

HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY

INCLUSION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: ATTITUDES
OF TEACHERS IN LEBANESE PRIVATE SCHOOLS (INTERPRETIVE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS)

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July 2022

Inclusion of Early Childhood Students with Disabilities: Attitudes of Teachers in Lebanese
Private Schools (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis)

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of

Haigazian University

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Degree of

Master of Arts in Education – Emphasis: Special Education

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is accepted by the Graduate Thesis Committee as satisfying the thesis requirements for
the degree Master of Arts in Special Education

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July 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks and appreciation to a few people who have been by my side throughout my thesis writing journey. For they have been my source of strength in many ways.

A debt of gratitude is owed to my thesis advisor, Dr. Nizar Mehtar. The completion of this study could not have been possible without his support and guidance. His effort and input made this work a success. I sincerely thank him for his mentorship. I would also like to offer my gratitude to the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Hanine Hout and Ms. Rita Merhej for helping me increase my knowledge and skills.

I would like to offer a deep and heartfelt thank you to my parents for their continuous support and encouragement. I truly owe them both all my success. Last but not least, a special thanks to my best friend for being there for me throughout this journey. She never failed in believing in me.

‘Thank you’ is the least I can say to express my deep appreciation to the abundant support I have received.

Abstract

This study is particularly concerned with Lebanese general education early childhood teachers serving in the private sector, and its aim was focused on exploring their experience-based (a) attitudes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral components) towards including early year's children with disabilities in general education classrooms and (b) views regarding the kind of academic and professional support they need for advancing their instructional inclusive practices. Additionally, the study adopted the qualitative methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which purposefully sought a profound examination and interpretation of teachers' ways of making meaning of their experiences associated with inclusive education. In-depth semi-structured individual interviews was the primary data collection method used, but a Teacher Profile Questionnaire was also employed as a supportive data collection instrument. The study sample consisted of 4 in-service early childhood teachers recruited – based on well defined criteria –from inclusive private schools in Beirut. The research problem of this study originates from the dearth of studies on the topic of inclusive education in Lebanon where children with disabilities are concerned; this problem has been deemed particularly significant for two main reasons. Firstly, it is expected to contribute to culture-specific body of knowledge pertaining to the conditions and challenges (conceptual, affective, and practical) associated with inclusive instructional practices and learning environments. Secondly, exploring teachers' inclusion-related professional experiences and understanding the attitudes originating from those experiences are needed to generate significant implications pertaining to relevant early childhood curricular frameworks as well as teacher pre-service formal academic programs and in-service professional development/support systems. The results revealed many similarities between the attitudes of the teachers towards including students with disabilities in early years inclusive classrooms. Moreover, the analysis of the teachers' views indicated similar factors affecting their

conceptualization of disability and inclusive education, as well as very similar views regarding the support needed for pre-service and in-service teachers to successfully implement inclusive education. Few different ideas emerged regarding the behavioral attitudinal component that teachers implement to emphasize inclusive education in their classrooms. However, the ideas generally complement each other. The overall analysis of the teachers' attitudes and input revealed that the teachers have a positive attitude towards disabilities and inclusive education. However, teachers showed to have mixed emotions regarding leading such classrooms. Causes and origins of such emotions relate to every teacher's personal, academic, and professional background. However, they do all share common causes of such emotions. Moreover, the teachers' lack of pedagogical content knowledge and expertise was evident. In some areas, they were not able to provide thorough elaborations such as inclusive management approaches and strategies. Based upon the gathered data and literature recommendations, implications for teacher preparation programs and school-based support are suggested.

Keywords: Early years teachers attitudes, inclusive education, students with disabilities, Lebanese private sector, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes the central elements of a qualitative study that focuses on exploring the attitudes of Lebanese early childhood teachers regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities into early childhood general education classrooms. An inclusive classroom is a learning environment in which the academic, physical, and social needs of all learners – those with disabilities included – are addressed within one setting (UNESCO, 2009). In Lebanon, the private sector of education – as compared to the public sector – is the predominant contributor to inclusive education, but teachers seem overwhelmed as they find themselves compelled to teach students who have a range of disabilities within regular classroom settings, while facing various and significant challenges (e.g. Crochen, 2012; Sharma, 2008). Research studies on inclusive education in general, and teachers' attitudes to type of education seem to be insufficient in the Lebanese context (e.g. Crochen, 2012; Marouche et al., 2021). For that reason, exploring teachers' inclusion-related professional experiences and understanding the attitudes originating from those experiences are needed to generate significant implications pertaining to relevant early childhood curricular frameworks as well as teacher pre-service formal academic programs and in-service professional development/support systems.

This chapter in the thesis focuses mainly on the background of the problem, statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, situating the self, overview of research design, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. Notably, the expressions *inclusion* and *inclusive education* are used interchangeably in this document.

Background of the Problem

Inclusive education has been a topic of focus in the education milieu for a long period of time, but, it has been conceptualized from various perspectives. According to Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004), inclusive education is the form of education provided for children with disabilities in the regular classroom by the regular classroom teacher. Villa and Thousand (2005) view inclusive education as a belief system, while Mentis, Quinn, and Ryba (2005) contend that inclusive education involves “attitudes, values, and beliefs that extend beyond schools to the wider community” (p.76). In pertinent literature, inclusive education commonly addressed as a process which evolves with emerging changes in the educational context (e.g. UNESCO, 2009) as well as a basic human right, where all children are accepted and taught in the regular classrooms (e.g. UNICEF, 2012).

A number of concerned scholars (e.g. De-boer et al., 2011; Cansiz, 2018) agree that in order for inclusive education practices to be effective, the school personnel and most importantly general education teachers - who will be most responsible for its success - should be open to the demands of inclusion. In view of that, those scholars bring into conversation the importance of addressing teachers’ attitudes and the factors affecting these attitudes in inclusion-related research studies (Cansiz, 2018). Due to their importance, teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion have been widely researched in the past decades. While most of the studies were conducted in the United States, some studies have been also performed all over the world, including developing countries to some extent (Saloviita, 2020). Research results, in general, reveal that teachers’ beliefs and values influence how they implement inclusive education policies in their classrooms (Carrington, 1999) and their attitudes towards inclusion vary in positivity or negativity due to diverse factors that differ between countries, cultures, and educational systems (Angstadt, 2002; Clipa et al., 2020). Angstadt (2002) recognizes three main factors, namely

severity of students' disabilities, the degree of administrative support, and prior teacher training, while Clipa et al. (2020) emphasize the role of professional experience, degree of training, types of disabilities, gender, teachers' beliefs regarding inclusion and children with disabilities in general, class size, time, and resources.

Research studies do not show any promising positive consistency regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. However, there is emerging research-based evidence revealing that teachers' attitudes vary depending on the country, culture, and education systems available. In developing countries, teachers show the most negative attitudes (El-Ashry, 2009). On the other hand, some arguable research findings show that teachers' inclusion-related attitudes in Western countries are relatively more positive (e.g. Sharma et al., 2006)

In Lebanon, available systematic studies on teachers' inclusion-related attitudes are rare. Wehbi (2006) and Khochen (2012) confirm that there is a current dearth of studies on the topic of inclusive education in Lebanon where children with disabilities are concerned, and there is a need to address this gap to seek culturally relevant solutions (Wehbi, 2012). This gap becomes more serious when it extends to the attitudes and views of teachers, whose crucial role in inclusive education cannot be overemphasized. Wehbi (2006) argues that change efforts to support inclusion should be taking place on various levels: awareness-raising, policy change, capacity-building, and community-building. Teachers should have a substantial contribution to the inclusion process on all of the aforementioned levels. However, the fruition of teachers' contribution depends on their attitudes towards inclusion. From a constructivist perspective, exploring and understanding the teachers' existing conceptions about inclusive education is crucial for achieving the desired inclusion-related attitudinal change (Berkeley, 2020).

Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study

Statement of the Problem

A number of researchers (e.g. Wehbi, 2006, Khochen, 2012) confirm that there is a current dearth of studies on the topic of inclusive education in Lebanon where children with disabilities are concerned, and there is a need to address this gap to seek culturally relevant solutions (Wehbi, 2012). This gap becomes more serious when it extends to the attitudes and views of teachers, whose crucial role in inclusive education cannot be overemphasized.

According to UNESCO (2009), inclusion often requires a change in people's attitudes and values, and such change is associated with significant reassessment of conceptions and role behavior. Wehbi (2006) argues that change efforts to support inclusion should be taking place on various levels: awareness-raising, policy change, capacity-building, and community-building.

Teachers should have a substantial contribution to the inclusion process on all of the aforementioned levels. However, the fruition of teachers' contribution depends on their attitudes towards inclusion. Positive attitudes involving sound conceptualization of inclusion (cognition) and persistent appreciation to it as human rights value (affection), are expected to engender effective educational initiatives and endeavors (behavior). On the other hand, teachers with negative attitudes, who do not comprehend and welcome diversity, will neither take an active role in the lives of students nor act as agents of change in the process of inclusion. Teachers are the frontline workers with students in learning environments, and their attitudes must be elicited, examined, interpreted, and harnessed appropriately towards successful implementation of inclusion. From a constructivist perspective, knowledge is essentially dependent on the standpoint from which the learner approaches it (e.g. prior experience, personal history, cultural background). It follows that understanding the learner's existing intellectual framework is central to understanding her/his conceptions and developing an approach for any necessary conceptual

change (Perry, 1999). Arguably, the desired inclusion-related attitudinal change starts by a profound analysis of existing attitudinal frameworks. Making teachers aware of their own attitudes is important on an educational and professional level when it comes to approaching and constructing positive attitudes toward inclusive education (Berkeley, 2020).

Significance of the Study

In relation to the problem statement above, this study is expected to contribute to the culture –specific body of knowledge pertaining to inclusive education and corresponding teachers’ attitudes in the Lebanese context. It is true that the nature of the study does not allow for any form of generalizations, but, because of its profound analytical and interpretive nature, it should provide a solid mechanism for understanding teachers’ inclusion-related attitudes and insightful implications setting the stage for other studies associated with wider scopes.

The Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach followed to explore early childhood teachers’ experience –driven attitudes is expected to provide significant implications, as briefly explained below.

Conceptualization of Inclusive Education

Armstrong and Barton (2007) emphasize that developments in social systems, concepts, and language are considered part of culture, so the conceptualization of inclusive education is not separate and cannot be interpreted away from the particulars of the social context. In line with Armstrong and Barton’s argument, that can be insightful in terms of uncovering at least some dimensions of Lebanese teachers’ conceptualization of inclusive education.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

Researchers suggest that one of the most common barriers to inclusive education is that most teachers lack sufficient or the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Hassanein et al., 2021). Outcomes of this study could provide some implications for the design and development

of teacher preparation regarding the knowledge and skill base that early years general education teachers need to acquire before they embark on their professional journeys. Data from this study could help in the development of at least three types of curriculum (a) written curriculum, found in the documents produced by the educational institution and the classroom instructor, specifying what is to be taught (curriculum guides and syllabi), (b) taught curriculum instructors actually implement or deliver in their courses and (c) supported curriculum which involves instructional resources, such as textbooks, software, and multimedia resources.

Implications for School-Based Support

General education teachers involved in inclusive education need the right kind of administrative support including in-service training, accommodating their professional needs, appropriate and sufficient supplies, and psychological support. The study's findings may provide valuable implications associated the nature and scenarios professional development teachers need throughout their professional practices.

Purpose of the Study

This study is particularly concerned with Lebanese general education early childhood teachers serving in the private sector, and its aim is focused on exploring their experience-based (a) attitudes towards including early year's children with disabilities in general education classrooms and (b) views regarding the kind of academic and professional support they need for advancing their instructional inclusive practices.

Attitudes, according to the World Health Organization (2007), are consequences of religious beliefs, factual beliefs, practices, ideologies, values, norms, and customs. Chambers and Forlin (2010) add that attitudes are learned and evaluative responses regarding an object or a concept. Hassanein (2010) suggests that there are different conceptualizations of attitudes, the most recognized of which are the unidimensional and multidimensional models; the

unidimensional model takes into account attitudes as feelings and emotions, while the multidimensional model considers attitudes as responses to stimuli with affective, cognitive, and behavioral components.

In this study, attitude is understood in terms of the cognitive, behavioral, and affective components, that are reasonably associated with beliefs, experiences, as well as environmental and cultural factors (Uusimaki, 2020). The cognitive component includes beliefs, opinions, and ideas about inclusive education. The affective component includes feelings of liking and disliking evaluation and positive or negative evaluation toward inclusion. The behavioral component includes action dispositions toward inclusion depending on the other two components. Expectedly, the integration of the attitudinal components translates into thorough or restricted acceptance or rejection of inclusive education (Ajzen, 2005; Fishbein & AJzen, 2011).

Disability is a complex, multifaceted, and contested construct, but this study adopts the *International Classification of Functioning* (ICF) as a conceptual framework for understanding disability (World Health Organization, 2011). ICF characterizes functioning and disability as a dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual personal and environmental factors. In relation to this characterization, disability is regarded as the umbrella term for three dimensions (i) impairments in a person's body structure or function, or mental functioning, (ii) activity limitations involving difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving, and (iii) participation restrictions in regular daily activities, like working, engaging in social activities, and/or seeking health care services (Leonardi et al.,2006). The aforementioned disability dimensions refer to the “negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)” (World Health Organization, 2011; p. 4)

In a nutshell, this study specifically attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the Lebanese early childhood teachers' attitudes regarding including children with disabilities in the general education classrooms?
2. What kind of academic and professional support do the teachers believe they need to implement inclusion effectively?

Importantly, these research questions were meant to be compatible and interrelated for the generated outcome of the study to be satisfactorily coherent and comprehensive. Indeed, teachers' inclusion – related attitudes affect their inclusive practices, but these attitudes should be also affected by the nature and quality of teachers' academic and professional experiences. Accordingly, teachers need pre-service and in-service support to advance their cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudinal constituents and that support ought to be based on teachers' self-reported requests. To enhance the adequacy of collected data, participants were asked to elaborate on their attitudes and suggestions by (1) explaining, justifying, and interpreting the nature and the origin of their attitudes and (2) explicitly and sufficiently linking their attitudes and suggestions to their academic and professional experiences.

Overview of Research Design

This study adopts the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology rooted in Psychological research, while seeks to investigate how individuals make sense of their own experiences (Smith, 2012), hence allows the researcher to understand the innermost 'lived experiences' shared by research participants (Alase, 2017) in relation to a certain phenomenon within a given context (Palmer, 2010). IPA rests on three fundamental constructs, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography. Phenomenology refers to the "study of human experience and the way in which things are perceived as they appear to consciousness" (Langdrige, 2007, p. 10). Hermeneutics is the "practice or art of interpretation" (Dallmayr, 2009, p. 23) and involves "the restoration of meaning" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 8).

Ideography is concerned with individuality, uniqueness, and subjectivity (Moses, 2012). IPA was adopted for this thesis study because it was meant to explore, analyze, and interpret early childhood teachers' experience-based attitudes towards inclusive education.

Sampling

According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), small samples allow for meticulous and deep case by case analysis, and serve the aim of IPA researchers, who typically seek contextual in-depth examination and interpretation of a certain phenomenon, rather than generating applicable to a large population. Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) notice that "IPA studies have been published with, for example one, four, nine, fifteen participants" (p. 4). However, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), advise 3 to 6 participants for a student project, but they also argue that no rule has been recognized regarding the ideal number of participants to be included in IPA research. Clarke (2010) stipulates that three is the default sample size for undergraduate or Masters-level IPA study, whereas 4-10 is advised for professional doctorates. Normally, IPA researchers aspire for a reasonably homogeneous sample to understand the true structure of the research subject-matter. Smith et al. (2009) contend that "samples are selected purposively because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience" (p. 48). The sample of the current study will be identified and recruited based on the predominant recommendations in IPA literature.

Data Collection and Analysis

Since IPA entails inviting participants to articulate stories, thoughts, and feelings about their experiences of a phenomenon (Smith, 2004), the semi-structured interview is a phenomenal IPA data collection form allowing for one person's understandings and experiential claims to be explored in substantial details (Palmer et al., 2010). Other supportive methods (e.g., questionnaires) can be also used to enrich the data collection process and interpretative

effectiveness (Noon, 2018). In this study, a semi-structured interview as well as Teacher Profile Questionnaire were used to collect data.

Researchers in IPA are encouraged to be creative in their analyses while making use of fluid, iterative and multi-directional analytical schemes (Noon, 2018). This study adopted a hybrid approach to thematic analysis by integrating top-down, deductive and bottom-up, inductive mechanisms (Swain, 2018). The deductive mechanism involved (a) identifying the inclusion-related attitudes (essence of the first research question) and support-related views (essence of the second research question) as themes and (b) deriving theme-related a priori categories and subcategories based on research questions (and their representative interview questions) and pertinent literature. The inductive mechanism of the analytical scheme involved the generation of data-driven codes in relation to the a priori categories and sub-categories. Each participant was approached “on its own terms, to do justice to its own individuality” (p. 100). During this process, an effort was made to avoid any possible influence of one analysis by findings from previous accounts. Comparisons between participants’ were solely observed in the discussion of findings.

Situating the Self

The research topic and the problem in particular is an area in education that I can identify with. From my previous teaching experience, I had to include young children with disabilities in the general education class. However, at that time, I did not have any educational or professional experience, knowledge, support, or any sort of training in how to include these children in the general education classroom and simultaneously meet their needs. I tried different strategies that might work. My instruction was generally given in the same method to everyone in the classroom. I found it challenging to understand the type of disabilities some of the students had and to figure out the best approach I must follow to provide them with productive learning

experiences. Facing struggles and challenges to manage between students who had disabilities and others who did not, influenced my attitude towards inclusive education. I did not feel confident in teaching students with disabilities because I saw how my instruction failed to help them to progress and achieve. I believe that personally, I needed specific training, and my students and I needed abundant support from the school to have a successful inclusive teaching and learning experience. As a general education teacher at that time, I asked for supportive strategies from other general education teachers; however, most of those teachers had a negative attitude towards inclusive education because they found themselves and the school not ready to serve the needs of students with disabilities. Based on my experience, I believe that handling inclusive learning environments would be much easier for the general education teachers if they were prepared for it before starting the teaching profession.

Today, as a researcher and special educator, I strongly believe that special education courses should be provided in University general education courses and not only for teachers who are studying special education. Hence, through this study, I will be receiving answers through interviews that might be relatable, in different ways, to my professional experience. The participants of my study might have been in similar or dissimilar situations, but they will be given the opportunity to characterize their experiences in their own ways while communicating their inclusion-related attitudes in relation to this characterization. I will make sure to use an in-depth data collection protocol that will allow the participants to profoundly make their thinking and feelings visible through describing, explaining, justifying, demonstrating, and articulating relevant events and emerging attitudes. Moreover, I will exert a purposeful effort to present – apart from my inclusion-related experience and views – an interpretive account of the collected data based on a solid understanding of the participants' specific lived experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences within their particular contexts.

Summary

The thesis study briefly described above adopted an *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis* design particularly concerned with Lebanese general education early childhood teachers serving in the private sector. The study's aim was focused on exploring aforementioned teachers' experience-based (a) attitudes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral components) towards including early year's children with disabilities in general education classrooms and (b) views regarding the kind of academic and professional support they need for advancing their instructional inclusive practices. Expectedly, the study's findings could benefit educational policy developers, general education teachers, principals, and the whole school team including experts in the field.

Four more chapters follow this chapter. Chapter two includes a comprehensive overview of the literature regarding inclusive education and the elements of the research questions. Chapter three includes the study's methodology. Chapter four's main focus is on the findings of the study, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the findings in chapter five.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a literature review that introduces the research topic in terms of the following sections (a) characterization of inclusive education and disability; (b) nature and essential attributes of early childhood inclusive education and classrooms; (c) challenges and debates associated with inclusive education; (d) teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education; and (e) inclusive education in Lebanon. Those sections are supposed to be synthesized and interconnected to support the two research questions of the study. Sections (a) and (b) are primarily (not exclusively) associated with the first research question (teachers' attitudes regarding inclusion). Section (c) is primarily (not exclusively) associated with the second research question (needed academic and professional support). Section (d) simultaneously informs both research questions. Section (e) links both research questions to the Lebanese context.

Importantly, the scope of this review has been framed to provide essential theoretical and research-based aspects of inclusive education, with a focused examination of selected sample of pertinent and representative studies to justify the purpose and significance of the study. The literature search strategy was developed by making use of relevant keywords that are used in the literature's search databases (mainly EBSCO) available in HU digital library. The sources of information, which included journal articles, books, governmental websites, reference lists in the reviewed articles, and theses, were evaluated based on the criteria of *currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose*, developed by librarians at California State University-Chico (Blakeslee, 2004). Notably, while the majority of the used sources were relatively current, other sources were somehow older yet with sustainable relevance. The benefit of using older sources is

to show the significance of research problem in terms of the longevity and history of research regarding inclusive education.

Characterization of Inclusive Education and Disability

Inclusive Education

According to UNESCO (2009), inclusive education is a process of reinforcing the proficiency of the educational systems to achieve Education for All goals; therefore, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the dual assertion that education is a fundamental human right and the foundation for social justice. The major momentum for inclusive education was given at the World Conference on *Special Needs Education: Access and Quality*, held in Salamanca, Spain in June 1994. This conference brought together representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations (senior education officials, administrators, policy-makers, specialists, representatives of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, international governmental/ non-governmental organizations, and donor agencies), who adopted the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework for Action. This statement was informed by the principle of inclusion and an acknowledgement of the need for a substantial educational reform transforming ordinary schools into “schools for all”; that is institutions including everybody, celebrating differences, and supporting learning by responding to individual needs (UNESCO, 2022). This vision was reaffirmed by the World Education Forum meeting in Dakar, April 2000, and extended to address and respond to the diversity of needs of all learners involving those from poverty backgrounds, ethnic minorities, rural communities, and other sources of disadvantage. However, in line with the thesis study, the focus here is solely on including students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Mitchell, 1999; UNESCO, 2009).

Disability

Disability is a multifaceted experience that has been commonly defined in terms of two opposing models, the *medical model* and *social model*. In the *medical model* disability is seen as impairment, that is a problem in the structure, function, or condition of an individual's body or mind. The *social model*, which was developed by disability activists and researchers over the past five decades, provides a progressive perspective calling for a new understanding of disability in light of the social and environmental barriers limiting the activities of persons with disabilities. Activists advocating the *social model* argue that social structures disable people, and could be changed; those activists successfully shifted the disability – related discourse away from medical treatment to social transformation entailing a progressive understanding of the way disability can shape an individual's identity in a complex society (Lakkis et al., 2015; Marouche et al., 2021). The medical and social models have been frequently addressed as dichotomous, but a number of scholars (e.g. Forsyth et al., 2007; Shakespeare, 2008; Thomas, 1999) argue that disability must be regarded neither as purely medical nor as purely social; rather, a balanced approach is required, with apposite weight to the various facets of disability. The *International Classification of Functioning* (ICF), a framework for describing and organizing information on functioning and disability (World Health Organization, 2011), characterizes functioning and disability as a dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual personal and environmental factors. ICF's characterization, referred to as a "bio-psycho-social model," provides a reasonable compromise between medical and social models. Accordingly, Leonardi et al. (2006) sees disability as the umbrella term for three dimensions (i) impairments in a person's body structure or function, or mental functioning, (ii) activity limitations involving difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving, and (iii) participation restrictions in regular daily activities, like working, engaging in social activities, and/or seeking health care services. The

aforementioned researchers presume that these disability dimensions refer to the “negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual’s contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)” (as cited in World Health Organization, 2011; p. 4).

