishment	Start date of Inclusive program	Type of Inclusion Implemented at School	Average # of students with SEN Included Per Regular Class
1	Beirut	1959	2006	SN students are in class 80% of the school day. They are pulled-out for the remaining 20% of the school day mainly in French Sessions for special tutoring. In case the SN students are shadowed by a special educator, then, the special educator will do the required modification. If the SN is not shadowed, the regular teacher will do the required modification.	3 students per class (27)
2	Beirut	1949/1997	2006	The school offers full inclusion program always with a shadow teacher.	2 students per class (22)
3	Mount Lebanon	1974	1986	SN students are integrated for one or all subjects. Each student depends on his case or level is included in the class. The regular teacher with the help of the special educator does the required modification.	4 students per class (25)
4	North Lebanon	1937	2007	SN are pulled out for English, Math, Arabic	2 students per class (22)



## APPENDIX C

**Regular Classroom Teachers' Perception Towards Inclusion**  
**Nadine Abou Assaly**  
**M.A. Thesis**  
**Haigazian University**

My name is Nadine Abou Assaly. I am writing my MA Thesis at Haigazian University, which is about regular classroom teachers' perception towards inclusion in private schools in Lebanon

Please respond to the following questions to the best of your knowledge.

Your name is not important, and neither is the school where you teach.

Thank you for your help.

Teaching Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Male                      Female

Years of Teaching:    1-5 years       6-11 years       12 years and above

How many years have you taught in an inclusive setting? \_\_\_\_\_

University Degree:    Yes       No

Degree in: \_\_\_\_\_

Level of University Education:    BA                      MA

Other: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

Please select the response that best reflects your thoughts for each statement.

	Not at all	Barely	Fairly well	Very well
1. I believe myself to be knowledgeable about inclusion.				
2. I have read literature (books, articles, etc...) about 'inclusion'.				
3. I have the educational background and instructional skills to effectively teach students with SEN in my class.				
4. I know how to modify or adapt curriculum/ instruction for students with SEN.				
5. I have the training and in-service workshops to teach and include students with SEN into the regular classroom.				
6. I believe that if teachers are provided with ongoing training and in-services, it will prepare them to feel competent in teaching students with SEN.				
7. I believe that a continuum of services (resource room, pull-out and team teaching, etc...) needs to be provided in order to effectively meet the needs students with SEN.				
8. I believe with suitable in-class support, teaching regular and students with SEN is completely feasible in regular classroom.				
9. I have the administrative support in planning to meet the needs of students with SEN.				
10. I know inclusion of Students with SEN is important, but I don't have the necessary resources for it to succeed.				
11. I have been provided with sufficient time to implement inclusion effectively.				

Thank you for your time and participation in this study 😊

## Regular Classroom Teachers' Perception Towards Inclusion

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M.A. Thesis

Haigazian University

Please answer the following seven subjective questions as accurately as possible:

<b>2.</b>	<b>Drawing from your experience, what kind of knowledge do you think regular classroom teachers need to prepare them to teach in an inclusive setting?</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Elaborate on any kind of training you have attended. (types, focus area, benefits)</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Based on your experience, what kind of in-service training and ongoing professional development would you recommend for preparing teachers for inclusion?</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Explain the kind of modifications you use in your classroom.</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>In your opinion, what administrative support needs to be in place to achieve successful inclusion?</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>What kinds of challenges are you currently experiencing or have experienced to include Students with SEN in your classroom?</b>

## APPENDIX D

Number of Private Inclusive Schools in Lebanon *Adopted from MEHE (2014)*

Region	Number of Private Inclusive Schools
Beirut	21
Mount Lebanon	23
North of Lebanon	7
South of Lebanon	12
Bekaa	12