In relation to relevant scholarly work, World Health Organization (2011) confirms that disability is a human rights concern since, because of their disabilities, persons with disabilities experience discriminations (e.g. denied equal access to health care, employment, education, or political participation), are subject to dignity – related violations (e.g. violence, abuse, prejudice, or disrespect), and are denied autonomy (e.g. confined in institutions against their will, regarded as legally incompetent). In view of that, a significant complement to the *Social Model* is the *Human Rights Model* has been promoted suggesting that all humans, including those with disabilities, shall have access to their full human rights-civil, political, social, and economic rights (Nagata, 2008). The *Human Rights Model* has been represented in discrimination legislations adopted by more than 40 nations in the 1990’s (World Health Organization, 2011).

Nature and Essential Attributes of Early Childhood Inclusive Education and Classrooms

Inclusive education has been a topic of focus in the education milieu for a long period of time, but, as mentioned previously, it has been conceptualized from various perspectives. According to Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004), inclusive education is the form of education provided for children with disabilities in the regular classroom by the regular classroom teacher. Villa and Thousand (2005) view inclusive education as a belief system, while Mentis, Quinn, and Ryba (2005) contend that inclusive education involves “attitudes, values, and beliefs that extend beyond schools to the wider community” (p.76). In pertinent literature, inclusive education commonly addressed as a process which evolves with emerging changes in the

educational context (e.g. UNESCO, 2009) as well as a basic human right, where all children are accepted and taught in the regular classrooms (e.g. UNICEF, 2012).

For more than 35 years, inclusion has been explored through research to show how beneficial and constructive it is for children in their early years. Yu and Park (2020) contend that early childhood inclusion acknowledges the children's right to access and participate in classroom learning experiences while receiving all the physical and social support they need. This contention mirrors the essence of previous scholarly work suggesting that early childhood inclusion is about providing educational environments that nurture and support development in all children (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2014) through collaborating, playing, learning, making choices, and having a say (Booth, 2006).

Relevant literature documents numerous attributes associated with effective implementation of early childhood inclusive education. Vlachou and Fyssa (2016) maintain that children with experience in such education tend to have a sense of belonging, positive social relationships and friendships, and better development and learning experiences. Further, Zabeli and Gjelaj (2020) suggest that inclusive education in a child's early years is substantially essential, because those years constitute a critical period where a child's brain and their physical, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral potentials grow promptly. Today, more schools around the world are becoming aware of how inclusion in the field of education is significant. Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms has become an international focus (Yada & Savolainen, 2017).

Challenges and Debates Associated with Inclusive Education

Common Challenges

As much as inclusive education has become a topic of awareness and an international focus, its implementation is accompanied with challenges. When it specifically comes to early

childhood education, inclusion has been noticeably debatable in the past three decades (Biamba, 2016), due to significant difficulties that have been acknowledged and documented worldwide. An increasing number of children with disabilities at their early years of childhood are enrolling in inclusive general education classrooms where general education teachers are expected to meet their different needs (Education, 2007). Bricker (2000) and Odom (2000) construe that early childhood teachers often struggle with their mission because they are neither adequately prepared in solid and cohesive pre-service programs nor sufficiently empowered in effective in-service support systems. Avramidis et al. (2000) report that overcrowded classrooms, insufficiently prepared materials, insufficient time to plan with learning support team, lack of modified and flexible timetables, inadequate available support from specialists, and lack of regular in-service training opportunities are also key contributors of failure or achievement of inclusive educational practices.

In a study conducted by Mitiku (2014), it was found that teachers, who are not sufficiently prepared for implementing inclusive education, fail to prepare individual educational plans (IEP) for students with disabilities. Notably, IEPs for such students are important to address and meet their needs and, reasonably, teachers have to learn about IEPs and the method of developing them. When discussing teacher's inadequacies pertaining to inclusion-related instructional planning, Mitiku (2014) stresses the factor of teachers' attitudes as well as obstacles related to shortage in finding or using educational material and resources and classroom management.

There seems to be various learning barriers for children with disabilities in relation to poor teacher training and preparation. One study conducted in the Kingdom of Lesotho with 140 teachers revealed that teachers understand disabilities from a deficit perspective leading teachers to expect students with disabilities to do less than what others are able to do (Johnstone, 2005).

Another study conducted in Hong Kong (Wong et al., 1999) with 224 teachers showed that inadequate teacher training and limited resources impeded effective inclusive education.

Findings of studies presented in a meta-analysis of 28 research reports emphasize the lack of time, knowledge, and proficiency as obstacles teachers face when working with children with disabilities (Scruggs et al., 1996).

Significant Debates

Generally, inclusive education has been regarded as a controversial and multifaceted topic in educational research. Concerned scholars, educators and other professionals do not share common understanding of the aims and processes of inclusive education, and as a consequence, its implementation tends to be inconsistent from region to region (e.g. urban vs. rural), system to system (private vs. public) and even from school to school or classroom to classroom within the same school community (Lutfiyya & Van Welleghem, 2002).

A number of researchers (e.g. Crawford, 2008) argue that inclusive education is realizable and advantageous for all children apart from the level of disability, while other researchers (e.g. Kalyanpur 1994) assert that different societies have dissimilar beliefs and practices towards children with disabilities. In their comprehensive review of the international development of inclusive, Artiles and Dyson (2005) conclude that people around the world, who increasingly have more access to global education systems, are becoming more vulnerable to globalizing trends, one of which is the Western model of the inclusion paradigm. Accordingly, concepts like self-fulfillment, attaining one's maximum potential, and being integrated into society –advantages of inclusive education commonly represented in relevant research conducted in Western countries – are part of a Western package of ideals and philosophy, and may not be necessarily shared by other cultures (Ciyer, 2010). From a related perspective, Armstrong and Barton (2007), confirm that developments in social systems, concepts, and language are culture –

specific and historically situated, so inclusive education cannot have a unique and universal interpretation away from the social context. Further, Ainscow et al. (2006) recognize that the social, cultural, and economical uniqueness of each national context renders the transfer of educational conclusions between different contexts problematic (Ainscow et al., 2006). For inclusive education, there should be a difference in various socio-cultural contexts at the level of policy formulation and enactment. Interestingly, some scholars question the effectiveness of inclusive education – in theory and practice – even in Western countries where the apparent commitment to this form of education is deemed relatively high (Mitchell, 2005).

Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

A number of concerned scholars (e.g. De-boer et al., 2011; Cansiz, 2018) agree that in order for inclusive education practices to be effective, the school personnel and most importantly general education teachers - who will be most responsible for its success - should be open to the demands of inclusion. In view of that, those scholars bring into conversation the importance of addressing teachers' attitudes and the factors affecting these attitudes in inclusion-related research studies (Cansiz, 2018). The importance of teachers' attitudes seems obvious, because teachers' views of differences in classrooms and their willingness to react positively and effectively to those differences determine the outcomes of inclusive education (EADSNE, 2003). If a teacher does not voluntarily welcome a particular child in her/his classroom, any magnitude of support (e.g. resources, training) is not expected to save inclusion from being a failure (Saloviita, 2020).

Factors Affecting Teachers' Attitudes

Due to their importance, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion have been widely researched in the past decades. While most of the studies were conducted in the United States, some studies have been also performed all over the world, including developing countries to

some extent (Saloviita, 2020). Research results, in general, reveal that teachers' beliefs and values influence how they implement inclusive education policies in their classrooms (Carrington, 1999) and their attitudes towards inclusion vary in positivity or negativity due to diverse factors that differ between countries, cultures, and educational systems (Angstadt, 2002; Clipa et al., 2020).

Angstadt (2002) recognizes three main factors, namely severity of students' disabilities, the degree of administrative support, and prior teacher training, while Clipa et al. (2020) emphasize the role of professional experience, degree of training, types of disabilities, gender, teachers' beliefs regarding inclusion and children with disabilities in general, class size, time, and resources. More than 20 years ago, Carrington (1999) summarized certain environmental factors that influence inclusive education practices like quality of support provided by staff and agencies, relationship between the special education professionals and general education teachers, the administrators' attitudes toward inclusive education, and teachers' level of confidence in selecting and applying appropriate teaching methods.

The aforementioned factors have been addressed in various studies and scholarly explorations and arguments, but only representative ones are concisely discussed below in relation to the scope and aim of the current study.

The effectiveness of teacher education programs have been addressed in inclusion-related literature with noticeable criticism. Sharma et al. (2008), contend that pre-service teachers who graduate with a degree in Education commonly show apprehensive attitudes regarding including children with disabilities in their inclusive classrooms, and they attributed this trend to the inadequacy of the teacher preparation programs. In a comprehensive UNESCO-supported review of research on teachers and inclusive education, Reiser (2013), asserts Sharma et al.'s contention as he explains that:

The providers of education for pre-service teachers around the world are still largely operating from a teacher-centered pedagogy and have little recent and relevant experience. They do not teach inclusive education principles. When children with disabilities are covered, it is in discrete courses based upon the old deficit medical model approach. Student teachers and their educators have little practical experience in inclusive settings. Teacher educators have low status and little scrutiny of what they are doing and how effective it is. There is a reticence amongst the more progressive academics to use categorical approaches to impairment for fear of regressing into segregative medical model approaches. (p. 136).

Universities have a crucial role in preparing teachers for inclusion. Forlin (2018) sees this role through proper teacher education that (i) provides teachers with relevant background knowledge and key competencies, balanced traditional and inclusive approaches, and authentic inclusive experiences, (ii) familiarizes teachers with possible inclusion – related issues and challenges, and (iii) links research to teaching. Forlin (2018) notices that most teacher-training programs focus on theory and research with little emphasis on field work where theory is translated into practice. Sharma et al. (2006) believe that teachers need to gain both theoretical and practical knowledge to be well prepared to implement effective inclusive education.

Research work by the Council for Exceptional Children, as reported in McLeskey et al. (2018), proposes that traditional teacher preparation curricula must be replaced by a new curricular approach to qualify teachers for effective inclusive education. This approach involves applying high-leverage practices focused on four areas, namely collaboration, instruction, assessment, and social/emotional/behavioral learning. From the same perspective, Forlin (2018) suggests that an effective teacher preparation approach should be accompanied by rich resource material (e.g. case studies, videos).

A study conducted by Amr (2011) aimed to examine teacher education programs in the Arab region to assess teachers' preparedness to work in inclusive education settings. Amr's (2011) study showed that in Arab countries where inclusive education has been implemented teachers seem to be inadequately prepared to serve all children's needs. The aforementioned researcher argues that pre-service and in-service programs show prepare teachers who lack skills to teach students with and without disabilities in the same classrooms. Amr (2011) construes that teachers in the Arab World often lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively implement inclusive education, because few universities offer significant training on inclusive education, special education, or disabilities.

Regarding gender, research results concerning its effect on teachers' attitudes are seemingly inconsistent. While some studies like those conducted by Efiliti and Arslan (2017) and Srivastava (2010) showed no significant gender-based effect, other studies like those performed by Alquraini (2012) and Shatri (2017) revealed that females have more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. Only in few studies (e.g. de Boer et al., 2011), it was found that male teachers acquire more positive attitudes towards inclusion.

As far as age is concerned, its effect on teachers' attitudes appears to be inconsistent as well. In some studies (e.g. Chhabra et al., 2010; Gyimah et al., 2009), no association was identified between teachers' age and attitudes, whereas in other studies (e.g. Ahmmed et al., 2014; Bornman & Donohue, 2013), younger teachers had a slightly more positive attitude than older teachers did.

Among the attitudinal variables frequently studied were teachers' training in special education, their work experience with students with disabilities, and their level of prior contact with people with disabilities. Work experience and contact were frequently and noticeably associated with more positive attitudes towards inclusion (e.g. Boyle, Topping, & Jindal-Snape,

2013; Wilkerson, 2012), but in some studies teachers tended toward the opposite (Loreman et al., 2007). The training effect has constantly correlated positively with inclusive attitudes (e.g., Ahsan et al., 2012), especially when collaboration is an essential element of the training. Kivirand et al.'s (2011) conducted a study involving the design and implementation of an in-service inclusive education course for school teams, and significant results emerged: (1) systematic and coherent coverage of topics help teachers to focus on relevant issues and pursue self-development; (2) training with a practical approach facilitates the identification of priority areas of development in schools; (3) Collaboration among teachers (school teams) in and across schools supports communal learning and effective problem-solving related to the implementation of inclusive education in schools. From a similar perspective, McMaster (2013) confirms that successful and effective professional developments related to inclusive education will only progress when school teams and staff share the same vision and work collaboratively.

Self-efficacy has been one of the most frequently studied factors based on Bandura's (1997) theory. In most inclusion studies "Teacher Efficacy to Implement Inclusive Practices Scale [TEIP]" (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012) and "Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale [TSES]" (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) were used for data collection. According to a review done by Saloviita (2020), in studies using TEIP, results confirmed the positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and their attitudes towards inclusion, but in studies using TSES no association was found between teachers' self-efficacy and their inclusion-related attitudes.

Type of disability as a factor effecting teachers' attitudes towards inclusion was also researched. Findings revealed that teachers are most positive with respect to including children with mild impairments and most negative when they have to cater for students with severe

intellectual disabilities or behavioral problems (e.g. Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004; Moberg, 2003).

This finding has been discussed to communicate a lack of teacher training or a shortage of other resources, such as administrative support, adapted study materials or classroom assistants (e.g. Cook, 2001).

Concerning the effect of resources on attitudes, lack of resources has been an issue noticeably emphasized in a number of studies (e.g. Goodman & Burton, 2010; Gunnþórsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014). However, Saloviita (2020) believes that teachers' may not be necessarily accurate, especially that is no measure that can be effectively used to assess the assumed shortage of resources. Teacher's claim, Saloviita suggests, can be an excuse for avoiding any engagement in inclusive practices.

Higher levels of negative attitudes has been claimed to be a result of low levels of relevant professional development or in-service training (Garrad et al., 2019). In other words, teachers who fail to effectively include children with disabilities in the general education classroom attribute this failure to insufficient training and develop persistent negative toward inclusion (Garrad et al., 2019). Rae et al. (2010) recommend targeted training, support groups, and collaboration between schools, teachers, and parents. Reasonably, Hsien (2007) acknowledges the crucial role of early years teachers' attitudes in the general education classroom, and argues that any teacher training program must heed teachers' inclusion-related attitudes and their satisfaction with the training they are receiving.

Teachers' Attitudes from a Cultural Angle

Teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusive education entail their qualifications and readiness to successfully cater for various needs in the same classroom, while appreciating the

importance of having all students - with and without disabilities - in the same learning environment, and believing in all students' rights and values (Uusimaki, 2020).

Research studies do not show any promising positive consistency regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. In general, when it comes to the increased expectations associated with inclusive teaching practices, teachers communicate comparable discouraging experiences and corresponding challenges, which may be regarded as attitudinal barriers (Killoran et al., 2014). However, there is emerging research-based evidence revealing that teachers' attitudes vary depending on the country, culture, and education systems available.

In developing countries, where sufficient resources like time, skills, and training may not be available, teachers show the most negative attitudes (El-Ashry, 2009). Those teachers are often overwhelmed by the additional preparations necessitated by the admission of a child with disabilities into the general education classroom (Wang, 2009), especially that they feel unprepared, unsupported, and insecure to be able to meet expectations in providing high quality experiences for these children (Villines, 2011). Al-Attayah (2012) argues that, despite all efforts exerted to enhance inclusive education in many Arab countries, many teachers remain truly concerned about the concept of inclusion and therefore do not fully support it. This researcher notices that teachers still prefer segregated learning environments (general education classrooms versus special education centers) to inclusive ones; however, teachers tend to favor segregation when they feel unconfident or not ready to successfully include children with disabilities in their general education classrooms. At a broader level, Gaad (2011) generalizes that in the Middle East, creating an inclusive society is still at its early stages of implementation. Hadidi and Al Khateeb (2015), in a debatable stance highlighting the consequences of teachers' negative attitudes, assume that governmental provision of inclusion-related support will be useless as long as teachers' have negative attitudes towards inclusion in the first place.

On the other hand, some arguable research findings show that teachers' inclusion-related attitudes in Western countries are relatively more positive. A study conducted by Sharma et al. (2006) revealed that, comparing teachers from Western and Eastern countries, teachers from Western countries tend to show more positive attitudes towards inclusive education. The researchers attributed this finding to the prevailing level of inclusive implementation and the dominant inclusion-related policies in the countries.

Inclusive Education in Lebanon

Laws and Policies

In the year of 2000, after extensive lobbying by disability NGOs and other civil society actors, the Lebanese Parliament adopted the Law 220, which provides a legislative structure for the fundamental rights of people with disabilities. This law, which is developed based on the UN Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities and the World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, entitles persons with disability for comprehensive livelihood services involving Social Service, Education, Health, employment, housing leisure and others. Articles 59, 60, and 62 of the Law address the educational aspects of the aforementioned entitlements. While Article 59 emphasizes the right to equal educational and learning opportunities, article 60 affirms that a disability should not restraint the access to any educational institution and Article 62 requires the adaption of formal examinations to the needs of students with disabilities (Wehbi, 2006). One of commonly recognized issues with Law 220 is its limited definition of disability, definition that emphasizes physical, some sensory, and some intellectual disabilities, while marginalizing invisible disabilities. This marginalization leaves certain members of the disability community without resources, protection, or even legal recognition as disabled (Marouche, 2021).

On a policy level, in 2010 the MEHE circulated a number of laws to support inclusive schemes in schools. The laws were centered on the involvement of social and special educators to help teachers perform their inclusive tasks associated meeting students' learning needs and catering to their psychological and social conditions. This initiative was further supported in terms of a MEHE five-year plan aiming at developing the educational sector with emphasis on social integration (Khochen, 2012).

Neither legislation nor policies seem to bring about significant positive changes in educational inclusive practices. Khochen (2012) asserts that the majority of learners with disabilities is commonly excluded from the inclusive schools and remains uneducated; the minority of those learners (typically with mild disability) who succeeds to get an education is usually placed in institutions administrated by NGOs under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs or supported by national or international donations. Some special schools, Khochen (2012) confirms, may support the inclusion of some of their learners at certain stages of their education; however, it is mainly private schools that is contributing to the inclusion initiative in Lebanon given the public sector's incapability to provide healthy physical environments for effective inclusive services.

Projects and Programs

Inclusion endeavors in Lebanon began in the 1980s at the initiative of civil society actors, but the governmental interest in inclusion became noticeable in the late 1990's (Wehbi, 2006). In 1998, the issue of the educational needs students with disabilities was part of a governmental project for the development of the Lebanese educational system in Lebanon (Khochen, 2012). In 1999 the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNESCO, requested an 'expert report' on the educational situation of children with special needs. This report successively provided the platform for First National Conference on the Education of Persons with Special Needs

(UNESCO, 1999), six follow-up commissions, and a second national conference the work of the other commissions were presented (Brousse-Chamichian et al., 2000).

After the official adoption of the Law 220, a number of projects were launched in support of inclusive education in Lebanon. A sample of representative projects is outlined below.

Between 2008 and 2010, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), the Italian Embassy and Saint Joseph University cooperatively worked on a project with twofold objective: piloting an inclusion project to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in some schools and developing a national inclusion-related policy to ensure the right of Education for All in the Lebanese educational system (NIPL, 2010).

In 2014, the Center for Educational Support Services for People with Learning Disabilities was established by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Some of the services that this center provides include therapeutic services for students of public or private schools, interdisciplinary intervention to accommodate students with difficulties, and individual plans that help in guiding the teachers (UNESCO, 2021).

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education launched an inclusive education program with the support of UNICEF. This pilot program targeted 30 public schools in all Lebanon. The focus of this program was to promote the development of education for all children with and without disabilities. It aimed to increase the number of enrollment of students with disabilities in public schools. This program intended to increase the capacity in public schools and equip the teachers, administrators, and other school staff with the proper knowledge and skills regarding inclusive education. The program was also meant to increase the awareness of families, teachers, decision-makers, community leaders about inclusive education rights, opportunities, and the significance of collaboration between the family and the school. After the

selection of 30 public schools, the ministry of education and higher education created a special team to follow up and monitor the implementation of the activities in the selected schools. This special team had the task of coaching and providing support to all 30 schools. The program consisted of direct services and intervention. Therefore, the ministry of education and higher education positioned a full time special educator for each of the 30 schools, and a team of part-time experts (psychologist, psychomotor therapist, and speech therapist) for each of the selected schools (UNESCO, 2021).

In addition, The Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) has organized several workshops regarding curriculum development. One of the workshops in 2015 emphasized the characteristics of the special needs curriculum. Furthermore, in relation to a workshop conducted in 2019, the UNESCO Beirut office has been collaboratively working with CERD on developing a Lebanese Curriculum Framework as a main reference document in Lebanon (UNESCO, 2021).

Research on Inclusive Education

In Lebanon, because of the movement by parents and civil society actors seeking to promote and support inclusion, there has been a great growth in the interest in understanding the needs of children with disabilities (Wehbi, 2019). Wehbi (2019) adds that most of the conducted studies on this topic are available in unpublished or organizational reports. However, available systematic studies on inclusion in Lebanon seem to be rare.

A selected sample of representative and relevant studies and MA theses as well as a major research report emphasizing teachers' attitudes (partially or totally) are outlined below.

Research Studies

Wehbi (2006) conducted a mixed-method exploration aimed at describe the main issues facing inclusive education in Lebanon from the perspective of children with disabilities and their

families, as well as from the educators' (teachers and other academic employees involved in inclusion) perspective. The study sample was recruited from various Lebanese regions including Bekaa, Beirut, the North and Mount Lebanon, and focus groups and individual interviews were used for data collection. Based on the adopted processing and analysis scheme, the researcher identified six themes pertaining to the educators' perspective, namely "lack of awareness (or acceptance) of inclusion; a perceived lack of trained and qualified personnel; a focus on the cost of inclusion; mixed experiences regarding the relationship of school to parents and the role of parents; a lack of educational planning; a lack of coordination between school administration and inclusion programs; the relationship to NGOs and parent associations; and a perceived lack of acceptance of intellectual disabilities." (p. 339). Notably, the *lack of awareness* entailed the understating of inclusion as a simple integration within an established framework and fears that inclusion would negatively affect the reputation of the school. In addition, the theme of *mixed experiences regarding the relationship of school to parents and the role of parents* was associated with the inconsistent willingness of parents to cooperate with inclusion efforts. The *lack of educational planning* originated from apparent absence of curriculum adaptation and individualized pedagogy to serve students' diverse needs.

Similarly, In Wehbi's (2019) study, entitled *Barriers to Education for People with Disabilities in Bekaa, Lebanon*, findings of a survey conducted with 200 participants in the Bekaa region revealed inadequate education situations for people with disabilities. The focus of the research study was on the barriers people with disabilities face when it comes to education. The participants identified several barriers to effective education such as educational system barriers, inadequate finances, health related issues, transportation difficulties, and family pressure. The participants also reported that they left school almost illiterate. Wehbi (2019) concluded that qualifications of teachers, teacher support, and openness of educational

institutions to inclusion are all important components that would help in understanding what would hinder or facilitate inclusive education.

In their study, entitled *Attitudes of teachers and head teachers towards inclusion in Lebanon*, Khochen and Radford (2011) investigated the attitudes of teachers and head teachers towards people with disabilities in Lebanon. A mixed method approach - using questionnaires and interviews - was applied with forty teachers working in schools from different geographical locations across Lebanon. The selected teachers had an experience in and were trained on teaching children with disabilities. The findings revealed a general positive attitude towards the inclusion of learners with disabilities, with noticeable reluctance when it comes to types of disability specifically involving severe or behavioral difficulties. The results also underlined a number of issues, commonly reported in similar studies, such as lack of teacher training, need for qualified special education teachers, and expensive cost of inclusion. The author argues that the study provided empirical data emphasizing the dire need for further research studies focusing on Lebanese teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, in order to explore the challenges impeding effective implementation of inclusive education in Lebanon.

Khochen (2012), conducted a mixed method study - entitled *Inclusive education, an account from Lebanon* - focusing on Lebanese teachers' attitudes towards including students with disabilities, trainings they have previously received, and their opinions on social inclusion in school settings. The study, in which 40 participants were recruited from ten different schools across Lebanon, included a written questionnaire and interviews as data collection instruments for the quantitative and qualitative components respectively. The results generally revealed a positive attitude towards inclusive education; however, participants showed (a) noticeable reluctance associated with including certain types of disabilities, and (b) significant concerns pertaining to insufficiency of teacher training, lack of qualified special educators, and extremely

high costs of inclusive services. Khochen argued that the study's results provided empirical data emphasizing the need for further research studies on teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education. The study also highlights the importance of conducting further research in order to explore the factors that hinder and challenge inclusive education in Lebanon.

MA Theses

In her MA thesis, Abou Assaly (2014) explored the perception of regular classroom teachers toward inclusion in 4 selected regular private schools in Lebanon. The study, which surveyed 60 and interviewed 10 female elementary and middle teachers, addressed 4 factors associated with inclusion-related perceptions: knowledge of inclusion, in-service training, administrative support, and availability of time and resources. Thematic analysis of participants' responses revealed that the majority of regular teachers supported the idea of inclusion with identifiable variations in relation to the nature of the disability. In addition, the factors of 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 recognized by all participants as important issues to be observed for effective implementation of inclusion.

In another MA thesis adopting a qualitative single-case design, Ghandour (2017), examined the implementation of inclusion in a primary school in Beirut. The thesis study, which focused on the identification of and catering for psychosocial and academic needs of students with learning difficulties, involved as participants the school's special needs coordinator, 11 parents, and 19 regular and support teachers. Data were collected through online questionnaires, observations, and artifacts, and comparatively analyzed to show that a positive attitude towards inclusion is evident in the school's mission and vision statements and acquired by administration, teachers, students, and parents. Moreover, the findings revealed that intervention books for

students with learning difficulties and recruitment of a psychomotor therapist are needed to advance the effectiveness of the inclusion program at school.

In a quantitative thesis study, Khalaf (2021) addressed teachers' and parents' attitudes and concerns towards inclusive education. More specifically, the study's purpose was twofold (1) examining whether teachers' sentiments, attitudes, and concerns about inclusive education differ according to age, gender, level of education, years of experience, training, experience in teaching students with special needs, and teaching-efficacy and (2) investigating the role of age, gender, and level of education on the attitudes of parents of typically developing and special needs children. To satisfy the first part of the purpose, teachers of 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th graders with and without special needs in seven private schools located in Beirut were asked to fill two surveys: Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education (SACIE) and Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practice (TEIP). Results of the study indicated that general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were positive. Nevertheless, the participants had concerns regarding the acceptance of special needs children by their classmates as well as the increase of responsibilities and more stressful workload. As far as demographic variables are concerned, Khalaf's (2021) study showed that (a) male teachers expressed less positive attitudes towards inclusive education, (b) teachers with bachelor's degrees had more concerns compared to teachers with master's degrees, (c) there was no relationship between the subscale "attitudes" and experience in teaching students with special needs, and (d) teachers with no or less than 40 hours of training expressed more inclusion – related concerns and less positive attitudes than those with a high level of training.

Research Report

As part of Inclusive Education Pilot Project jointly designed by the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNICEF (described above under 'Projects and Programs'),

the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, SBS (2021) at Haigazian University, conducted a research project adopting a mixed-method case study design on a representative sample of 6 schools selected from the 30 participating public schools. The project assessed the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of inclusive education as a concept and practice of different stakeholders directly concerned with the implementation of inclusive education i.e. school principals, classroom teachers, special educators, paraprofessionals and SEN Coaches, collaborating NGOs, parents, and learners. Questionnaires, focus groups, and observations were used for data collection which was particularly focused on eliciting stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes across 3 dimensions: inclusive culture, inclusive policies, and inclusive practices.

Findings revealed that classroom teachers believed that an inclusive culture cannot be forced externally and should originate from a solid teacher's commitment. However, when teachers were asked about their willingness to join another non-inclusive school, responses were equally divided into positive and negative ones. SBS (2021) argues that "the "yes" answers clearly do not reveal an antagonism to the concept of IE; rather, they reveal a need for some logistic improvements (reducing the number of learners with disabilities per class) and more efficient, targeted teacher training." (p. 56).

Regarding inclusive policies, 4 out of 6 classroom teachers perceived parental participation as part of the inclusive education process, and they suggested multi-disciplinary meetings with parents and awareness-raising sessions as examples for such participation. Further, 5 teachers confirmed that the concept of inclusive education must include the community and outdoors activities for all learners using community facilities.

On the dimension of inclusive practices, 5 out of 6 teachers asserted that they were actively involved in setting inclusion-related educational and behavioral goals for the learners in

their classrooms. In addition, 4 out of 6 teachers said that their voices were heard in the school decision making related to learners' statuses and placements.

Importantly, SBS (2021) noticed, while analyzing the collecting data, that school closure during Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the teaching and intervention services in schools, especially that an appreciable percentage of students with learning difficulties could not benefit from such services.

Summary

The review of literature shows that more research is needed to further understand teacher's attitudes towards including early year's students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

The topics covered in this literature review mainly addressed different characterizations of inclusive education and disability, natures and essential attributes of early childhood inclusive education and classrooms, challenges and debates associated with inclusive education, and inclusive education specifically in Lebanon. The reviewed literature did not show any promising positive consistency regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. However, there is emerging research-based evidence revealing that teachers' attitudes vary depending on the country, culture, and education systems available. Research studies on inclusive education in general, and teachers' attitudes to type of education seem to be insufficient in the Lebanese context. Therefore, this study is an opportunity to fill the knowledge gap that exists regarding, exploring teachers' inclusion-related professional experiences, and understanding the attitudes originating from those experiences. This study is also an opportunity to fill the knowledge gap needed to generate significant implications pertaining to relevant early childhood curricular frameworks as well as teacher pre-service formal academic programs and in-service professional development/support systems.

An overview of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as the qualitative methodology adopted for this study, using interviews as the main data collection instrument is provided in Chapter three.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a comprehensive discussion of the study's methodology, where it is organized to essentially highlight, with necessary justifications, the study's research design, sample identification, data collection and analysis, as well as trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Research Questions

This study specifically attempts to answer the following research questions:

3. What are the Lebanese early childhood teachers' attitudes regarding including children with disabilities in the general education classrooms?
4. What kind of academic and professional support do the teachers believe they need to implement inclusion effectively?

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research method, which according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), aims to explore and understand meanings that individuals give to social or human problems. Qualitative research is an approach that focuses on specific descriptions of situations or people rather than numbers (Maxwell, 2013) and allows for developing profound explanations during exploration and investigation stages of a research study (Alase, 2017).

Qualitative researchers argue that a study's social reality cannot be condensed to variables, so there is a need for the understanding of the holistic meaning that is involved in specific social settings or events. Accordingly, qualitative research intends to understand human and social behavior from the participants themselves while living in a particular social setting. In a typical qualitative approach, subjective perceptions and biases by both participants and researcher are

acknowledged and respected, specifically when the level and scope of subjectivity are framed based on essential ethical and trustworthiness considerations (Ary et al., 2013).

This study aimed to explore and understand early childhood teachers' inclusion-related attitudes based on their academic and professional experiences. This purpose aligns with the aforementioned fundamental attributes of qualitative research. More specifically, the methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was adopted.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative methodology rooted in Psychological research, where it was first developed by the psychologist Jonathan Smith in 1996. IPA's main goal is to investigate how individuals make sense of their own experiences (Smith, 2012), hence allowing the researcher to understand the innermost 'lived experiences' shared by research participants (Alase, 2017) in relation to a certain phenomenon within a given context (Palmer, 2010).

IPA rests on three fundamental constructs, namely phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography.

Phenomenology refers to the "study of human experience and the way in which things are perceived as they appear to consciousness" (Langdrige, 2007, p. 10). A Phenomenologist attempts to reveal meaning through focusing on participants' thoughts, feelings, and memories. Consistent with its phenomenological origins, IPA is concerned with understanding the meanings individuals attach to their personal experience, while exploring experience itself (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). More specifically, IPA provides an opportunity for research participants – as experiential experts – to tell their own story in their own words. Participants are considered the experiential experts, without making an "explicit commitment to person-in-environment and not just phenomenon-as experienced" (Quest, 2014, p. 43). In other words, IPA researchers ought to

focus on the participants' context-dependent worlds and the corresponding social, historical and cultural factors (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Therefore, IPA is not 'simply descriptive', as the researcher needs to present an interpretive explication of what it means for respondents to be in such context-specific experiences (Noon, 2018).

Hermeneutics is the "practice or art of interpretation" (Dallmayr, 2009, p. 23) and involves "the restoration of meaning" (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 8). In IPA, analysis always includes interpretation. Double hermeneutics is required in IPA. This means that the participant will make sense and meaning of their own social world, while the researcher will make sense and meaning of the participant making their own meaning (Noon, 2018). Interpretations are therefore done conducted by both the researcher and the participant. The participant tries to articulate their experiences, while the researcher tries to dissect and make meaning of what is said. The objective here is to get the closest description of what the participants view (Larkin, 2006).

Ideography is concerned with individuality, uniqueness, and subjectivity (Moses, 2012). IPA emphasizes detailed and in-depth examinations of how every individual makes sense of a particular phenomenon. IPA seeks to learn and understand from every individual's unique case. Therefore, this will allow for a more deep and informative understanding of the participant's thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.

According to Noon (2018), scholars in the human, social, and health sciences have increasingly used IPA, especially in analytical and interpretative studies centered on examining and exploring how individuals make meaning out of their life experiences. In view of that, IPA was adopted for this thesis study, which was meant to explore, analyze, and interpret teacher's experience-based attitudes towards inclusive education. More specifically, IPA schemes, in this study allowed multiple early childhood teachers who have shared and similar experiences in

including children with disabilities, to tell their stories without any distortions or prosecutions (Alase, 2017).

Study Participants

Sampling in IPA

In IPA studies, providing full appreciation to each of the participants' experiences is a main concern, and this explains the 'small sample' trend in such studies. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), small samples allow for meticulous and deep case by case analysis, and serve the aim of IPA researchers, who typically seek contextual in-depth examination and interpretation of a certain phenomenon, rather than generating applicable to a large population.

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) notice that "IPA studies have been published with, for example one, four, nine, fifteen participants" (p. 4), but less common larger sample sizes are also possible. However, Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), advise 3 to 6 participants for a student project, but they also argue that no rule has been recognized regarding the ideal number of participants to be included in IPA research; those scholars maintain that the appropriate number is generally identified based on a number of study – specific factors including the targeted depth of analysis for each participant, richness associated with each participant, comparison scheme between individual participants, and the pragmatic limitations surrounding the research context. Clarke (2010) stipulates that three is the default sample size for undergraduate or Masters-level IPA study, whereas 4-10 is advised for professional doctorates.

Normally, IPA researchers aspire for a reasonably homogeneous sample to understand the true structure of the research subject-matter. Smith et al. (2009) contend that "samples are selected purposively (rather than through probability methods) because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience" (p. 48). The aforementioned authors expect that when the sample in an IPA study is homogeneous and small, the analytical process will be rich

and descriptively deep, with a better opportunity to examine convergence and divergence in adequate detail. The extent of sample homogeneity, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) presume, depends on interpretative concerns (e.g. degree of similarity or variation that can be contained in the analysis of the phenomenon), and pragmatic considerations (e.g. ease or difficulty of contacting potential participants, relative rarity of the phenomenon).

Study Sample

The sample of the study was identified and recruited based on the predominant recommendations in IPA literature, particularly pertaining to the purposefulness of sampling, sample size, and sample homogeneity.

The study participants are early childhood teachers working in Lebanese private inclusive schools located in Beirut. More specifically, the participants teach students (regular, with disabilities) belonging to the period of childhood up to age eight (UNESCO, 2021) in inclusive classrooms.

The reason for targeting early childhood teachers in this study, originate from the emerging international and local trend of including students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Yada & Savolainen, 2017). Further, an increasing number of children with disabilities at their early years of childhood are enrolling in inclusive general education classrooms where general education teachers are expected to meet their different needs (Special Education Programs, 2007). In line with Smith et al.'s (2009) recommendations, four participants were recruited. To make sure that participants have substantial relevant experiences (academic and professional) to share and a corresponding attitudes to extend, each one of the participants have (i) at least three years of formal professional experience in teaching early years students with disabilities (as framed in chapter 1, Purpose of the Study) (ii) a relevant university degree in Education from a recognized local or international Higher Education institution, (iii) at least

one experience in one type of planned and purposeful in-service professional development (e.g. workshops, conferences, school-based training), and (iv) adequate competency in communicating with the English language for data collection purposes. These general criteria framed the homogeneity of the sample at a preliminary level, but the final scope and level of sample homogeneity was delineated after collecting and processing the data from the *Teacher Profile Questionnaire* (description in the instruments' section below). Notably, some 'internal' diversity in the sample was observed for analytical and interpretative comparison purposes, when necessary and possible. The 'internal' diversity was based on the sample's backgrounds and profiles documented in the *Teacher Profile Questionnaire*.

Convenience considerations associated with geographical proximity (Frey, 2018) and local Lebanese circumstances (Covid-19 pandemic, economic crisis) were also observed to recruit volunteering teachers from private schools in Beirut educational district. Accordingly, the 4 participants were selected from schools in Beirut district, where the MA researcher lives. The convenience considerations were deemed adequately 'safe', as they should virtually have no significant negative effect on the purpose and outcomes of a study rigorously following the qualitative research paradigm (Robinson, 2014).

Notably, the decision to conduct the study with teachers serving in the private sector only has been reasoned based on previous studies showing that it is mainly private schools that are contributing to the inclusion in Lebanon (e.g. Khochen, 2012).

In relation to the above description of the study, a tabulated summary is presented below to highlight important aspects of sample's backgrounds and profiles. The four participants are given the following pseudo names: Darin, Rawan, May, and Maya.

Table 1

Summary of Study Sample Backgrounds and Profiles

		Darin	Rawan	May	Maya
Personal Data	Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female
	Age	35	41	39	27
Higher Education	Major	ECE	ECE; Comp Lit	ECE; Arab Lit	ECE
	Highest degree	BA (ECE)	MA (Comp Lit)	MA (Arab Lit)	BA (ECE)
	Overall years of experience	8	14	4	6
Professional Data	Classes taught	KG 3, Gr. 1,2,3	Gr. 1,2,3	KG 1; Gr. 1,2	KG 2,3; Gr. 1,2
	Curricula followed	Lebanese; IB	Lebanese; British; IB	Lebanese; IB	Lebanese; IB
	Years of experience in inclusive instruction	8	11	4	4
	Types of disabilities addressed	ADHD; Autism; Language delay; Learning difficulties; Mental delays; Physical disability	ADHD; Autism; Dyslexia	ADHD; Autism; Speech complication; Sensory disabilities; Concentration difficulties	ADHD; Learning difficulties
	Academic responsibilities	Teacher; IB coordinator	Teacher	Teacher	Teacher

Table 1 Cont'd

		Darin	Rawan	May	Maya
Professional Development Activities	Type	IB workshops: Teaching and learning; Role of the Coordinator ; Evidencing Learning Multiple in-service workshops: inquiry, concept-based learning, IB induction, documentation Differentiation	Concept-Based Teaching IB workshops: Making the PYP Happen in the Classroom Applied Behavioral Analysis	Concept-Based Teaching IB Workshop: Making the PYP Happen in the Classroom Virtual learning Training Applied Behavioral Analysis Time management	Concept-Based Teaching IB Workshop: Making the PYP Happen in the Classroom Learning Disabilities: Taking a Closer Look into Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, and Dyscalculia Principles of Applied Behavior Analysis & Method for Plan Development
	Role	Participant and facilitator	Participant	Participant	Participant

Note 1. ECE : Early Childhood Education ; Com Lit : Comparative Literature ; Arab Lit: Arabic Literature ; IB : International Baccalaureate ; PYP: Primary Years Program (IB program).

Note 2. All the professional development activities reported by participants took place between 2015 and 2021

Note 3. Participants' evaluation of their reported professional development experiences ranged between partially helpful and widely helpful.

Inclusive Programs in Schools where Participants Work

The schools where the study participants work are acknowledged by Haigazian University as *cooperating schools* where student teachers specializing in Special Education are accommodated to complete the *Field Experience* (internship) requirements. It follows that each of those schools is known to have a recognized and functioning inclusive program. Below brief descriptions of the schools' profiles are presented.

School A

School A is committed in promoting a safe and supportive learning environment for students with special educational needs to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. The school values and welcomes all students equally and aims to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to engage in the curriculum. The school enables students with special educational needs to experience educational success and be fully included in their school community. It recognizes that some students may need additional support during part of their school education to ensure access to the whole curriculum. The school has a Special Educational Needs Policy that recognizes and articulates the school's responsibility in identifying, and providing support for students who have special educational needs that cannot be met within the parameters of the taught curriculum. The school accepts as eligible for admission students with mild learning support needs. The school considers, on a case-by-case basis, the admission of students who require moderate support. Therefore, school A only admits learners for whom it is able to provide suitable resources and support. In addition, every student has his or her own uniquely designed program referred to as the IEP. The IEP best describes the child and the types of accommodations, modifications, and specialized instruction needed for success (School A website).

School B

School B provides learning support for students with diverse learning needs. It encourages an inclusive approach consistent with the International Baccalaureate policy. The school supports the notion that includes, with the right skills, training, strategies and support, the majority of the students with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education. Admission is available for students who demonstrate age appropriate abilities to meet the school's standard grade level learning outcomes, and who are able to function emotional and physically with minimal support. Where significant learning or physical support is needed to function within the school's inclusive setting and to meet the academic requirements needed, these students may be considered only if the school is able to cater for their individual needs. Students with learning needs are considered on a case-by-case basis and the needs of all the students, parents and the school are taken into account when planning for the best approach for any particular student (School B website).

School C

School C caters to students with learning difficulties. School C was one of the pioneers in Special Education services, beginning in 1986. Since then, the school has developed a comprehensive and holistic program for children with mild learning difficulties, including counseling services, speech therapy, psychomotor therapy and specialized pull out programs. This program caters to students with learning difficulties. School C believes that each student has the right to be given a quality education. It provides this to all students with special rights, respecting each as a unique student. The Special Rights Department draws up an Individualized Plan (IP) for each student, tailored to his or her educational, social, and emotional needs. In such a supportive environment, students with a disparate range of learning difficulties are able to

avoid failure and develop a sense of pride and accomplishment in their achievements (School C website).

Sample Recruitment Procedure

The procedure for sample recruitment involved the following general steps: (a) principals of schools A, B, and C were contacted for approval and assistance with obtaining the contact information of teachers with the required profiles; a principal information letter (appendix A) was shared with each of the principals (b) teachers suggested by the principals were invited to participate in the study; participant information letters along with consent forms were shared with the first six responsive teachers to complete the selection process (appendix B and appendix C) (c) each of the six teachers were required to complete and return (by mail) the *Teacher Profile Questionnaire* (appendix D); analysis of the questionnaire's data determined the scope of homogeneity based on which 4 participants were recruited as a study sample and the other two contributed to the pilot episode prior to the formal data collection.

Data Collection

Data Collection in IPA

The primary concern for IPA researchers is to conduct a study that investigates rich, detailed, and first-person experiences and phenomena (Smith et al., 2009), and this is why semi-structured, one-on-one interviews are considered the primary IPA method of data collection (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

In semi-structured interviews, some questions are fully decided, whereas others might not be fixed. Therefore, the researcher has leeway in asking follow-up questions, where an ideal compromise can be established between structure and flexibility (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). With semi-structured interviews, it is useful to prepare an interview protocol in advance, as this facilitates a natural flow of conversation. Arthur and Nazroo (2003) emphasize the importance of

careful preparation for interview, with well planned yet flexible topic guide (protocol) comprising the following essential components: Introduction; Opening questions; Core in-depth questions; and Closure. Such a scheme corresponds to the stages of an interview process as described by Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2003), who identify six pre-designed stages for the interview process: (a) Arrival (putting participants at their ease); (b) Introducing the research (participants made aware of the research purpose, given informed consent, comfortable with recorded interview, and understand their right to withdraw); (c) Beginning the interview (gathering background information to contextualize the rest of the interview); (d) During the interview (body of the interview shaped by the themes of interest for the research); (e) Ending the interview (ensuring there are no loose ends); (f) After the interview (participants thanked and told what will happen next with their data). Many participants think of additional ideas to share once the recorder is off, and these may be noted. Legard et al. (2003) suggests various strategies for questioning, like using broad and narrow questions, avoiding leading questions, and making sure all questions are clear and succinct; they also propose that interviewees must be guided to use examples and focus on the details of specific incidents rather than generalizations.

Since IPA entails inviting participants to articulate stories, thoughts, and feelings about their experiences of a phenomenon (Smith, 2004), the semi-structured interview is a phenomenal IPA data collection form allowing for one person's understandings and experiential claims to be explored in substantial details (Palmer et al., 2010). According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), the typical duration of most IPA interviews is one hour or longer; the semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to ask questions in a convenient order, and develop any unanticipated novel perspectives emerging from the conversation. Alase (2017) and Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) advise that IPA data collection procedure can include different technological devices, and it is necessary to audio record the interviews and produce a verbatim transcription of it.

Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) also note that in IPA studies, the interviewer should ethically examine how the interview is affecting the participant and act accordingly; they explain that, while skilled interviewers can rather effortlessly determine when the participants start feeling uncomfortable and/or becoming reluctant or emotional, a novice interviewer with no such developed competence should learn how to follow specific ethical procedures before conducting interviews in a formal manner.

Notably, a semi-structured interview is not necessarily the only data collection method used in IPA studies. Other alternatives and supportive methods (e.g., diaries, focus groups, letters or chat dialogues, questionnaires) can be also used to enrich the data collection process and interpretative effectiveness (Noon, 2018).

Data Collection in the Study

In this study, the semi-structured interview was utilized as the main method for data collection. The interview questions were used to generate sufficient data for responding to the research questions of the study (i.e. attitudes towards inclusive education, views regarding the needed academic and professional support). A *Teacher Profile Questionnaire (TPQ)* was also administered to elicit participants' personal data and rich information about their academic and professional backgrounds and profiles. TPQ was used for framing the scope and level of the sample homogeneity, and, to a certain extent, for further understanding of the participants' responses and overall discussion of findings.

Construction and Piloting of Teacher Profile Questionnaire (TPQ)

TPQ (appendix D) was structured to elicit participants' focused yet free responses to questions organized within the following categories: personal data, higher education and qualifications, professional data, and professional development. To ensure that the questionnaire will satisfy its purpose and Johnson & Christensen's (2008) recommendations for questionnaire

design: (a) the items were worded concisely and precisely while making sure to add instructions, clarifications, and examples when needed; (b) the questionnaire was properly organized to be presentable, readable, and clear - appropriateness of titles, categorization of related questions, use of tables, clarity of instructions and lead-ins, and sufficiency of blank spaces for participants' answers; and (c) the content and structure of the questionnaire were finalized after it was reviewed by a disinterested expert and piloted with two teachers satisfying the participant-selection criteria discussed previously.

Construction and Piloting of Interview Protocol

An interview protocol (appendix E) was developed in accordance with the aforementioned frameworks of Arthur and Nazroo (2003) and Legard et al. (2003).

Core in-depth questions were formulated in close relation to the research questions. Interview questions associated with the first research question (inclusion-related attitudes) explore the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of the participants' attitudes. Interview questions associated with the second research question (support-related views) address participants' views regarding the academic and professional support that teachers need to enhance their inclusive instruction. Since follow-up questions are equally important to the core questions in a semi-structured interview (DeJonckheere, 2019), *going further* prompts were used with the main questions to encourage participants to continue talking and provide more specific and relevant details needed to understand their attitudes and views.

The construction of the interview questions was substantially guided by the fundamentals of the IPA methodology that is commonly meant to elicit participants' descriptions and interpretations of their experiences (Noon, 2018). Accordingly, some of the interview questions and prompts were formulated with a descriptive sense while others were formulated with an interpretive sense.

To illustrate the construction of the interview protocol, sample interview questions pertaining to the first research question (inclusion-related attitudes) and specifically addressing the cognitive component of attitude are tabulated below with informative classifications and clarifications (appendix F for comprehensive classification):

Table 2

Illustration of Interview Questions Construction

Main Questions (MQ)	Going Further Prompts (GFP)	Classification	
		Descriptive	Interpretative
1. What is your definition of the concept of disability and how do you describe its distinctive features?	1a. In what ways (if any) and to what extent did your personal academic and professional experience influence the development or framing of this characterization.	MQ 1: Definition & features	GFP 1a: Links to professional and academic experience
2. What is your characterization of inclusive education?	2a. In what ways (if any) and to what extent did your personal academic and professional experiences influence the development or framing of this characterization?	MQ2: Definition and properties	GFP 1a: Links to professional and academic experience
	2b. Could you please elaborate further on aspects like rationale, fundamental principles, and contemporary educational & curricular models?	GFP 2b: Focus on specific aspects	

The final version of the interview was adopted finalized after a disinterested expert reviewed it and piloted with two teachers satisfying the participant-selection criteria discussed previously (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). During the pilot interviews, teachers were encouraged to verbalize their thoughts, impressions, or concerns about the interview protocol, and the researcher made use of teachers' feedback in the development of the protocol's final version.

Actual Data Collection

The four participants selected to the formal sample were contacted to schedule convenient appointments to conduct the interviews. All four teachers decided to have the interviews after school due to their busy schedules during school hours even during their breaks. Meeting places were arranged in their working settings since they felt comfortable that way. The administration of the interview followed the tips for conducting effective interviews as suggested by Seidman (2013): Listening more and talking less, following up on what the interviewees say, avoiding leading questions, keeping interviewees focused and asking for specific details, asking the interviewees to tell their stories, and avoiding any reinforcement of interviewees' responses.

Data Saturation in the Study

Data saturation is a core principle applied in qualitative research to determine the adequacy of data for developing a robust and valid understanding of a study phenomenon (Hennink & Kaiser, 2019). According to a number of qualitative researchers (e.g. Bowen, 2008; Kerr, Nixon, & Wild, 2010), failure to reach data saturation has a negative effect on the quality of the research conducted and impedes content validity. Guest, Bunce, & Johnson (2006), contend that researchers must always address the question of 'How many interviews are sufficient to achieve data saturation'. However, data saturation has not been acknowledged as a concern in IPA data collection and analysis (Brocki & Weardon, 2006). The focus in IPA studies ought to be on committing to a thorough and in-depth analysis of every individual experience (Noon, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data Analysis in IPA

According to Pietkiewicz (2012), IPA focuses on gaining evidence from the study's participants. The evidence will then be analyzed in a way to understand the study's investigation.

Simultaneously, the researcher will be documenting their own sense making of the evidence gained under investigation. The research is therefore moving between the emic to the etic perspectives (Pietkiewicz, 2012). IPA has a set of flexible guidelines that can be used by the researcher in accordance with their study's objective. Researchers in IPA are encouraged to be creative in their thinking and therefore can adapt to the flexible guidelines. IPA has a set of common principles that researchers abide to. They all start with, but go further, a standard thematic analysis. Analysis is fluid, iterative and multi-directional (Noon, 2018).

Data Analysis in the Study

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data once qualitative data has been recorded in text form. In this study, this process was represented in terms of the following essential steps as recommended by Johnson and Christensen (2019) : (a) transcribing – transforming qualitative research data (audio recordings of interviews) into typed text (b) segmenting – dividing the data into meaningful analytical units in relation to participants' responses to the interview questions (c) coding – seeking words, phrases, and events that symbolically assign a collective, significant, essence-capturing, and/or suggestive traits related to transcribed data (d) categorizing - organizing and grouping similarly coded data into categories because they share some characteristic, and (e) generating themes - looking at ways categories are related to one another; more specifically, theme – generation in this study was based on Shank's (2002) explanation:

. . . themes do not really emerge from data. What emerges, after mind of the researcher that there are patterns of order that seem to cut across various aspects of the data. When these patterns become organized, and when they characterize different segments of data, then we can call them "themes." (p. 129)

Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis

In relevant literature, there is a distinction between inductive and deductive approaches to thematic analysis. In an inductive approach, the data determines the themes through ground –up coding developed by the researcher by directly examining the data. A deductive approach, on the other hand, involves the examination of data using preconceived themes categories, and/or corresponding codebook with initial set of codes based on research questions and/or an existing scholarly framework or theory (Swain, 2018).

This study adopted a hybrid approach to thematic analysis by integrating a top-down, deductive mechanism and a bottom-up, inductive mechanism (Swain, 2018).

The deductive mechanism involved (a) identifying the inclusion-related attitudes (essence of the first research question) and support-related views (essence of the second research question) as themes and (b) deriving theme-related a priori categories and subcategories based on research questions (and their representative interview questions) and pertinent literature. The themes, categories, and sub-categories are tabulated below:

Table 3

Deductive Mechanism of the Analytical Scheme

Theme	A priori Category	A priori sub-category
Participants' attitudes towards inclusive education	Cognitive attitudinal component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterization of disability • Characterization of inclusive education • Effect of beliefs on characterizations • Effect of experience on characterizations
	Affective attitudinal component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of emotions regarding inclusion • Classification of described emotions • Causes and origins of described emotions • Effect of experiences on emotion development
	Behavioral attitudinal component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of inclusive instructional approaches/strategies

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of inclusive assessment approaches/strategies • Description of inclusive management approaches/strategies • Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources • Evaluation of approaches'/strategies' success.
Participants' views regarding support needed	Academic Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation • Supportive justifications for suggestions
	Professional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for in-service teacher training • Supportive justifications for suggestions

The inductive mechanism of the analytical scheme involved the generation of data-driven codes in relation to the a priori categories and sub-categories. The codes here were meant to be researcher-generated constructs that translated the data (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014) and provided the key attributes for characterizing the categories and eventually for depicting the patterns associated with the themes. A sample codes of the generated codes in tabulated below (complete coding process represented in appendix G):

Table 4

Sample Codes for the Cognitive Attitudinal Component

A priori Category	A priori sub-category	Codes	Representative Quotes (Interview)
Cognitive attitudinal component	Characterization of disability	Incompetence	“Disability is the inability to do something.”
	Effect of experience on characterizations	Empowering professional experience	“I have decent knowledge now in what inclusive education is about.”

Affective attitudinal component	Description of emotions regarding inclusion	Diverse emotions	“I have mixed feelings at different times. I sometimes feel hopeful and excited. At other times I feel worried.”
	Causes and origins of described emotions	Stressful experiences	“I was once challenged by my disabled student’s behavior during a group visiting the school.”
Behavioral attitudinal component	Description of inclusive instructional approaches/strategies	Evidence-based instructional approach	“I make use of flexible learning resources and other types of targeted strategies that are effective for students’ with different learning needs.”
	Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources	Diagnostic assessments	“For every concept I teach, I have a diagnostic assessment that I conduct.”

Moving From One Participant to Another

In line with the argument of Smith et al. (2009), each participant was approached “on its own terms, to do justice to its own individuality” (p. 100). During this process, an effort was made to avoid any possible influence of one analysis by findings from previous accounts. Comparisons between participants’ were solely observed in the discussion of findings.

Summary

This chapter included a comprehensive discussion of the study’s adopted methodology that is the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The study’s methodology was organized in a manner to essentially highlight, with necessary justifications, the study’s research design, sample identification, and data collection and analysis.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

This chapter includes the findings of all the participants in this study relating to attitudes regarding including children with disabilities and the needed support for effective implementation of inclusion. The findings are organized for each participant under two main sections namely *Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities* (first research question) and *Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion* (second research question). Further, the findings corresponding to each section are classified in terms of the categories and subcategories of the study's analytical scheme while using significant generated codes in association with representative participants' quotations.

The findings under *Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities* are classified in terms the cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudinal components. Under the cognitive component, participants' beliefs, opinions, and ideas about disability and inclusive education are synthesized to reveal their characterizations of disability and inclusive education (descriptive stance) and construed effects of beliefs and experiences on those characterizations (interpretive stance). Under the affective component, participants' described emotions regarding disabilities and inclusive education (descriptive stance) are integrated with their views regarding the causes and origins of the described emotions (interpretive stance). The behavioral component involves participants' action dispositions toward inclusion, with emphasis on their descriptions of effective inclusive instructional, assessment, and management approaches/strategies (descriptive stance) and elaborations on criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources (interpretive stance).

The findings under *Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion* are classified in terms the academic and professional supports, where participants' views (descriptive and interpretative stances) are integrated to reveal the nature of pre-service and in-service programs needed for effective implementation of inclusion.

Findings of the Participant Maya

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities

Cognitive Attitudinal Component

Characterization of Disability. The teacher characterized disability by emphasizing two key ideas, namely *incompetence* and disability as *broad multi-featured concept*. In relation to the first key idea, she stated that “disability is not being able to” and this applies to a child who is not capable of doing something because of a certain “case he or she has”. In a way, that “case” prevents him or her from successfully performing a required task just like any other child without a disability. A student with disability might not be able to “conduct, perform, or feel engaged in physical, emotional, or social activities.” The second key idea emerged from Maya’s description of disability as “a big umbrella that has sub ideas or sub branches.” Maya contended that disabilities are not always visible. From her experience in teaching students with disabilities, she learned that many disabilities are non-visible. She also gave examples such as, “a disability can be physical or mental; some difficulties can show in learning like dyslexia, while other disabilities can show in speech or in psychomotor skills.”

Characterization of Inclusive Education. Maya’s characterization of inclusive education was mainly based on *acceptance & integration*, but –interestingly – she also highlighted *teacher support* within this characterization. The participant said that “inclusive education means accepting the student whatever he or she has”, but she argued that acceptance into the whole school culture should precede the acceptance in the classroom. She explicitly

stated that “inclusive education is about accepting and actually including the student into the whole educational experience regardless of the disability.” Maya differentiated between what she called “theoretical” and “practical” inclusion in schools. To her, some schools *theoretically* recognize themselves as inclusive without actually providing the students with disabilities with the real inclusive educational experience. She emphasized that for a school to be truly inclusive, it must *practically* implement effective inclusive practices after accepting students with disabilities. The *practical* part of inclusion, the participant argues, is also about *teacher support*; that is, providing the teachers with the appropriate support to cope with disabilities and meet different needs. She particularly related the success of inclusive instruction to teacher training on using a variety of instructional strategies.

Effect of Beliefs and Values on Characterizations. When asked about the influence of her beliefs on her characterizations of disability and inclusive education, Maya construed this influence in terms of *cultural* and *religious values* as well as *child development convictions*. Concerning the *cultural values*, the teacher discussed her personal values against the more general Lebanese values. She noticed a slight but insufficient progress in the Lebanese cultural acceptance and tolerance of disabilities, but revealed serious doubts regarding the strength of the Lebanese positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities. She confirmed that, “people claim to accept disabilities but when it comes to actually applying an appropriate and successful inclusive program –I doubt that.” The participant asserted that, despite the fact she is part of Lebanese culture, she holds different beliefs as a pro-inclusion teacher.

From a religious perspective, the teacher confirmed that her characterizations of disability and inclusion originated from her religious values, because all religions teach acceptance and tolerance and “we should accept everyone since religion teaches us to value humanity.”

Additionally, the participant highlighted the role of her convictions pertaining to child development as she explained that, “I am a person who is into the behavioral and social components of a child’s development.” She elaborated on her interest in topics such as bullying, inclusion, special education, child development, and child psychology, and she confirmed that she has been constantly learning and enriching her knowledge in those topics.

Effect of Experience on Characterizations. Maya discussed the effects of her academic and professional experiences on her characterizations based on a number of essential ideas. She stressed the *complementarity* of academic and professional experiences because “academic experience without professional experience is nothing.” However, she shared a doubtful perception associated with the *insufficiency* of inclusion-related academic knowledge; she “only had some knowledge regarding inclusion from university courses” that were mostly taught with a lecturing style focused on theories that are never enough to “properly prepare pre-service teachers for the real life experience” and face contextual challenges in the learning environments. Accordingly, “more practical work is needed to really understand what strategies to use and how to really implement inclusive education.”

Maya confirmed that her professional experience was more beneficial and enriching compared to her academic experience. She underscored three professional elements, namely *diversity of teaching strategies*, *diversity of teaching settings*, and *collaboration between teachers*. The teacher said that, “within my teaching years, I have seen and used different strategies in how students with disabilities can be included.” She worked in several inclusive schools where she was exposed to different and effective ways of using inclusive strategies. Importantly, she attributed her inclusion-related professional benefits to the adequate and effective collaboration with her colleagues in different schools, a collaboration that enriched her professional experience and advanced her perception of her role in inclusive classrooms as a

facilitator of learning who employs scaffolding to teach students “different values and lessons.” She also related the development of her positive attitude towards disabilities and inclusive education to the authentic practical work in various inclusive classroom settings. She particularly understood how and why “a classroom should be a safe learning environment where children learn through speaking their minds, sharing their opinions while feeling safe in doing so” and eventually “learn to become good citizens” and lifelong learners.

Affective Attitudinal Component

Description of Emotions Regarding Inclusion. When asked about her emotions regarding inclusion, Maya described them as *challenging* and *overwhelming*. The teacher seemed to clearly understand and perceive inclusive education as being beneficial and a must. However, she also described the level of responsibilities that come with inclusive practice. The teacher described how having a large classroom in addition to it being inclusive is difficult. She said, “I find it challenging to engage all learners at the same time.” The teacher – who seemed to understand how inclusion is a process that needs to be well prepared for in order for effective learning to take place – was concerned about the large number of students in her classroom and the additional time and efforts to be dedicated to students with disabilities. Maya also emphasized how overwhelming “planning for differentiated assessments” could be, where she explained that “rather than planning a single general assessment for the whole class, inclusion requires additional work to plan and prepare for additional differentiated assessments for students with different needs.”

Causes and Origins of Described Emotions. Maya argued that her described emotions towards inclusion are due to being *unequipped* as a teacher. “If I was well equipped, I’d feel more comfortable... I would feel more comfortable and confident if I was better equipped in areas like knowledge, resources, and strategies”, she elaborated. Lacking sufficient knowledge

about inclusion and its relevant information is a solid reason that was discussed by the Maya. She explained that she had acquired some knowledge regarding inclusion from university courses, but she needed more practical work to really understand what inclusion is all about. In addition, Maya focused on the importance of fair school support in providing resources and strategies to help teachers. She confirmed that “when teachers are not well equipped, they will not know what to do”, while admitting how unconfident and unprepared she feels because she lacks the appropriate knowledge, resources, and strategies.

Behavioral Attitudinal Component

Inclusive Instructional Approaches/Strategies. Maya showed adequate awareness of the fact that students have different learning needs, so children cannot all learn in the same way. This awareness, she said, allowed her to implement the *evidence-based instructional approach* in her teaching strategies. To Maya, an effective evidence-based instructional approach must be direct and interactive. Children need direct instruction for a certain period of time before any practical application, because “before students work independently or in groups, they are in need of the teacher’s guidance.” However, Maya made it clear that teachers should not be spoon-feeding their students, but they should be guiding them through facilitating the learning process. Accordingly, “the teacher *scaffolds* and facilitates rather than tells the students what they should know.” Maya also highlighted the importance of encouraging her “students to participate and engage in tasks and activities that could be done independently or in groups; interactive instruction is as important as direct instruction.”

Description of Inclusive Assessment Approaches/Strategies. When asked about the inclusive assessment approaches and strategies that she uses, Maya focused on three main aspects: *forms of assessments*, *ways of assessing*, and *the purpose of assessing*. She described two main forms of assessment, namely the formative and the summative. To her, formative

assessments are ongoing assessments conducted on a regular basis, while the summative assessment is a form of assessment that is done at the end of every unit. Maya indicated that she uses both forms for all students in the classroom, but she pays considerable attention to the different learning needs of children with disabilities. Because the ways of assessment are wide-ranging, she differentiates her assessment methods by allowing her students to demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge “in writing, through drawing, and vocally.” She also makes use of games, activities, exit-slips, and reflections to assess her students’ knowledge and understanding. In addition, Maya extended a critical stance regarding the common trend of using assessments for “grading or simply evaluating.” She emphasized that assessments need not to be always quantitative with a numerical score need a grade; rather, some assessments should be qualitative associated with comprehensive evaluation of a student’s performance and understanding. Maya confirmed that the purpose of assessing students is to help them to learn better.

Description of Inclusive Management Approaches/Strategies. Maya admitted that inclusive management is an area of weakness for her, as she indicated “I don’t feel that confident when it comes to approaches or strategies related to inclusive management.” She referred to *behavioral charts*, as a management strategy that may be effective for some students sometimes but not for all students at all times. Interestingly, Maya said that she has started a new strategy where students are engaged in the management process. She elaborated that throughout her professional experience she learned that effective classroom management can be ensured when students are given an ownership responsibility in the management planning process: “Recently, I am allowing my students to come up with the school, classroom, and playground rules themselves since they are the ones who will be following the rules, getting rewards and receiving consequences.”

Criteria for Adopting Approaches/Strategies and Resources. Maya did not seem to be completely independent when it comes to selecting strategies and resources, because her *coordinators' confirmation* in the decision-making. She clarified that she often receives support from her coordinators in choosing the suitable approaches and strategies for inclusive classrooms. She pointed out that “the coordinators must confirm and give their approval before I apply a certain approach or strategy in the classroom” because she lacked sufficient knowledge and confidence associated with the selection criteria.

Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

Academic Support

Suggestions and Justifications for Pre-Service Teacher Preparation. Maya had a lot to say regarding the support needed for pre-service teacher preparation; however, all her ideas focused on a single suggestion, namely *sufficient practicum hours*. She justified the importance of a practicum course in the field of education by saying “we need to be present in the classroom setting to see and understand what we are learning about.” To Maya, pre-service teachers who only receive knowledge without any or sufficient practical work will not be ready and confident to implement effective inclusive education. When enrolling in the practicum course at university, she was required to complete only 4 practicum hours per week, which were not sufficient. “We need more observation and on ground experience to better support pre-service teachers, fresh graduates, and even in-service teachers”, she argued. Maya expressed that “education is a field that requires teachers and other related experts to stay updated and informed since changes are continuous.” She noted that she graduated in the year 2017, and “within the past 5 years, many new concepts, theories, methodologies, approaches, and strategies became available.”

Professional Support

Suggestions for in-service teacher training. Maya shared beneficial suggestions regarding the needed support for in-service teachers, while focusing on two main ideas: *School team collaboration* and *focused workshops*. In support for the first suggestion, Maya argued that a school team consisting of subject teachers, principal, coordinators, experts, professionals, and parents must be involved in inclusive education programs. “The school team working together would be of great support for us teachers” when its members “cooperate, plan, implement, assess, evaluate, and reflect as a whole team.” Maya explained that inclusive education is a big responsibility that cannot be implemented and successfully achieved unless done cooperatively. She also insisted that “parents will definitely help teachers because they are the ones mostly with their children at home. Parents can have their own important roles that would also support teachers.” Maya further elaborated that learning settings, when designed collectively, could positively affect children on a long run as they develop into life-long learners and good citizens. Therefore, to achieve such inclusive education results, teachers need to appropriate support.

Maya proposed that *focused workshops* are needed to support in-service teachers, but she specifically emphasized the importance of having a substantial practical part in workshops. She said that a workshop is not only about collecting a certificate, and it should be different than typical university courses that are often loaded with theories.

Maya’s Attitude and Views: Key Ideas

An outline of the most essential ideas identified in Maya’s attitude and views is presented in the table below:

Table 5

Key Ideas Maya's Attitude and Views

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities		
Cognitive Component	Affective Component	Behavioral Component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability: Incompetence and broad multi-featured concept • Inclusive education: Acceptance and integration • Effect of experience on characterization: Academic professional complementarity, insufficiency of academic knowledge, practical work importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions regarding inclusive education: Challenging and overwhelming • Causes and origins of emotions: Insufficient academic background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive instructional approaches/strategies: Evidence-based instructional approach • Inclusive assessment approaches/strategies: Diverse formative and summative assessments • Inclusive management approaches/strategies: Student contribution • Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources: Coordinators' confirmation
 Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion		
Academic Support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation: Sufficient practicum hours
Professional Support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for in-service teacher training: School team collaboration and focused workshops

Findings of the Participant Rawan

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities

Cognitive Attitudinal Component

Characterization of Disability. Rawan characterized disability by emphasizing two key ideas, namely *incompetency* and disability as *broad multi-featured concept*. In relation to the first key idea, the participant stated, “It is about what children cannot do and what they are not able to do.” She described these children with disabilities as not being capable of doing something because of a certain condition that they have. Rawan also described disability as an area in some children that requires support to complete a certain task. In a way, that ‘area’ prevents the child from successfully performing a required task just like any other child without a disability. The second key idea emerged from Rawan’s description of disability as being “academically, physically, mentally, and emotionally” incompetent. From her 11 years of experience in teaching students with disabilities, she learned that many disabilities are non-visible. In other words, depending on the disability type, the case can be obvious or ambiguous. She gave examples of disabilities such as, “Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or even absence of some limbs.” Furthermore, she claimed that sometimes some disabilities could be barriers to learning. The disabilities that can act as barriers generally depend on the degree of the disability.

Characterization of Inclusive Education. Rawan’s characterization of inclusive education was mainly based on *integration* and *differentiation*. She said that, “It’s about including all students with disabilities in the same classroom.” She clearly described that an inclusive classroom is a classroom that integrates different abilities. Such inclusive classrooms are wide-ranging classrooms due to the inclusion of wide-ranging abilities. Rawan explained how inclusion is actually about integrating all students in the learning process (e.g. tasks,

activities) regardless of their abilities or needs. “I follow and cater to what my students need”, she said.

Rawan conversed the significance of inclusion by mentioning her child as a personal example. She shared, “I learned how inclusion is significant when I saw my son benefiting from it.” Her son with Autism was welcomed and included in his classroom. She described and explained how inclusion and integration has helped him greatly on different levels despite his disability. In order to truly implement inclusion, she explained how teachers have the role of catering to different learning needs to meet with all students at their certain level.

Rawan mentioned the importance of differentiation in inclusive education. She believes differentiating in learning will benefit students. She said, “teachers need to start with their students somewhere to reach somewhere.” However, she pointed out that within her 11 years of professional experience, she learned that differentiation could be implemented to a certain limit. She is willing to cater to different needs in her classroom but not to the extent where the disability is very difficult or considered extreme to work with.

Effect of Beliefs and Values on Characterizations. When asked about the influence of her beliefs on their characterizations of disability and inclusive education, she interpreted this influence in a *positive attitude*. She discussed her cultural values relating them to *humanity*. Concerning the cultural values, the teacher discussed her personal values against the more general Lebanese values. She noticed a slight but insufficient progress in the Lebanese cultural acceptance and tolerance of disabilities. She pointed out that, “Our culture still needs more work on truly accepting disabilities.” According to the teacher, “the Lebanese culture has positively changed but still needs more work on tolerating and supporting disabled children especially in the field of education.” Rawan has strong hopes that one day the Lebanese culture will be pro-inclusion on different levels. Her personal experience with her son who has Autism has given her

hope and determination in positively believing in inclusion and its benefits. Rawan added the significance of the concept of humanity in teachers. She explicitly stated, “We cannot ask a teacher who does not have this humanity in her to accept and tolerate diversity.” Therefore, in other words, she was trying to say that attitude cannot be taught academically nor professionally. It is all about having empathy and humanity in the first place. These beliefs and values that she has grasped within the past years, have positively shaped her characterization of disability and inclusion.

Effect of Experience on Characterizations. When asked about the effect of her experience on her characterization of disability and inclusion, she explained how she took *initiatives* in enriching her knowledge and awareness in these focuses. Rawan explained how her academic experience did not specifically prepare her in understanding disabilities and inclusion. Her interest in wanting to learn more and her personal reason of having a child with a disability made her take initiatives to enrich her knowledge and experience. Rawan clearly understands that diversity is a wide spectrum. She does not only see it as differences in academics but in other areas as well. She explained, “Diversity includes different learning levels, abilities, nationalities, languages, and personalities.” She became interested in understanding how diversity can be dealt with appropriately in an inclusive classroom. Rawan explained, “I learned how to deal with Autism, dyslexia, and ADHD for example.” She registered in additional University courses and workshops in order to learn about these disabilities and how to support these children. She took personal initiatives because she wanted to inquire. She registered in such courses and workshops to enrich her knowledge and understanding of different disabilities. In addition, she aimed to be able to help meet her son’s needs. Registering in such additional courses and workshops helped her shape her characterization of disability and inclusion.

Affective Attitudinal Component

Description of Emotions Regarding Inclusion. Rawan had a main answer to describe her emotions regarding inclusion. She has a very positive attitude towards inclusion. However, she described it to be *exhausting*. She described her emotions as, “I always work hard enough hoping my students with disabilities benefit as much as my students without disabilities are benefiting.” She described her concern in wanting everyone in the classroom to benefit regardless of any student’s abilities. Rawan explained how she feels hopeful when her students show they are benefiting in class. She described herself as a very patient person. Her experience with her son taught her how to be patient and find new ways that might be successful. She keeps patient with all students regardless of how tiring their disability may be. She described how her hard work and effort makes her feel stressed and exhausted at times. She said, “If I had an assistant, the burden would have been less.” She believes she can be supported in order to feel less exhausted and stressed. Regardless of the exhaustion, she clearly explained how it does not change her positive attitude regarding inclusion.

Causes and Origins of Described Emotions. The causes and origins of Rawan’s exhaustion feels regarding inclusion is due to *uncertainty* and *ambiguity* about certain types of disabilities. She explained how it can be confusing at times to identify students with disabilities. She said, “Something that is difficult though is when you don’t know if the child has a disability or it is just part of their personality or character.” Sometimes children in the classroom might be disabled but not diagnosed. This makes it harder for the teacher to cope with them since she is uncertain if there is a disability or not. Sometimes students might go off-task during a lesson. She added that she would be unsure if it is related to a learning disability or if it is simply about confusion or boredom. When students are not focused anymore, it makes the teacher have to stop to grab their attention all over again. Another example she gave regarding stress was extreme

behavior issues. She said, “The most stressful disabilities in my opinion are the ones having to do with extreme behavior issues.” According to the Rawan, dealing with behavior on its own is a hectic task. Rawan already has many other responsibilities in the classroom to deal with.

However, she said, “The reason why I have hope is because of my son who has Autism.” Her son with a disability gives her hope that he will benefit and grow. She tries her best to include everyone regardless of their disability because she knows how it feels not to be included in a classroom or activity because of a certain disability. She added, “I learned how to be patient and try out several methods that might benefit children with disabilities.” In other words, her son has been the source of her patience in differentiating her inclusive strategies. She explained how her personal life affected her career on a great level.

Rawan gave examples of how her professional experience helped her feel more patient and hopeful with students with disabilities. She said, “I once had a student with Autism who felt engaged in a group activity.” She explained how knowing his character, he wasn’t like that at the beginning of the year. His parents were very pleased with the improvements he had made. According to Rawan, her positive attitude, patience, hope, inclusive strategies, and activities were a success.

Behavioral Attitudinal Component

Inclusive Instructional Approaches/Strategies. Rawan described and explained the instructional approach and strategies that she adopts within her inclusive teaching. She mainly highlighted using the *evidence-based instructional approach*. She has been teaching the Primary Years Programme (PYP) for more than 7 years. The PYP is an Inquiry Based learning approach. This program requires a variety of teaching strategies that best help meet students’ learning needs. She said, “I use inquiry-based learning that benefits all my students.” Through inquiry-based teaching, she said, “I focus mainly on differentiation and group work.” She explained how

she uses differentiation even through inquiry. She said, “I use different strategies and approaches that suit different learning needs.” She understands that children learn differently. Therefore, she gave examples of how she differentiates in her instructional strategies. She explained how some students learn best through recording audios; others learn best through drawing, writing, or simply orally explaining or expressing their thinking. Sometimes she would even help write for some disability cases depending on the objective of the task. Rawan also added the importance of group work as one of her instructional strategies. She explained, “I look more at behavior and abilities when I construct groups.” Some students are very open-minded when working in groups. These students work well with disabled students. Sometimes groups would be homogeneous; at other times, group formulation would be the contrary. Rawan formulates the group according to learning abilities and competencies. She believes all students regardless of their abilities, benefit from diversity when collaborating with their group.

Description of Inclusive Assessment Approaches/Strategies. When asked about the inclusive assessment approaches and strategies that she uses, she mainly emphasized using *diagnostic assessments* and *content-based assessments*. Assessments are not always to be applied at the end of lessons. Assessing students before teaching a lesson or objective are equally important as assessing students after learning. First, Rawan described the importance of diagnostic assessments. She explained the significance of knowing where each student is at with respect to his or her academic level. She clearly stated, “I always start with diagnostic assessments.” Such assessments help her know the students’ prior-knowledge. This assessment approach allows her to choose the appropriate teaching approaches and strategies accordingly. Rawan discussed a second type of assessment approach –content-based assessments. She explained how she uses both formative and summative assessments. She said, “The assessment approach itself is different for students with disabilities whether for formative or summative

assessments.” Rawan uses formative and summative assessments with all her students regardless of their abilities. However, she is aware of the need to accommodate or modify the assessments for certain students. Therefore, the method of assessing the students is not the same. She uses differentiation depending on the student’s IEP. She explained, “I use the same objectives but differentiate in the way I assess the students with disabilities.” The IEP highlights what the student needs whether it be accommodations or modifications in the assessment methodology.

Description of Inclusive Management Approaches/Strategies. Rawan seemed comfortable in her management approaches. Her years of experience with the early years age group has enriched her knowledge in adopting a successful approach and strategies. She conversed two different approaches that she has found to be successful. She mentioned *positive reinforcement* and *Board Certified Behavior Analysis (BCBA)*. First, she described how she understands early years children very well. Such an age group work well with positive reinforcement. She described different examples of what her students like and what motivates them to work according to instruction and abide to rules. She strictly emphasized the significance of student interest. She said, “I try to know what interests them and I work accordingly.” She knows that she needs to consider their interests when planning for a reward system. She would use their interests as positive reinforcements when her students follow classroom rules. Furthermore, she added, “I get to know what my students like and I customize the rewards accordingly.” She said that some students like to have extra break time while others prefer quiet time to read a book. Students with disabilities have IEPs that also emphasize their interests and motivations. Rawan uses their IEPs as support when planning personalized positive reinforcements. Another approach that the teacher has recently started using is BCBA. This approach was provided by the school she teaches at as support. Rawan explained how the school provided all the early years teachers with a workshop related to BCBA. This workshop allowed

teachers to become knowledgeable in how to deal with difficult or severe behavior. She said, “The school provided the early years teachers with ABA training that was of great support.” She described how according to her, that workshop was widely beneficial on both a personal level and a professional level. She learned how to better deal with management whether with her own son or with a whole classroom with disability included.

Criteria for Adopting Approaches/Strategies and Resources. When asked about the criteria that she abides to when selecting her approaches and strategies, she did not seem to have abundant if not sufficient interpretation of a variety of criteria she can make use of. Rawan explained how she frequently uses *references*. She refers to her coordinators and the school’s special educator for support and back up when needed. She emphasized how she mostly refers to the school’s special educator when selecting approaches and strategies specifically designed for students with disabilities. She said, “The school’s special educator gets involved in my weekly plan.” The weekly plan is a crucial element in the process of planning for a successful lesson. Rawan is well aware that she needs to differentiate her instructional strategies for some of the students in the classroom who are in need of this support. She added to say that the special educator supports her by, “adding, modifying, and accommodating the resources and strategies for some of the students with disabilities.” The special educator is supportive in helping teachers select the best resources for differentiation. She has become knowledgeable and capable of adopting approaches, strategies, and resources on her own. However, she feels more comfortable with the support she is receiving. She feels more on track in what she is selecting or adopting as approaches, strategies, and resources –specifically for students with disabilities.

Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

Academic Support

Suggestions and Justifications for Pre-Service Teacher Preparation. Rawan had good input for suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation. She mostly focused on specific courses –*special education courses* and the *practicum course*. As an early childhood education (ECE) pre-service teacher who graduated about 15 years ago, she claimed not to have had any special education courses. She strictly stated that special education shouldn't be restricted to only students enrolled in that domain. ECE pre-service teachers should also be receiving at least a certain level of knowledge or background information to be familiarized with concepts such as inclusion and disabilities. Rawan said, "I did not receive any special education related courses. I believe this is a must for all ECE teachers to know about." She added by explaining how learning about special education would benefit teachers who are not teaching inclusive classrooms as well. Inclusive education benefits all and not just children with disabilities. Therefore, teachers should be prepared for such classrooms even if they don't have any disability in the classrooms. Another suggestion she made was the significance of the practicum course. Whether teachers have or haven't had any special education courses in University, they need to observe and implement what they have learned about inclusion, disabilities, and diversity. Theories on their own do not prepare teachers for real inclusive classrooms. Rawan said, "Practicum hours in inclusive classrooms would benefit teachers on a very deep level." The practical part of what pre-service teachers have learned is as equally important as what they have learned in the courses they have enrolled in.

Professional Support

Suggestions for in-service teacher training. When Rawan was asked to share some of her suggestions for in-service teacher training, she mainly focused on what she thinks works and

what doesn't work as support that is already being done. She explicitly mentioned how she believed an *expert's feedback* would actually provide her with support. She would feel comfortable for a professional to actually inform her what she is doing right and wrong in her classes. Based on the expert's regular classroom observation, she believes it would help her stay on track on a regular and continuous basis. She said, "I am against theories without application." In other words, she explained how some school members would 'support' her with theories rather than actually provide her with what she really needs. She suggested that in-service teachers need feedback and reflection continuously. Furthermore, she focused on how many *workshops* and *professional developments* are not being useful for teachers like they are supposed to. She stated, "Anything that we cannot apply in the class is useless." The teacher gave an example of telling her students the rules without showing them how to abide to them. This would be useless because it would be considered theories. Rawan emphasized the need for workshops to be more focused on areas teachers need as support such as, how to best support different disabilities, how to differentiate, and how to apply innovative teaching methods.

Rawan's Attitude and Views: Key Ideas

An outline of the most essential ideas identified in Rawan's attitude and views is presented in the table below:

Table 6

Key Ideas Rawan's Attitude and Views

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities		
Cognitive Component	Affective Component	Behavioral Component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability: Incompetence • Inclusive education: Wide-ranging classroom • Effect of experience on characterization: Personal inquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions regarding inclusive education: Exhaustion • Causes and origins of emotions: Personal and classroom experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive instructional approaches/strategies: Evidence-based instructional approach • Inclusive assessment approaches/strategies: Diagnostic assessments and content-based assessments • Inclusive management approaches/strategies: Positive reinforcement and Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) • Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources: Special educator involvement
Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion		
Academic Support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation: Special education courses and practicum courses
Professional Support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for in-service teacher training: Expert's feedback and workshops/professional developments

Findings of the Participant May

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities

Cognitive Attitudinal Component

Characterization of Disability. May characterized disability in the form of someone being *limited* in performing a certain task. She considered students with disabilities have the need for support in order to complete a given task like any other student without a disability. She said, “Sometimes students with disabilities seem to be limited or restricted in performing like any other student without a disability.” However, May did not emphasize a variety of disabilities. She mainly focused on learning disabilities or difficulties. She referred to such disabilities as limitations in learning skills. She discussed how learning disabilities cause some children difficulty to process certain information, acquire skills, and understand abstract ideas. Interestingly, she did see an advantage of including students with disabilities in the classroom. May said, “This is something good for my classroom because diverse children will bring to the classroom a variety of skills, knowledge, and input.” In other words, she viewed including children with disabilities as a positive act for other students as well. It allows all children with and without disabilities to be exposed to diversity. In other words, they will learn how others are different from them and learn to be appreciative towards others. Since every child is different, they will enrich the class with different skills, knowledge, and input.

Characterization of Inclusive Education. When asked about the ways she views inclusion, May described it in a positive manner. She characterized inclusive education in a way that she considered it a *shared learning opportunity* for everyone in the classroom. She mostly emphasized the idea that inclusion benefits all rather than just students with disabilities. She said, “When students are together in the same classroom they can all benefit from the experience.” She explained how students without disabilities could benefit rather than stay behind because of

the presence of some students who have certain limitations due to their disability. Students who are exposed to inclusion at a young age learn to accept and tolerate others who are different from them. It makes differences less “different”, engages all students, encourages cooperation, builds empathy, and creates high expectations for all students. Therefore, inclusive education provides shared learning opportunities for all students in the inclusive classroom. Furthermore, she claimed that inclusive education facilitates learning for diverse students in the classroom. She pointed out that one of the inclusive education’s aims is to eliminate exclusion. May said, “I want all my students to feel safe and included in the classroom regardless of their differences.” When students feel safe and welcomed in the classroom, it will make their educational experiences much more effective than if they were to be excluded. This shows how much May models a good example of how to be accepting and welcoming in the classroom, rather than rejecting and excluding.

Effect of Beliefs and Values on Characterizations. When explaining the effect of her beliefs and values on the way she characterized disability and inclusion, she mainly focused on two aspects –her *personal beliefs and values*, and the *Lebanese culture’s beliefs and values*. May explained how she strongly believes that every child has the right to learn and receive a proper education experience. She explicitly said, “I believe that all children have the right to education.” In other words no child should be left behind or uneducated for any reason. Education is their right and not an opportunity. It was clear that her assumption about teaching an inclusive classroom with students who have disabilities is positive. She believes that she has an important duty that comes prior to teaching –which is accepting and tolerating all students. May said, “I believe I have an important role in my classroom which is accepting every child.” This clearly shows that her teaching philosophy reflects a positive attitude towards inclusion. Furthermore, May has seen a positive change in the Lebanese culture when it comes to the way it values

disabilities and inclusion. She discussed the positive change that the Lebanese culture and society has experienced in the recent years. She explained, “Our culture has started to accept and tolerate disabilities and inclusive education.” She has realized a general positive change in the people’s attitudes towards inclusive education and disabilities. She added, “When we see or hear of disabled students we are not scared or afraid like we used to before.” May included herself in the way she viewed and understood disabilities before teaching inclusive classrooms. However, she also highlighted how her attitude and perspective changed into a much positive one due to her experience in teaching students with disabilities for the past 4 years.

Effect of Experience on Characterizations. May discussed two opposing views on the effect of her experience on characterizing disabilities and inclusion. She mainly focused on her *limited academic knowledge* and her *empowering professional experience*. Regarding her academic experience, she explicitly stated, “Inclusive education was not something I learned about academically.” This is clearly a disadvantage for her when she first started teaching an inclusive classroom about 4 years ago. She lacked appropriate knowledge and skills in how to implement inclusive education effectively. May added, “I did not learn about students who might have disabilities and how to deal with different cases.” This caused her to face additional stress since she was unprepared for such a task. She was also unprepared to cater to diverse learning needs. However, throughout her professional years of experience, she became more confident in teaching an inclusive classroom. She said, “My coordinators supported me in a ways to provide differentiation in my teaching strategies.” May benefited greatly from her coordinators’ support in empowering her growth and development regarding inclusive education and its proper implementation. She also said, “Throughout my years of teaching students with disabilities, I was able to understand and how disabilities might look like.” May focused greatly on how much her professional experience was much more beneficial than her academic experience. Her

professional experience exposed her to different learning disabilities, which helped her better understand disabilities and inclusive education on a practical level.

Affective Attitudinal Component

Description of Emotions Regarding Inclusion. Other than the fact that May showed a positive attitude towards inclusion, she also has diverse emotions due to her short years of experience in the field. She described how she feels *challenged* when implementing inclusive education in her classroom. She said, “It feels like I am in a competition.” She explained how she felt she had many responsibilities that she had to meet. Such responsibilities are challenging to her because she feels she has to perform her role in the most effective ways. She believes she should give her best to help support her students. She explained how inclusive education isn’t easy as it seems. Having to implement proper inclusive education can be challenging especially for early years teachers when they aren’t properly equipped, trained, and supported. In addition, she also described how she feels short on time. May discussed how inclusive education demands additional time to plan, prepare, cater to, and assess. Inclusive education can be time consuming for teachers since they have to make time, supervise, and report on different abilities and outcomes. She said, “It feels like I am in an exam and I am short on time.” May did not seem to have a negative attitude or opinion regarding inclusive education. However, she highlighted her emotions that origin from challenges she faces. She also added that she feels anxious when she needs to work with different levels in the same classroom. She worries she might not be giving what these students really need.

Causes and Origins of Described Emotions. The reasons behind the causes and origins of May’s described emotions towards inclusion are the fact that she is *unprepared* and lacks *sufficient support*. First, she said, “I always feel the need to know more to become ready and prepared for anything I might face in my classroom.” The feeling of being challenged and

anxious is because she believes she needs to be more knowledgeable regarding special education. According to May, this could have been strengthened academically. She also mentioned the need of more resources that will help her feel less anxious and challenged. Having to look for appropriate resources adds to her previous responsibilities. According to May, searching for appropriate resources is time consuming. Even after 4 years of experience in teaching inclusive classrooms, she still feels unprepared for some tasks on her own. Second, she also focused on what the school can do to help teachers avoid feeling stressed and challenged when implementing inclusive education in the classroom. She claimed that not having a teacher assistant in an early years inclusive classroom of about 20 students can be hectic. She said, "Not having an assistant in an inclusive classroom makes the work hard because all the burden and load are on you alone." May believes that the causes of such emotions can be reduced if teachers receive in class support in the implementation process.

Behavioral Attitudinal Component

Inclusive Instructional Approaches/Strategies. May expects her students to have a positive mindset that will allow them to succeed not only in the near future but on the long term. May said, "I want my students to understand that their knowledge is not limited. I want them to know that their abilities and skills can grow." She is therefore helping her students to be committed and determined. May helps her students by building on their prior knowledge. She encourages her students to think aloud and participate in all activities. She said, "I try to activate my students' prior knowledge and help them by demonstrating what to do." May is aware that she needs to model skills in the most effective ways for her young students to learn. Therefore, she adopts the *evidence-based instructional approach*. Some examples of instructional strategies that she frequently uses are thinking routines and group work. She said, "I like to use the think/pair/share strategy." This strategy is used to allow students to start with the provocation

stage of learning and then inquire further into the lesson. Such thinking routines bring all the students together. Students learn to help one another; they brainstorm, and try to inquire in order to learn. It allows the students to take initiatives in their learning. It also allows them to communicate their thinking with their peers. In addition, she added, “Group work is another strategy that I use in my inclusive classroom.” Students learn to work together, accept different opinion and views, become open-minded, and feel confident in discussing their thinking and perspectives.

Description of Inclusive Assessment Approaches/Strategies. May did not seem to have sufficient knowledge regarding different assessment approaches that she could use with early years students. She mainly focused on *accommodations* and *modifications* of assessments. She discussed how she prepares differentiated assessments to meet different learning needs and academic abilities in the classroom. She said, “I take into consideration that not all students can have the same exact assessment.” She makes sure that some students might need a different version of the original assessment. May uses the original assessment but makes some accommodations or modifications to it. She applies this strategy for both formative and summative assessments. She added, “I try to shorten the assessment, use different colors, and change fonts and the layout for certain students with IEPs.” Depending on the student’s needs that are clearly stated in their IEP, she accommodates or modifies their assessments accordingly. May believes that IEPs of students with disabilities can be very beneficial in the process of planning and preparing differentiated assessments.

Description of Inclusive Management Approaches/Strategies. According to May she still struggles in selecting effective inclusive management approaches and strategies for her classroom. Not all students respond to certain management approaches or strategies the same way as others. At times, some students need a different approach that works with them. She

explained how she doesn't enjoy the fact that some of her students are difficult to grab their attention. Sometimes, some students especially who have a certain disability, lose attention quickly. Therefore, these students tend to go off-task frequently. She said, "When they feel bored or off task it makes it harder for them to follow or to get their attention back again." May finds it time consuming to get those students back on track while paying attention to the rest of the class. Therefore, she found *positive reinforcement* to be effective. May discussed how she found positive reinforcement beneficial for early years. She said, "I refer to positive reinforcement and encouragement." May chooses to stick to what encourages her students to work and put effort. She provides them with motivation, rewards, and constructive feedback. She said, "such motivation helps my students feel appreciated for what they do. Positive reinforcement is important for them to know that their teacher sees the good and effort that they are doing."

Criteria for Adopting Approaches/Strategies and Resources. May considers *available resources, student interests, and student assessments* when selecting criteria for adopting approaches, strategies, and resources. May explained how she made use of what the school resource room had to offer. According to her, the resource room isn't abundant with resources that teachers can use for students with disabilities. She claimed that not enough resources are available. The school resource room should be resourceful and helpful for teachers when they select their resources, approaches, and strategies. She said, "The school resource room has fair resources that are helpful." She stressed on the idea of the need of more varied resources that can be beneficial when selecting for differentiation. Moreover, she said, "I take into consideration what they are interested in." May takes into consideration her students' interests in what and how they like to learn. This means that she integrates what her students will most likely be engaged in to grab their attention throughout the lesson. She uses this strategy to give them a reason or purpose to enjoy learning. In addition, she emphasized the need to refer to the students'

assessments when planning for further lessons and objectives. She can know if her approaches and strategies are effective and beneficial by assessing her students throughout and at the end of every lesson. She said, “When I assess my students’ learning, I learn as well. I learn to reflect on my teaching.” This shows that the teacher is aware of selecting effective approaches and strategies keeping in mind her students as the learners. Depending on how her students perform in the assessments, she is informed of what approaches and strategies were a success or not. This supports her in selecting approaches and strategies for the coming lessons.

Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

Academic Support

Suggestions and justifications for Pre-Service Teacher Preparation. May provided suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation based on what she lacked within her academic experience. She mainly focused on the importance of *inclusive related courses*. She strongly believes that pre-service teachers need courses that explicitly teach skills. She said, “Students who are willing to become teachers need more skill focused courses and not just courses that teach strategies.” She emphasized the importance of learning how to become a skilled teacher. She explained how university courses focus more on lecturing pre-service teachers about different approaches and strategies. She views such courses as theoretical. In other words, courses need to be more focused on the practical areas of what pre-service teachers will really need when they become teachers. In addition, she also suggested the significance of courses that explicitly teach classroom management approaches and strategies. She said, “Classroom management is also an important area that teachers should be well prepared for.” Pre-service teachers should be well prepared to know different ways of managing different behaviors. May also emphasized that teachers should learn how to have positive attitude towards children when dealing with their behavior or any other type of needs. She stressed on the idea that classroom

management should be in line with teachers having a positive attitude. She said, “Disciplining students should be done in a way that teaches them what is right and wrong but at the same time in a loving way.” This shows that she has a positive attitude towards dealing with behaviors. Yet, she really sees the strong need of pre-service teachers learning different classroom management strategies and approaches.

Professional Support

Suggestions for in-service teacher training. The 4 years of teaching experience for May are little. However, they gave the teacher a better vision of what inclusive education is about. Working in the field, the teacher is now in a better position to provide suggestions for in-service teacher trainings. She focused on 3 main suggestions for in-service teacher training. She focused on *teacher assistants*, *effective workshops*, and *parent involvement*. To start with, the May first focused on the need of teachers having an assistant in the classroom. She said, “In order for better and more effective inclusive classrooms, I think an assistant would be of great support.” She suggested that having a classroom assistant is considered great backing by the school. She explained how much responsibilities and work would be less if they were shared by two teachers rather than just one. Teacher assistants are crucial especially when students with disabilities are included in the same classroom.

To add, May also focused on workshops needing to be more effective and beneficial. She has attended several workshops provided by the school within the past four years. However, she described these workshops in the following way, “I feel that the workshops that are provided by schools are more of lectures. I do not find them that beneficial.” She discussed how workshops should be more beneficial, unlike what most schools are doing. She claimed that the workshops she has attended did not help her become a prepared inclusive teacher. Beneficial workshops would support teachers in areas of their weaknesses.

Moreover, May has learned the importance of parent cooperation and involvement. Parents have an important role when it comes to supporting teachers and the school in implementing effective inclusive education. She said, “Parents should also be part of the team in order to effectively implement inclusive education.” She explained how parents could have a positive role by complementing what is being done or worked on with their child in school. Parents can support teachers by following up, responding to teacher’s suggestions, and being part of their child’s learning plan. This is even more important for children who have disabilities and are provided with an IEP.

May’s Attitude and Views: Key Ideas

An outline of the most essential ideas identified in May’s attitude and views is presented in the table below:

Table 7

Key Ideas May’s Attitude and Views

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities		
Cognitive Component	Affective Component	Behavioral Component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability: Limitation • Inclusive education: Shared learning opportunities • Effect of experience on characterization: Limited academic knowledge and Empowering professional experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions regarding inclusive education: Challenging • Causes and origins of emotions: Unprepared and lacks sufficient school support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive instructional approaches/strategies: Evidence-based instructional approach • Inclusive assessment approaches/strategies: Differentiated assessment • Inclusive management approaches/strategies: Positive reinforcement • Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources: Available resources, student interest, and assessment

Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

Academic Support

- Suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation: Inclusive related courses (skills and classroom management)

Professional Support

- Suggestions for in-service teacher training: Teacher assistant, effective workshops, and parent cooperation
-

Findings of the Participant Darin

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities

Cognitive Attitudinal Component

Characterization of Disability. Darin described disability in a way that shows inability to complete or perform a task. She described how disability is something that stops someone from doing something in a sound matter or like anybody else without a disability. She said, “Disability is the inability to do something.” Therefore, she characterized disability as a child being *incompetent*, or not having certain skills to complete a task successfully. She elaborated on the categories of disabilities such as physical, mental, emotional, and learning disabilities. There are different characteristics and features of what disability can look like. Some disabilities are visible while others are invisible. In addition, she explained that she had an important role when teaching a child with a disability. She stated, “These children are in need for support, reassurance, and comfort to complete certain activities or tasks.” According to Darin, students with disabilities might feel regression since they might not be able to do a task like everyone else. More likely, the student might want to stay in their comfort zone. Teachers need to provide support to make the disabled child feel accepted and included in the classroom. She believes that she can help these students even when there are barriers that might limit their activities or performances.

Characterization of Inclusive Education. When asked to describe her characterization of inclusive education, she seemed to be knowledgeable and experienced in the matter. She described inclusive education in terms of *nobody being excluded*, *teacher’s attitude*, and *inclusive school culture*. Darin described that inclusive education aims to remove any sort of any student being excluded or left behind. She discussed the invisible barriers that according to her, most people do not address. She said that inclusive education is, “Keeping nobody out of any

learning task.” This shows that she understands and believes that no child should be left behind, rejected, or excluded from the learning experience.

Moreover, Darin’s attitude was another element she discussed about inclusive education. She emphasized the need to get rid of the invisible barriers before getting rid of the physical barriers. According to Darin, invisible barriers include the way teachers see, understand, and implement inclusion. She said, “We all have our fears in inclusive education no matter how much we are prepared academically and professionally. But as long as we have a positive attitude towards these children then we can get somewhere.” Therefore, she clearly said that having a positive attitude is what will allow effective learning and growth. An invisible barrier that needs to be solved before solving any of the physical barriers is the negative attitude that some teachers have towards including students with disabilities.

In addition, teachers alone cannot implement effective inclusion if the whole school culture isn’t inclusive. Darin characterized her understanding of inclusion in a matter relating to policies, structures and systems. For example, she mentioned how the whole school culture should be inclusive and not just inside the classroom settings. Teachers cannot do it on their own if the whole school does not have the inclusive philosophy to follow and abide to. She clearly stated, “It’s more about the whole school environment that will allow inclusive education to succeed or not.” Therefore, Darin characterized inclusive education in more than one element. She emphasized how each element contributes to the effective implementation of inclusive education.

Effect of Beliefs and Values on Characterizations. When asked about the effect of her beliefs and values on her characterization of disability and inclusive education, she discussed the Lebanese culture and the way she took *initiatives* to enrich her knowledge about disabilities and inclusive education. Darin showed a very positive attitude towards accepting and tolerating

disabilities and inclusive education. However, she discussed how Lebanon still has a long way to become tolerant and accepting enough like other countries. She said, “The Lebanese society has changed a lot when it comes to appreciating and tolerating disabilities but we still have a long way.” She mentioned how Lebanon’s society has recently improved in the way it views and perceives disabilities and inclusive education, but more needs to be done. Throughout her expressions and explanations, she did not seem to be negatively affected by the negative beliefs that are still present in the Lebanese culture. She explained how she refused a certain excluding mentality. Therefore, she took initiatives in educating herself in the field of education. She was specifically interested in learning more about disabilities and inclusive education. Her positive attitude allowed her to deepen her understanding and tolerate students with disabilities. Moreover, she does not see that her beliefs and values match the negative beliefs that are still present in society.

Effect of Experience on Characterizations. Darin explained how her *limited academic knowledge* and *empowering professional experience* both had an effect on her characterization on disability and inclusive education. According to Darin’s academic experience, “Unfortunately, I did not learn sufficient knowledge regarding inclusive education in my courses at university.” Academically speaking, the experience of understanding what inclusion is all about was not enough. Therefore, she was not well prepared academically as a pre-service teacher. She explained the importance of pre-service teachers being appropriately academically prepared. She said, “my insufficient knowledge related to inclusion and disabilities did not allow me to feel comfortable and prepared to lead an inclusive classroom and cater to different needs.” However, she did not only rely on what she learned in university. According to Darin, she took initiatives during her professional period of experience to enrich her knowledge and understanding of inclusive education and disabilities. Workshops were of great support for her.

She claimed, “I attended workshops where I was a participant and at other times I was the facilitator.” She mentioned how she traveled abroad taking the initiative to learn more about inclusive education. She explained how education is rapidly changing and how it is important for teachers to always stay updated with new strategies and approaches. She also added that she had an enriching professional experience in teaching at different inclusive schools. She enriched her knowledge and became more comfortable in teaching other teachers what inclusive education is about. She said, “I have decent knowledge now in what inclusive education is about.” Her 8 teaching years were all about inclusive education. She included numerous disabled children in her classes. That has taught her a lot about inclusive education and how to meet different needs through numerous strategies, activities, and approaches.

Affective Attitudinal Component

Description of Emotions Regarding Inclusion. Darin described diverse emotions towards inclusion. Depending on certain situations, she would feel different. She said, “I have mixed feelings at different times. I sometimes feel *hopeful* and *excited*. At other times I feel *worried*.” She classifies her emotions as hopeful and excited at certain times. She said, “I became excited and hopeful when I started seeing that I am able to deal with both cases in the same classroom. My students helped me with that because they were cooperative.” She feels optimistic when she is able to deal and cater to different learning needs in the same classroom. Young children can be great support when they accept and tolerate each other’s differences. The burdens lessen on the teacher. However, having to include students with disabilities and students without disabilities together in the same classroom is not easy. She mentioned how it pressures her depending on the disability type and degree. She said, “Sometimes it is challenging to cater to different needs all at once especially when the disability is a difficult or severe case.” It is

pressuring her to give most of her time, effort, and attention to a certain student or students within a large classroom.

Causes and Origins of Described Emotions. According to Darin, being *academically unprepared* and facing *stressful on ground experiences* were the main causes and origins of her described emotion towards inclusion. As a pre-service teacher and undergraduate, she was not adequately prepared to lead an inclusive classroom. She became an inclusive teacher immediately after graduating. She did not feel ready and prepared to have disabled students in her classroom right away. She said, “I was not feeling well prepared academically to cater to different needs in the classroom.” She mentioned she had learned general classroom strategies, methodologies, and approaches. However, these were not enough for a fresh graduate to teach and cater to different learning needs in an inclusive classroom. She had not yet dealt with or experienced inclusive education nor disabilities to teach in such a classroom. At the beginning of her career, she felt very worried and scared because she did not know how to deal with disabled students in the classroom. She did not feel ready to approach them at first. She stated that this was due to her poor academic knowledge and experience.

Moreover, what added to her worrying emotions is the fact that she faced stressful experiences with certain students with disabilities. Darin gave an example of a stressful experience that made her feel worried and stressed at a certain period of her teaching experience. She said, “I was once challenged by my disabled student’s behavior during a group visiting the school.” She explained that it was a very important event. She had to deal with his difficult tantrums on her own. This was one of the most stressful experiences she had to deal with during her teaching years. This was stressful for Darin because it was on a day of an event and she had limited knowledge and strategies to deal with the case. The child had severe behavior issues. Such stressful stories made her feel uncomfortable at the beginning of her teaching career.

Behavioral Attitudinal Component

Inclusive Instructional Approaches/Strategies. Darin described and explained how she adopts an *evidence-based instructional approach*. According to Darin's description, she believes that learning should be child-focused by attending to their needs. She explained how learning should be conducted in a way to suit students' different learning needs rather than focus only on a single method of acquiring new knowledge. Darin claimed, "If children don't learn the way we teach, then we should teach the way they learn by catering to their needs." In addition, she explained that the method of teaching is as important as the content that is being taught. She motivates and supports her students in different ways to help them learn through the most effective ways. She motivates and challenges students with a variety of strategies. She added, "We teachers don't only teach content. Teaching is about working with what we already have in the classroom using a variety of ways."

Darin makes use of evidence-based instructional practices and strategies to support all her students in feeling engaged and included in all tasks and activities. She explicitly said, "I do not stick to a single strategy or approach." She added, "I make use of flexible learning resources and other types of targeted strategies that are effective for students' with different learning needs." She gave examples of how she makes use of group work very often because she realized students benefited and were comfortable working with each other. She also added how she makes use of thinking routines during provocations, reflection strategies, and exit slips. Students learn a lot when the teacher is a facilitator and guides them rather than tells them what to learn and how to learn. In addition, Darin provides one on one support and intervention when needed. She understands that every child is different. She starts the school year by setting goals for the students. Through her differentiated teaching strategies, she implements scaffolding instructional

strategies. Darin focused on how she breaks up learning into chunks and provides tools for each chunk.

As a result of her instructional approach and strategies, Darin expects her students to become life-long learners. She aims to prepare her students to keep up with the continuously changing world. Being life-long learners increases the students' self-esteem, improves their memory, nurtures their curious minds, and helps them build new skills. Darin stated, "I expect my students to benefit from my classes in order to become life-long learners."

Description of Inclusive Assessment Approaches/Strategies. Darin had a different view of inclusive assessment approaches and strategies. She mostly described inclusive assessments to be *on-going activities*. She discussed how she prepares for assessments and what made her become familiar in this area. She focused on a variety of inclusive assessment strategies that suit different learning needs. Darin is completely against using single forms of assessments. Interestingly, she described a positive purpose of assessments. She said, "I use assessments to report on my students' progress rather than evaluate them." She explained how she uses both formative and summative assessments. She assesses through picture analysis, prompting questions, games, presentations, projects, and even through note taking on a regular basis. She does not only stick to written assessments. She allows assessments to be done orally as well, where she engages her students in discussions to check for understanding. The assessment type depends on the learning objective that she has set for her students.

Her knowledge in assessment approaches and strategies was enriched due to her experience in teaching PYP. The fact that she became experienced and much more confident in the field she became an IB coordinator. She supports other teachers in planning, conducting, and evaluating assessments. Before becoming a coordinator herself, she learned a lot about the assessment process from the learning support teacher available in school. Darin stated, "I would

prepare the appropriate assessment for disabled students to be done with the support teacher.”

Darin learned to take into consideration different accommodations and modifications such as, additional time, different setting, color coding, font, font size, hand signals, visual aids on walls and on desks, and organization charts.

Description of Inclusive Management Approaches/Strategies. When describing her inclusive management approach and strategies, Darin did not seem to have abundant strategies that may work. She mostly focused on a single approach which was the *positive reinforcement* approach. According to her, generally behavioral charts work with early years students. She uses them with reinforcements when rules of the classroom are being abided to correctly. She rewards her students when they follow the set rules. Darin said, “I like to use a class behavioral chart where the whole class needs to cooperate to get an award later on.” She believes this is a collective strategy that allows her students to learn to work together. It teaches them that classroom management is not only focused on themselves. Students will then get a positive reinforcement as a group, which they usually show to enjoy much more. However, Darin is aware that more than a single strategy is needed depending on the students in the classroom. Sometimes Darin needs to plan individual strategies that are designed specifically for students with disabilities or behavior difficulties. There would be some specific rules and personalized positive reinforcements with respect to their IEPs if available.

Criteria for Adopting Approaches/Strategies and Resources. Darin deeply explained the criteria that should be taken into consideration when adopting certain approaches, strategies, and resources. She mainly focused on *learning objectives*, *diagnostic assessments*, and *interest and competence*, and *collective evaluation*. First, depending on the objectives of the lesson, the teacher tries to include the child with a disability based on their IEP. The IEP helps a lot in selecting approaches and strategies that are effective and suitable for different learning

objectives. She explicitly said, “Sometimes students are not able to understand a certain lesson in a certain way. This is why we teachers should try different ways that suit their learning styles.” She explained how learning objectives are significant to set and work accordingly to meet learning goals. However, she mainly highlighted the importance of the method of approaching and teaching those objectives.

Second, diagnostic assessments are another area that help in selecting approaches, strategies, and resources that suit different learning needs. Darin explicitly said, “For every concept I teach, I have a diagnostic assessment that I conduct.” Conducting diagnostic assessments prior to the lesson helps the teachers know what her students know and do not know. She then chooses her approaches and strategies accordingly.

Third, Darin gave great emphasis to student interest and competence. Interest and competence are two other important areas to take into consideration as criteria for selecting approaches, strategies, and resources. She selects resources depending on the students’ interests and their needs. She makes use of online links, educational videos, activities, and interactive stories that best help the students learn. She said, “In my lessons I try to integrate what my students are interested in so that they enjoy learning.” She also explained that she plans for different levels in the classroom. Not all students have the same skills or competence to build on. She sometimes works one on one with certain students. At other times, she formulates groups based on skills and competence.

Fourth, collective evaluation is what Darin believes makes planning for learning more efficient. She is not the only one who evaluates and plans the approaches and strategies. Evaluation is collective because many are involved including herself, the students, and the whole school team of experts. For example, wrap time is a very important part of the children’s day. Darin said, “At the end of the day, we would discuss and reflect on our day.” Based on what

worked and didn't work, she would evaluate and choose more effective strategies and approaches for next time. Another important area specific for students with disabilities is to follow their IEP. IEPs can help a lot in informing the teacher how students learn best, what motivates them, and their areas of strengths and weaknesses. The whole school team including experts can help in evaluating the selected approaches and strategies based on their knowledge and experience. Darin said, "The whole team would plan together for the lesson bringing our knowledge and ideas all together." According to Darin, collective collaboration supports teachers in selecting the appropriate approaches, strategies, and resources.

Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

Academic Support

Suggestions and justifications for Pre-Service Teacher Preparation. Regarding the suggestions of Darin on pre-service teacher preparation, she mainly focused on inclusive related courses. She explained three main ideas related to academic support including courses related to *character education, practicum, and case studies*. She said, "University courses should be preparing the pre-service teachers in practical ways and not just theories." To begin with, universities should provide character education courses to familiarize the teachers with what they might have to face in reality. She explained, "Pre-service teachers still haven't encountered what they have learned about. Most importantly, they should know different characters they might encounter in the classroom." In other words, Darin meant to say that pre-service teachers should be exposed to different disabilities types, characteristics of disabilities, how to cater to different learning needs, and how to cope with behavioral issues if any.

In addition, an important area that Darin highlighted was the significance of the practicum course. She explicitly said, "Having a thorough exposure in observing inclusive classrooms is what all pre-service teachers need." Attending sufficient hours in inclusive

classrooms with different disabilities is important for pre-service teachers to be exposed to. Familiarizing pre-service teachers with practical experience is what they mostly need during their academic experience. Pre-service teachers will not be adequately prepared if they are only taught theories with the practical experience.

Moreover, Darin highlighted the need of pre-service teachers conducting and working on case studies. Case studies would complement the practicum course. She clearly stated, “Case studies include observing or reading about a disability case, proposing solutions, analyzing what is being done and what should be done, and reflecting.” This would explicitly focus on the practical support for pre-service teachers rather than only theories. It would better prepare pre-service teachers for the real life experience in inclusive classrooms.

Professional Support

Suggestions for in-service teacher training. As an IB coordinator, Darin seemed to be encouraging teacher to take *initiatives* in self-development and growth. She believes that teachers are the ones who should educate and support themselves to become ready in the professional field. All the other support provided by the school would be additional. However, it is up to teachers to enrich their knowledge and experiences by taking initiative in learning and inquiring. They should be motivated enough to take initiatives in wanting to enrich their professional experience. Regarding workshops that are provided by the schools, she said, “Workshops should be very far away from lecturing teachers only about the materialistic approach.” She explained how lecturing teachers about materials and theories is not beneficial at all. Workshops should be more relevant to teachers in providing them with practical strategies. In addition, she explained how she heard many teachers complain in needing an assistant in the classroom. She did not seem to be supportive of the idea. She believes, “a teacher assistant would be helpful but the class teacher will be the one who will need to guide

her. So again, the teacher herself needs to be knowledgeable regardless of the support she receives.” To add, she highlighted the importance of *inspiration* in the field of education. According to her, inspiration will enhance creativity and engagement in teachers. She stated, “Choose people who inspire you in the field.” Teachers can be inspired by experts in the way they think, their teaching philosophy, and how they manage their inclusive classrooms. That way they can learn from their rich knowledge and experiences.

Darin’s Attitude and Views: Key Ideas

An outline of the most essential ideas identified in Darin’s attitude and views is presented in the table below:

Table 8

Key Ideas Darin’s Attitude and Views

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities		
Cognitive Component	Affective Component	Behavioral Component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability: Incompetence • Inclusive education: Nobody excluded and inclusive school culture • Effect of experience on characterization: Limited academic knowledge and empowering professional experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotions regarding inclusive education: Optimism and pressure • Causes and origins of emotions: Academically unprepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive instructional approaches/strategies: Evidence-based instructional approach • Inclusive assessment approaches/strategies: Assessments as on-going activities • Inclusive management approaches/strategies: Positive reinforcement • Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources: Learning objectives,

diagnostic
assessments, interest,
competence, and
collective evaluation

Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

Academic Support

- Suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation: Inclusive related courses (Character education, practicum, and case studies)

Professional Support

- Suggestions for in-service teacher training: Taking initiatives
-

Summary

The findings in this chapter show similarities and differences between the participants' attitudes regarding including children with disabilities, and suggestions for needed support for effective implementation of inclusion. A comparison between the participants and a comparison with the literature is provided in the next chapter.

Chapter IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion regarding the findings of this study. This chapter includes a comparison of the participants' attitudes regarding including children with disabilities and needed support for effective implementation of inclusion. In addition, this chapter includes a comparison of the findings with the literature, concludes with research implications for the study, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Comparisons between Participants

This section is based on comparing the study's findings between the participants. The compared findings are related to the study's research questions as follows (1) Attitudes regarding including children with disabilities, and (2) Needed support for effective implementation of inclusion. The teachers' responses are compared according to the agreements and discrepancies presented between them.

In general, most of the participants' responses were similar to each other, with almost no noticeable contradictions. The teachers' academic and professional backgrounds seemed to have an influence on their attitudes.

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities

Comparisons Related to the Cognitive Attitudinal Component

The areas of comparisons including agreements and discrepancies pertaining to the cognitive attitudinal component regarding including children with disabilities will be discussed based on four elements namely characterization of disability, characterization of inclusive education, effect of beliefs on characterizations, and effect of experience on characterizations.

Characterization of disability was similarly framed by the participants, who described disability as the failure to do something or perform a specific task appropriately. According to

them, students with disabilities are incompetent suffering from limitations or restrictions when it comes to education and learning. The participants emphasized that disability is a broad multi-featured concept and it can be visible or invisible. They claimed that they act as the source of support, reassurance, and comfort for these children. Darin confirmed that students with disabilities need support to get out of their comfort zones and overcome any achievement barriers, while May argued that children with disabilities bring various input (knowledge and skills) to classrooms.

All participants included the ideas of acceptance and integration in their characterizations of inclusive education. Rawan focused on differentiation, and Darin and Maya emphasized the importance of the overall school culture for enhancing inclusive education. Darin elaborated that in a supportive school culture, teachers develop positive attitudes towards inclusion and overcome the inclusion-related invisible barriers associated with the way they see, understand, and implement inclusion. Maya's characterization of inclusive education involved an association between inclusion and teacher support systems. May, on the other hand, regarded inclusion as a shared learning opportunity allowing students to learn tolerance and empathy and providing students with disabilities with a safe learning environment.

Concerning the effect of beliefs and values on their characterizations of disability and inclusive education, the construct of culture appeared in various ways in participants' interpretations. Rawan stressed that cultural values associated with humanity influence her characterization of disability and inclusive education. She argued that only teachers with a humanitarian side can accept and deal with diversity, but attitudes cannot be taught as they develop from innate empathetic and humanitarian views. Maya talked about the influence of cultural and religious values and child development convictions, with emphasis on tolerance as a special religious value. May highlighted the effect of her personal beliefs and values as well as

the general Lebanese culture's beliefs and values; she claimed that she had the value of tolerance as pre-teaching personal value, but also admitted that she experienced a personal inclusion-related belief development in association with the cultural positive changes in the Lebanese culture. Darin contended that she her characterizations of disability and inclusion were developed through taking personal inclusion-related self-education initiatives against non-supportive cultural trend in Lebanon.

The participants' responses to the effect of their experience on their characterizations were mostly comparable. In general, the participants reported to have insufficient or even lacked any source of academic knowledge regarding disabilities and inclusive education, but they revealed more satisfaction with the in-service support they received. Rawan and Darin highlighted their personal initiatives through enrolling in non-formal educational opportunities locally and abroad to keep up with the changes and innovation in inclusive instruction. May appreciated her coordinator's guidance as an empowering professional support. Maya, who had the chance to teach in different schools with diverse cultures, underscored three supportive professional factors from her teaching experience: diversity of teaching strategies, diversity of teaching settings, and collaboration between teachers.

An outline of the most essential common ideas identified by the participants is presented in the table below:

Table 9

A-Priori Category: Cognitive Attitudinal Component

A-priori subcategory	Common key ideas
Characterization of disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incompetence • Disability as broad multi-featured concept
Characterization of inclusive education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance and integration
Effect of Beliefs & Values on Characterizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Beliefs and Values

Effect of experience on characterization

- Poor academic experience
 - More Rewarding professional experience
-

Comparisons Related to the Affective Attitudinal Component

The areas of comparisons including agreements and discrepancies pertaining to the affective attitudinal component regarding including children with disabilities will be discussed based on four elements namely description of emotions regarding inclusion and causes and origins of described emotions.

Challenging and *overwhelming* were common terms used by participants in their descriptions of their inclusion-related emotions. Maya indicated that inclusion is a process that needs to be well planned but the planning for large class size while differentiating assessment is burdensome. May argued that teacher, especially unprepared ones, face appreciable pressures and challenges associated with time management and instructional planning for students with diverse needs. Rawan highlighted the magnitude of exhaustion associated with her concern about wanting all students to benefit from her approaches; however, her experience with her autistic son taught her to be patient, although patience could be stressful quite often. Darine used the terms “hopeful, excited, and worried” simultaneously to describe her emotions, where associated (i) hopeful and excited emotions with successful experiences and (ii) worries with the challenges of teaching students with and without disabilities together especially when the disability cases are severe.

The participants openly discussed the causes or origins of their communicated emotions, and they attributed their concerns to the inadequacy of their academic pre-service preparation. Maya and May regarded the absence of pre-service preparation (knowledge, resources) as a main cause of stress. Darin presumed that emotions of worries originate from lack of academic pre-service preparation and the new challenging professional experiences that she has to deal

with on her own without any background knowledge. Rawan related her most stressful situations to the confusion associated with problematic identification of disability and the way extreme behavioral issues should be dealt with.

An outline of the most essential common ideas identified by the participants is presented in the table below:

Table 10

A-Priori Category: Affective Attitudinal Component

A-priori subcategory	Common key ideas
Description of emotions regarding inclusion	Challenging and overwhelming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence, time & effort needed to plan for students with diverse needs
Causes and emotions of described emotions	Inadequacy of pre-service academic preparation

Comparisons Related to the Behavioral Attitudinal Component

The areas of comparisons including agreements and discrepancies pertaining to the behavioral attitudinal component regarding including children with disabilities will be discussed based on five elements namely description of inclusive instructional approaches/strategies, description of inclusive assessment approaches/strategies, description of inclusive management approaches/strategies, and criteria for adopting/evaluating approaches/strategies and resources.

In their descriptions of inclusive instructional approaches/strategies, all participants mentioned evidence-based instruction associated with diversity and differentiation in relation to students' identified needs. Rawan revealed that based on the PYP curriculum adopted at her school, she uses inquiry-based approaches with differentiation and different grouping scenarios to address students' diverse needs and learning styles. Maya outlined her preferred multistage process of inclusive instruction, which start by direct instruction to collect evidence about

students and proceeds to scaffolding- based facilitation of students' individual and cooperative learning engagement. Darin specified that she teaches in the way students learn while making sure to diversify and differentiate the learning experiences for students; she particularly makes use of visible thinking routines, reflection, and cooperative learning to enhance students' lifelong learning dispositions. May indicated that she tries to build on students' prior knowledge to instill in them (students) a developmental and growth mindset. May seemed very similar to Darine in appreciating and employing visible thinking routines along with cooperative learning to enhance students' learning, open mindedness, and confidence.

In their descriptions of their inclusive assessment approaches/strategies, all participants focused on differentiation and diversity. Darin regarded assessments as on-going activities, and confirmed that – as IB coordinators – she diversifies summative and formative assessments using alternative forms based on the IB/PYP curricular standards. May clarified that, in her classes, differentiated assessment is used with occasional accommodations and modifications within IEP schemes. Maya explained that she resorts to purposive and diverse formative assessment strategies based on students' learning needs with focus on non-traditional qualitative forms involving games, exit slips and reflections. Rawan stated that she uses diagnostic and content-based assessments, while adopting and diversifying formative assessment based on IEP schemes to cater for students' differences and needs.

When describing their inclusive management approaches/strategies, the participants emphasized the importance of positive reinforcement. Darin explicitly stated that she uses positive reinforcement as the main strategy for classroom management within IEP schemes. May admitted that she usually struggles with managing inclusive classrooms, but she experiences some success with positive reinforcement. Like May, Maya acknowledged her difficult with inclusive management, but she has been finding some success by including her students in the

process of setting management plans , since students themselves will be following the rules, getting rewards, and handling consequences. Rawan , who seemed confident and comfortable with inclusive classroom management, reported that she uses rewards as positive reinforcement based on students' interests and motivation within IEP structures. Rawan attributed this competency to the board certified behavioral analysis workshops she has attended.

The participants outlined different criteria for selecting and evaluating their approaches and strategies, but three of them mentioned students' interests as a criterion. Darin's and May's criteria included learning objectives, outcomes of assessments, and students' interests; however, Darin also mentioned collective assessment involving teachers, students, and experts as an essential criterion. Rawan and Maya stated that they the coordinator's judgment is a selection and evaluation criterion for them, but Rawan added that she regards the special educator input as a criterion as well.

An outline of the most essential common ideas identified by the participants is presented in the table below:

Table 11

A-Priori Category: Behavioral Attitudinal Component

A-priori subcategory	Common key ideas
Description of inclusive instructional approaches/strategies	Evidence-based instructional approach/strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversification and differentiation for enhanced benefits ,
Description of inclusive assessment approaches/strategies	Differentiation and diversification
Description of inclusive management approaches/strategies	Positive reinforcement

Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies	Student interest and available resources
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Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

Comparison Related to Academic Support

The areas of comparisons including agreements and discrepancies pertaining to the academic support for effective implementation of inclusion will be discussed based on two elements namely suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation and supportive justifications for the suggestions.

All participants' suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation were mainly focused adding a special education course with a substantial practical component and enriching the practicum syllabi in teacher preparation programs. Darin suggested that an effective pre-service program must involve character education and practicum courses complemented with cases studies, and May added that inclusion – related courses must be practical and focused on skills.

Comparison Related to Professional Support

The areas of comparisons including agreements and discrepancies pertaining to the professional support for effective implementation of inclusion will be discussed based on two elements namely suggestions for in-service teacher training and supportive justifications for the suggestions.

Participants' suggestions focused, in various ways, on focused and effective training. Darin emphasized the idea of taking initiatives taking initiatives in professional learning to achieve self-development and growth. May confirmed that professional support should take place through having assistants to help teachers' with their inclusive responsibilities, enrolling in workshops involving essential practical components, and establishing a complementary role for parents to support the effectiveness of IEP schemes. Maya particularly highlighted the

significance of school team collaboration and focused workshops to address the genuine needs of teachers. Rawan proposed that workshops must be accompanied by opportunities must be provided for teachers to seek experts' feedback and engage in reflective discussions.

An outline of the most essential common ideas identified by the participants is presented in the table below:

Table 12

A-Priori Categories: Academic and Professional Support

A-priori subcategory	Common key ideas
Academic: Suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation	Inclusion-related related courses with practical component Enriched practicum course
Professional: Suggestions for in-service teacher trainings	Focused , practical, and interactive training

Comparisons with the Literature

This section is based on comparing the study's findings with the literature. The compared findings are related to the study's research questions as follows (1) Attitudes regarding including children with disabilities, and (2) Needed support for effective implementation of inclusion. The findings of the study are compared with what is documented in the literature as regards to the agreements and discrepancies presented between them.

Generally, the findings of this study were compatible with the literature in different areas. Participants of this study shared similar responses such as what the literature provided. However, teachers of this study did not show any negative attitude towards including children with disabilities the general classroom. Literature frequently focused on the causes of negative attitudes in teachers. Similar challenges and suggestions for support were shown between the findings and the literature. The main difference was the fact that teachers of this study still had a

positive attitude regardless of the undesired inclusive experiences they've had and the inadequate preparation and trainings they received.

Attitudes Regarding Including Children with Disabilities

In the literature, disability is a multifaceted experience that has been commonly defined in terms of two opposing models, the *medical model* and *social model* (Lakkis et al., 2015; Marouche et al., 2021). Activists advocating the *social model* argue that social structures disable people, and could be changed; those activists successfully shifted the disability – related discourse away from medical treatment to social transformation entailing a progressive understanding of the way disability can shape an individual's identity in a complex society. A significant complement to the *Social Model* is the *Human Rights Model*, which suggests that all humans, including those with disabilities, shall have access to their full human rights-civil, political, social, and economic rights (Nagata, 2008). The findings of this study indicate a higher level of compatibility between participants' views with the medical definitional model of disability. One of the noticeable responses to how all the participants perceived and characterized disability is that it is a form of incompetence. The participants explained how disability is the form of not being able to do something or when something stops the person from performing a specific task appropriately. Teachers explained that disability is a limitation or restriction when it comes to education and learning. In addition, some teachers explained how these children's disabilities might be barriers to their learning. However, the teachers did believe that these children with disabilities should have access to their full human rights such as in the area of education.

The literature has conceptualized inclusive education from various perspectives including a form of education provided for children with disabilities in the regular classroom by the regular classroom teacher (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2004); belief systems (Villa and Thousand, 2005);

“attitudes, values, and beliefs that extend beyond schools to the wider community” (Mentis et al., 2005); evolves with emerging changes in the educational context (UNESCO, 2009); and all children are accepted and taught in the regular classrooms (UNICEF, 2012). Responses of Assaly’s (2014) study revealed that the majority of regular teachers supported the idea of inclusion with identifiable variations in relation to the nature of the disability. The findings of the study show to have a significant level of agreement with the literature. The teachers described inclusive education as including children with disabilities not only in the school or classroom, but also in the activities and learning tasks. Findings revealed that the general education teachers are willing to become knowledgeable and experienced in how to include children with disabilities in the regular classroom. Teachers discussed their beliefs and values that helped in shaping and constructing their positive attitudes towards including students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. Similarly, findings of Haigazian University’s (2021) research project, revealed that classroom teachers believed that an inclusive culture cannot be forced externally and should originate from a solid teacher’s commitment. In addition, teachers on their own cannot implement inclusive education. Inclusive school culture is a necessity for teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms.

According to the literature, as much as inclusive education has become a topic of awareness and an international focus, its implementation is accompanied with challenges. This was strongly confirmed and emphasized by the participants. Bricker (2000) and Odom (2000) construe that early childhood teachers often struggle with their mission because they are neither adequately prepared in solid and cohesive pre-service programs nor sufficiently empowered in effective in-service support systems. Avramidis et al. (2000) reported that overcrowded classrooms, insufficiently prepared materials, insufficient time to plan with learning support team, lack of modified and flexible timetables, inadequate available support from specialists, and

lack of regular in-service training opportunities are also key contributors of failure or achievement of inclusive educational practices. Mitiku (2014) stresses the factor of teachers' attitudes as well as obstacles related to shortage in finding or using educational material and resources and classroom management. Similarly, the study participants explained how they felt challenged and stressed due to insufficient resources and materials, time to plan and prepare, and lack of sufficient and adequate pre-service preparation. They explained how ECE courses did not focus on disabilities and inclusive education. All participants stressed on the idea that had they been better prepared for inclusive education and specifically for disabilities, they would have felt less burden as teachers. The participants suggested needing more focused and practical courses for pre-service teachers to be prepared for the real classroom experiences as in-service teachers.

A number of researchers (e.g. Crawford, 2008) argue that inclusive education is realizable and advantageous for all children apart from the level of disability, while other researchers (e.g. Kalyanpur 1994) assert that different societies have dissimilar beliefs and practices towards children with disabilities. The findings of this study seem to agree with Crawford (2008). The participants highlighted the idea of inclusive education being advantageous and beneficial for all students with and without disabilities. They described inclusive classrooms to be beneficial for all since it includes collective knowledge, encourages acceptance and tolerance, and builds life-long learners. The participants also emphasized the sharing learning opportunity that inclusive education holds. According to them, when inclusive education is implemented appropriately, it can be beneficial for all students with and without disabilities.

Scholars in the literature bring into conversation the importance of addressing teachers' attitudes and the factors affecting these attitudes in inclusion-related research studies (Cansiz, 2018). The importance of teachers' attitudes seem obvious, because teachers' views of

differences in classrooms and their willingness to react positively and effectively to those differences determine the outcomes of inclusive education (EADSNE, 2003). Results of Khalaf's (2021) study indicated that general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were positive regardless of the concerns they had towards increase in responsibilities and more stressful workload. This is what the participants in this study emphasized when responding to questions related to their attitude towards including children with disabilities in the inclusive classroom. The participants' beliefs clearly showed a positive effect on their characterization of disability and inclusive education. The participants did not seem to have negative attitudes towards inclusion. They did highlight and elaborate on their worried emotions since they still feel they still need more support. However, not a participant described inclusion in a negative manner or seemed to be in contradiction of the idea. Teachers showed to be hopeful and excited when sharing positive and exciting inclusive stories from their classrooms.

Research results, in general, reveal that teachers' beliefs and values influence how they implement inclusive education policies in their classrooms (Carrington, 1999) and their attitudes towards inclusion vary in positivity or negativity due to diverse factors that differ between countries, cultures, and educational systems (Angstadt, 2002; Clipa et al., 2020). The participants openly discussed the causes or origins of their communicated emotions, while attributing them to the inadequacy of the support they had in their pre-service preparation programs. The participants admitted that their inclusion –related professional experience developed during the in-service opportunities.

In some studies (e.g. Chhabra et al., 2010; Gyimah et al., 2009), no association was identified between teachers' age and attitudes, whereas in other studies (e.g. Ahmmed et al., 2014; Bornman & Donohue, 2013), younger teachers had a slightly more positive attitude than older teachers did. Khalaf's (2021) study showed that (a) male teachers expressed less positive

attitudes towards inclusive education, (b) teachers with bachelor's degrees had more concerns compared to teachers with master's degrees, (c) there was no relationship between the subscale “attitudes” and experience in teaching students with special needs, and (d) teachers with no or less than 40 hours of training expressed more inclusion – related concerns and less positive attitudes than those with a high level of training. However, the participants of this research study, regardless of their age, did not show any link between the younger their age the more positive their attitude is. All participants, the young and older showed to have a good attitude towards disabilities and inclusion, but only needed the proper support for it. In addition, the findings of this study did not show a link between the number of training hours and the degree of the teachers’ attitudes. According to the literature, only a shared responsibility and collaboration between all the school team will support inclusive education and its effective implementation (Kivirand et al., 2011). This was strongly agreed to by the participants of this study. The participants emphasized the idea of school team collaboration during planning, selecting resources and material, and assessing.

Concerning the effect of resources on attitudes, lack of resources has been an issue noticeably emphasized in a number of studies (e.g. Goodman & Burton, 2010; Gunnþórsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014). However, Saloviita (2020) believes that teachers’ may not be necessarily accurate, especially that is no measure that can be effectively used to assess the assumed shortage of resources. Teacher's claim, Saloviita suggests, can be an excuse for avoiding any engagement in inclusive practices. The findings of this study reflect the need for more resources and material when it comes to planning for differentiation. The teachers highlighted the fact that they are always short on time. Selecting suitable resources and material can be time consuming especially when the resources are limited or not rich.

Al-Attayah (2012) argues that, despite all efforts exerted to enhance inclusive education in many Arab countries, many teachers remain truly concerned about the concept of inclusion and therefore do not fully support it. This researcher notices that teachers still prefer segregated learning environments (general education classrooms versus special education centers) to inclusive ones; however, teachers tend to favor segregation when they feel unconfident or not ready to successfully include children with disabilities in their general education classrooms. However, this was not the case according to the findings of this study. The participants elaborated on their belief that children with disabilities had the right to be included in the general classroom just like other children without any disabilities. The teachers did discuss their moments where they felt lack of confidence and readiness to implement inclusion. However, this did not seem to interfere with their beliefs and positive attitude about including children with disabilities.

Needed Support for Effective Implementation of Inclusion

According to the literature, there seems to be various learning barriers for children with disabilities in relation to poor teacher training and preparation. Bricker (2000) and Odom (2000) construe that early childhood teachers often struggle with their mission because they are neither adequately prepared in solid and cohesive pre-service programs nor sufficiently empowered in effective in-service support systems. This was noticeable in the study's findings. The participants focused their suggestions on the need of properly informing and preparing pre-service general education teachers for inclusive education. Universities have a crucial role in preparing teachers for inclusion. However, according to the literature, there is rarely a general policy that universities abide to that ensures effective teacher preparation. Proper teacher education includes providing teachers with general background knowledge related to inclusive education, balancing traditional and inclusive approaches, providing authentic inclusive experiences, teaching key

competencies, familiarizing teachers with possible issues and challenges, and linking research to teaching (Forlin, 2018). Participants of this study suggested more focused and intensive courses related to special education, inclusion, disabilities, teacher skills, and classroom management. In other words, courses need to be more focused on the practical areas of what teachers will really need when they become teachers rather than only theories related to approaches in education. This is compatible with Forlin's (2018) statement stating that in most teacher training programs, teacher training mostly focus on theory and research rather than translating them into practice. In trainings, little is focused on the connection between course and field work.

Amr (2011) states that few universities offer any training on inclusive education, special education, or disabilities. Therefore, teachers will lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively implement inclusive education in their professional careers as teachers. This was a suggestion by most of the participants in this study, who suggested more focused ECE courses relating to understanding what disabilities, inclusive education and its effective implementation strategies, classroom management skills, and teacher skills.

In Wehbi's (2019) study, entitled *Barriers to Education for People with Disabilities in Bekaa, Lebanon*, the lack of openness to inclusion and a lack of adequate qualifications of teachers was emphasized. Similarly, in this study, the participants have an ECE degree from reputable universities. However, they lack the proper preparation for inclusive teaching. The participants suggested the importance of all pre-service teachers to be informed and exposed to disabilities and inclusive education regardless of the fact they are not majoring in Special Education. General ECE teachers should be well prepared to include different learning needs in the same classroom. For this reason, the suggestion of sufficient practicum hours by the participants is essential. The participants stressed on the practicum hours that pre-service teachers are required to complete for the practicum course. Therefore, having a thorough

exposure in observing inclusive classrooms is what all pre-service teachers need. Teachers also highlighted the importance of case studies since they believe that such case studies complement observing classes for the practicum course. This would help focus on practical support for pre-service teachers rather than only theories.

Carrington (1999) summarized certain environmental factors that influence inclusive education practices like quality of support provided by staff and agencies, relationship between the special education professionals and general education teachers, the administrators' attitudes toward inclusive education, and teachers' level of confidence in selecting and applying appropriate teaching methods. According to Ghandour's (2017) study, the results showed that a positive attitude towards inclusion is evident in the school's mission and vision statements and acquired by administration, teachers, students, and parents. Participants' of this study did elaborate on the significance of the school team collaboration. They explained how advantageous it is when professionals in the field work together to support each other and the students as well. The participants also elaborated on how it would be supportive in boosting their confidence when selecting and applying appropriate teaching methods and approaches. According to the literature, Avramidis et al. (2000) report that overcrowded classrooms, insufficiently prepared materials, insufficient time to plan with learning support team, lack of modified and flexible timetables, inadequate available support from specialists, and lack of regular in-service training opportunities are also key contributors of failure or achievement of inclusive educational practices. Participants in this study reported similar suggestions as support needed to implement effective inclusive education such as school team collaboration, workshops and professional developments, constructive feedback, teacher assistants, parents' cooperation, and personal initiatives.

In developing countries, where sufficient resources like time, skills, and training may not be available, teachers show the most negative attitudes (El-Ashry, 2009). Those teachers are often overwhelmed by the additional preparations necessitated by the admission of a child with disabilities into the general education classroom (Wang, 2009), especially that they feel unprepared, unsupported, and insecure to be able to meet expectations in providing high quality experiences for these children (Villines, 2011). The participants in this study did not show a negative attitude knowing that they did highlight and elaborate on needed support in areas such as being well prepared, supported, and secure to be able to meet expectations in providing high quality experiences for these children.

Concluding Remarks

In relation to the comparisons in the previous sections, the following concluding remarks about the study's outcome may be distilled:

- The participants, irrespective of their profiles and backgrounds, showed an overall positive attitude towards inclusion, despite their communicated concerns in association with the affective attitudinal component. The participants' profiles and backgrounds did not seem to have any identifiable significant distinctive relationship with the emergence of attitudes.
- The participants' interpretative stance was not as deep as expected in line with the corresponding interpretive interview questions. Effects of beliefs and values on characterizations, causes and origins of emotions, as well as the use of criteria in selecting inclusive methods were mainly described rather than explicated in terms of conceptual arguments and reasonable mechanisms. This introduces some doubt and ambiguity pertaining to the cognitive attitudinal component.

- The participants acknowledged the benefits of the in-service support programs in terms of supporting the behavioral component of their attitudes.
- There is a need for pre-service program that is focused and enriched with a substantial practical component. The pre-service program seems to provide a much needed support that seems to have a substantial effect especially on the affective behavioral component.
- Arguably, the outcomes of this study show that Experiential Learning frameworks – in pre-service and in-service programs – could enhance the quality of teacher preparation and professional development programs. Experiential Learning contexts can also help in the development of strong inclusion- related attitudes with integrated and supportive relationship between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Kolb (1984) suggested an experiential learning theory functioning in four cyclic stages—concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In the first two stages, an experience is grasped, and the second two stages the experience is transformed. Concrete learning is when a learner engages in a new learning experience, while reflective observation is about the learner using the lens of the experience to reflect on the meaning and implications of the experience. Abstract conceptualization transpires as the learner either modifies old ideas or generates new ones based on the engagement in and reflection on the experience. Active experimentation is the stage where the learner transfers the acquired ideas to and applies them in novel contexts and environments Benefits of Kolb’s theory include an opportunity for learners to apply knowledge, promotion of teamwork, reflective thinking, and real world practice (Western Governors University, 2022).

Limitations of the Study

This study was context-bound, where semi-structured interviews were mainly used to collect data from a limited number of participants. However, factors such as school culture and school climate were not adequately addressed in the process of data collection, and this could limit the sought for understanding of participants' views.

Due to time restrictions some trustworthiness elements initially planned for the study were missed. More specifically, member check to elicit feedback from them on their transcripts did not take place. Member check would have been conducive to clarify ambiguities in participants' responses and to get detailed elaborations, and eventually to make more solid interpretations.

In addition, transferability is one of essential trustworthiness criteria of qualitative research. However, in this study this criterion was not possible due to the small sample size.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future investigations on the research topic can consider adopting a mixed method approach that can provide even greater insights on the topic of students with disabilities and inclusive education.

Participants of this study highlighted the significance of parents when researching about teachers' attitudes. The relationship between both stances seem to be significant and interesting for further research. In other words, future research can benefit from exploring the relationship between teachers' attitudes and parent involvement.

It was interestingly highlighted in more than one interview that pre-service and in-service learning experiences should compliment each other. The context, nature, and scope of such

complementarity can be addressed in further studies to assess its feasibility and potentials in terms of advancing inclusive education.

Further studies are certainly needed to address the ways inclusive education can be feasible in struggling societies suffering from social, political, and/or economic instability. Lebanon, in its current situation, is a typical example of a struggling society.

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APPENDIX A

Principal Information Letter



Dear Principal,

I am Aya Jaber, a student at Haigazian University from the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. This is to inform you about a research study that I am carrying out as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Special Education advised by Dr. Nizar El Mehtar. The study is entitled “Inclusion of Early Childhood Students with Disabilities: Attitudes of Teachers in Lebanese Private Schools.”

The study is particularly concerned with Lebanese general education early childhood teachers serving in the private sector. Its aim is focused on exploring their experience-based (a) attitudes towards including early year’s children with disabilities in general education classrooms and (b) views regarding the kind of academic and professional support they need for advancing their instructional inclusive practices. In this study, attitude is characterized in terms of cognitive, behavioral, and affective components associated with beliefs, experiences, as well as environmental and cultural factors.

This study is expected to contribute to the culture –specific body of knowledge pertaining to inclusive education and corresponding teachers’ attitudes in the Lebanese context. Because of its profound analytical and interpretive nature, the study should provide a solid mechanism for understanding teachers’ inclusion-related attitudes and insightful implications setting the stage for other studies associated with wider scopes. The adopted research design is expected to provide significant implications regarding (a) Teachers’ conceptualization of Inclusive Education (b) Teacher pre-service preparation programs and (c) School-Based Support for general education teachers involved in inclusive education

I am writing to request your permission and assistance to conduct the research study at your institution with your early child hood teachers who have (i) at least three years of formal professional experience in teaching early years students with disabilities, (ii) a relevant university degree in Education from a recognized local or international Higher Education institution, (iii) at least one experience in one type of planned and purposeful in-service professional development (e.g. workshops, conferences, school-based training), and (iv) adequate competency in communicating with the English language that will be used for data collection.

To achieve the purpose of the study, teachers, who satisfy the criteria and agree to participate in my study, will be asked to complete a questionnaire (takes no more than 30 minutes to complete) and a 1-hour interview, and I am hoping to administer the data collection in their break periods during their working hours at school.

I would like to confirm, that participation in my study does not entail any potential risks for the school and teachers. All the data collected during the study will be processed solely to address the research purpose and any information that could identify the school and participants will be kept strictly confidential. In addition, participants will have the right to withdraw their consent or discontinue participation at any time for any reason.

This research study has been reviewed and has received clearance from the SBS Ethics Committee at Haigazian University. For any ethical concerns, you may contact the committee at sbs.ethics@haigazian.edu.lb. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information about the study, please contact the student investigator Aya Jaber (phone: 03 088 934; email: ajaber02@students.haigazian.edu.lb), or the thesis supervisor Dr. Nizar El Mehtar (phone: 03813622; email: nizar.mehtar@haigazian.edu.lb)

Yours Sincerely,
Aya Jaber
MA Candidate

APPENDIX B

Participant Information Letter



Dear Ms./Mr.

I am Aya Jaber, a student at Haigazian University from the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. I am currently carrying out a research study titled “Inclusion of Early Childhood Students with Disabilities: Attitudes of Teachers in Lebanese Private Schools” advised by Dr. Nizar El Mehtar.

You are being asked to take part in this study since the study aims to explore the attitudes of early childhood teachers regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities into early childhood general education classrooms. I am reaching out to you after consulting with your school principal who confirmed that you have (i) at least three years of formal professional experience in teaching early years students with disabilities, (ii) a relevant university degree in Education from a recognized local or international Higher Education institution, (iii) at least one experience in one type of planned and purposeful in-service professional development (e.g. workshops, conferences, school-based training), and (iv) adequate competency in communicating with the English language that will be used for data collection.

Kindly read the below information to decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

Purpose of the Research Project

This research study aims to explore Lebanese general education early childhood teachers’ experience-based (a) attitudes towards including early year’s children with disabilities in general education classrooms and (b) views regarding the kind of academic and professional support they need for advancing their instructional inclusive practices.

The study is expected to contribute to the culture –specific body of knowledge pertaining to inclusive education and corresponding teachers’ attitudes in the Lebanese context. Because of its profound analytical and interpretive nature, the study should provide a solid mechanism for understanding teachers’ inclusion-related attitudes and insightful implications setting the stage for other studies associated with wider scopes. Adopted research design is expected to provide significant implications regarding (a) Teachers’ conceptualization of Inclusive Education (b) Teacher pre-service preparation programs and (c) School-Based Support for general education teachers involved in inclusive education.

What will I be asked to do?

If you choose to participate in this research study, you will be asked to (a) complete a questionnaire that will take no more than 20 minutes to complete and (b) participate in 1-hour interview. You will be contacted to schedule convenient appointments, and meeting places will be arranged where you feel safe and comfortable – most probably in your break periods during your working hours at school.

What are my rights?

- Participation in this study is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Your name or any other identifying information will not be asked.
- Data you provide along with data from all participants in the present research will be stored in aggregate in a locked cabinet on the personal computer. The data will be analyzed and reported in aggregate. Only the principle investigators of this study will have access to the compiled data which will be stored for a period of 5 years post data. During this time, you have the right to inspect the data.
- You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time for any reason. Your decision to refuse participation or withdraw will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Discontinuing participation in no way affects your relationship with Haigazian University.
- This research study has been reviewed and has received clearance from the Haigazian University ethics committee. If you have any further concerns about your rights as a research participant, please, do not hesitate to contact Dr. Nizar Mehtar (phone: 03813622; email: Nizar.Mehtar@haigazian.edu.lb) and/or the ethics committee (sbs.ethics@haigazian.edu.lb)

What are the risks and benefits of participation?

- Participation in this study does not involve any physical risk or emotional risk to you beyond the risks of daily life.
- You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research; however your participation does help researchers better investigate attitudes of Lebanese early childhood teachers regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities into early childhood general education classrooms. Therefore, your input adds significant value to the study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, you may contact me Aya Jaber (phone: 03 088 934; email: ajaber02@students.haigazian.edu.lb) or my thesis advisor Dr. Nizar El Mehtar (phone: 03813622; email: nizar.mehtar@haigazian.edu.lb)

Yours sincerely

Aya Jaber (MA Candidate)

APPENDIX C
Participant Consent Form

Inclusion of Early Childhood Students with Disabilities: Attitudes of Teachers in Lebanese Private Schools (Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis)

Please read the following statements and place a check mark in the boxes adjacent to them.

	I have volunteered to participate in this research project conducted for purposes of study. My participation is voluntary and does not involve payment of any kind.
	I know that I can choose to withdraw from participation any time without any penalties or consequences whatsoever. I also hold the right to decline to respond to any question(s) that I may feel uncomfortable with.
	My participation may involve completing a questionnaire that will take no more than 30 minutes to complete and participating in 1-hour interview.
	I have been assured that the researcher will maintain my identity securely confidential.
	I have been assured that the information from this survey will be used for the purpose of academic study only.
	I have received the assurance that this research study has been duly reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Haigazian University.
	I agree that the data gathered be kept in a secure location under the care of the study investigators for a period of a period of 5 years as per the regulations of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at Haigazian University.
	I have read, listened and fully understood the explanation given to me. All my questions have been satisfactorily answered.
	I, therefore, choose to voluntarily participate in this research study.
	I have received a copy of this consent form co-signed by the investigator.

Participant consent

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Investigator

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX D

Teacher Profile Questionnaire (TPQ)

Dear participants,

This questionnaire is meant to collect as much information as possible about you and your academic and professional backgrounds and profiles. The data collected will be ethically used to address the research questions guiding the study. Please respond to all of the questions below **accurately, concisely, and honestly.**

Personal Data

In the following table, you are kindly required to include specific information about you:

Full name	
Gender	
Age	
Contact information [mobile, email]	

Higher Education and Qualifications

In the following table, you are kindly required to include specific information about your university education and academic qualifications.

University Attended	Faculty / Department <i>[e.g. Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences/ Department of Education]</i>	Major & Minor if applicable <i>[e.g. Major Early Childhood Education & Minor: Special Education]</i>	Degree achieved <i>[e.g. BA, BS, License , MA, MS, PhD ...]</i>

Professional Data

Kindly respond to the questions below while making sure to provide specific and accurate information about your professional background.

1. Counting this school year, how many years have you been an early childhood teacher, including part-time teaching?

-
2. Knowing that “early childhood” means the period of childhood up to age eight, what early childhood classes have you taught (count this school year)?

3. What curriculum/curricula (e.g. Lebanese, American, International Baccalaureate, British...) did you use in your teaching (count this school year)?

4. Counting this school year, how many years have you taught one or more inclusive early childhood classrooms, including part-time teaching?

5. On average, what percentage of students with disabilities have you accommodated in your classes?

6. Please list all the types of disabilities you had to cater for during your teaching career?

7. Besides teaching, do you have any other academic responsibilities at the school (s) where you currently work? [If you do, specify the responsibilities e.g. subject coordinator, academic director, curriculum coordinator...]

8. Please include below any additional information, clarifications, or details you deem important or necessary

Professional Development [PD]

Professional Development comprises activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise, and other characteristics as a teacher. Types of PD activities include but are not restricted to: Courses/workshops; Conferences or seminars (where teachers and/or researchers present their research results and discuss educational problems); Observation visits to other schools; Participation in a network of teachers formed specifically for the professional development of teachers; Individual or collaborative research on a topic of interest to you professionally; Mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching as part of a formal school arrangement

1. Have you participated in any PD activities or training in inclusive education?

2. If your answer to question 1 is yes, please include – in the table below – specific and accurate information about your PD experiences pertaining to inclusive education in the past 5 years.

Type of PD activity <i>[Indicate one of the types listed above or any other relevant experience]</i>	Year <i>[e.g. 2018, 2020]</i>	Role <i>[e.g. Presenter, participant, facilitator...]</i>	Duration of engagement <i>[Indicate the total number of hours]</i>	PD provider – Trainer/ organization <i>[Include names and locations]</i>	Which of the following expressions best describes your evaluation of the PD activity: Widely helpful, Partially helpful; Insignificantly helpful

3. For the 'widely helpful' PD experiences, please briefly explain why/how were they helpful?

4. Please include below any additional information, clarifications, or details you deem important or necessary

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol

Introduction

- Thank you for accepting to be part of this research study; your contribution is highly appreciated
- This research study aims to explore your attitudes towards including early year's children with disabilities in general education classrooms as well as your views regarding the kind of academic and professional support early childhood teachers need for advancing their instructional inclusive practices. The study is expected to contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to inclusive education and corresponding teachers' attitudes in the Lebanese context.
- I have prepared a certain number of questions for this interview, and I hope you will respond to those questions as clearly and accurately as possible. There are no right or wrong answers to all the questions, so please share your genuine views. It is assured that no answer will be judged for what it is. I expect you to elaborate, justify, and most importantly give examples and illustrations from your personal academic and professional experiences. I may repeat my questions in different ways and/or ask you to clarify your thoughts based on some follow up questions. I hope this will not cause you any disturbance. In all cases, this interview should not last more 1 hour.
- The interview will be audio-recorded, but I confirm that participation in this study is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Your name or any other identifying information will never be revealed. Data you provide along with data from all participants in the present research will be stored in aggregate in a locked cabinet on the personal computer. The data will be analyzed and reported in aggregate. Only the principle investigators of this study will have access to the compiled data which will be stored for a period of 5 years post data collection. During this time, you have the right to inspect the data. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time for any reason. Your decision to refuse participation or withdraw will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Discontinuing participation in no way affects your relationship with Haigazian University.

Interview Questions

	Main Interview Questions	Possible <i>Going Further</i> Prompts
Introductory Questions	1. What is your teaching philosophy? 2. How do describe your professional experience as an early childhood teacher so far? 3. How do you understand the concept of diversity in education	2a. What reason(s) made you want to become an early year's teacher in the first place? 2b. What do you enjoy most and least about teaching? 3. How did you achieve this understanding? Where did it

	and the significance of this concept?	originate from and how did it develop with time?
<p>Core In-depth Questions; Addressing Research Question 1: <i>What are the Lebanese private schools' early childhood teachers' attitudes regarding including children with disabilities in the general education classrooms?</i></p>	<p>Cognitive Component of Attitude</p> <p>3. What is your definition of the concept of disability and how do you describe its distinctive features?</p> <p>4. What is your characterization of inclusive education?</p> <p>5. In what ways (if any) do your general and education-related beliefs and values influence or frame your characterizations of disability and inclusive education? To clarify, general beliefs and values could be cultural, religious, social, and/or political.</p>	<p>1. In what ways (if any) and to what extent did your personal academic and professional experience influence the development or framing of this characterization?</p> <p>2a. In what ways (if any) and to what extent did your personal academic and professional experiences influence the development or framing of this characterization?</p> <p>2b. Could you please elaborate further on aspects like rationale, fundamental principles, and contemporary educational & curricular models?</p>
	<p>Affective Component of Attitude</p> <p>1. How do you describe your emotions about having to teach students with and without disabilities in the same classroom?</p> <p>2. In your opinion, what are the causes/origins of these emotions and what are their corresponding consequences on you as a person and professional?</p>	<p>1. In some frameworks, emotions are classified as achievement emotions, challenge emotions, loss emotions, and deterrence emotions. Can your emotions be partially or completely classified based on this framework? Would you like to suggest additional classes?</p> <p>2a. Can you specifically relate these emotions to your personal academic and professional experiences?</p> <p>2b. Can you describe and reflect on some pleasant and stressful stories from your inclusive classrooms?</p>
	<p>Behavioral Component of Attitude</p> <p>1. What typical instructional approaches (strategies, activities, and/or assignments) do you use in your inclusive classroom and how do you apply/customize</p>	<p>1/2/3</p> <p>a. Based on what criteria do you select your approaches/strategies? What resources do you use for the best selection?</p> <p>b. How do you evaluate the success of your approaches/strategies?</p>

	<p>them to serve your lessons' learning outcomes?</p> <p>2. What common assessment strategies do you use in your inclusive classrooms and how do you apply/customize them to serve your lessons' learning outcomes?</p> <p>3. What common classroom management strategies do you use in your inclusive classrooms and how do you apply/customize them to engage your students and maintain discipline?</p>	
<p>Core In-depth Questions; Addressing Research Question 2: <i>What kind of academic and professional support do the teachers believe they need to implement inclusion effectively?</i></p>	<p>1. In your opinion, how can universities prepare students pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education to become more competent in teaching inclusive classrooms?</p> <p>2. In your opinion, what kind of professional support in-service Early Childhood teachers need to handle inclusive classrooms effectively and who should provide this support?</p>	<p>1. You may wish to provide more specific details related to programs, curricula, courses, programs of study...etc.</p> <p>2. You may wish to provide more specific details related to school-based training and/or other professional development opportunities/programs (e.g. launched by MEHE, CERD, local universities)</p>
<p>Closure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't? Please feel free to share any additional thoughts or clarifications you deem relevant and significant 	

Conclusion

- Thank you for participating in my study. This has been a very successful discussion
- Your opinions will be a valuable asset to the study
- I hope you have found the discussion interesting
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be anonymous
- I may contact you again for confirming/validating my understanding of your responses to the interview questions
- My very best wishes

APPENDIX F
Interview Questions Construction

	Main Interview Questions	Possible <i>Going Further</i> Prompts	Function/Participant
Introductory Questions <i>Supportive role</i>	4. What is your teaching philosophy? 5. How do describe your professional experience as an early childhood teacher so far? 6. How do you understand the concept of diversity in education and the significance of this concept?	2a. What reason(s) made you want to become an early year's teacher in the first place? 2b. What do you enjoy most and least about teaching? 3a. How did you achieve this understanding? Where did it originate from and how did it develop with time?	Questions 1&2: <i>Descriptive: Is inclusion or any pertinent idea/aspect (β) mentioned?</i> <i>Interpretative: is there any elaboration that may be regarded an answer to the following prompts:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What makes β significant? i.e. why does it matter and make sense?</i> • <i>How does β relate to me as a person and/or to my academic and professional experiences?</i>
			Question 3: <i>Interpretive: is there any elaboration that may be regarded an answer to the following prompts:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What does diversity mean?</i> • <i>Why makes diversity significant?</i> • <i>What does diversity illustrate or illuminate in human experience?</i> • <i>How does diversity relate to me as a person and/or to my academic and professional experiences?</i>
Core In-depth Questions; Addressing Research Question 1: <i>What are the Lebanese private schools' early childhood teachers' attitudes</i>	Cognitive Component of Attitude 6. What is your definition of the concept of disability and how do you describe its distinctive features? 7. What is your characterization of inclusive education?	1a. In what ways (if any) and to what extent did your personal academic and professional experience influence the development or framing of this characterization? 2a. In what ways (if any) and to what extent did your personal academic and professional experiences influence the development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 1: Descriptive [Definition & features] • Prompt 1a: Interpretative [links to academic and professional experiences]
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 2: Descriptive [Definition & characteristics] • Prompt 2a: Interpretative [links to academic and professional experiences] • Prompt 2b: Descriptive [focus on specific aspects]

<i>regarding including children with disabilities in the general education classrooms?</i>	<p>8. In what ways (if any) do your general and education-related beliefs and values influence or frame your characterizations of disability and inclusive education? To clarify, general beliefs and values could be cultural, religious, social, and/or political.</p>	<p>or framing of this characterization?</p> <p>2b. Could you please elaborate further on aspects like rationale, fundamental principles, and contemporary educational & curricular models?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 3: Interpretive [links to beliefs and values]
	<p>Affective Component of Attitude</p> <p>3. How do you describe your emotions about having to teach students with and without disabilities in the same classroom?</p> <p>4. In your opinion, what are the causes/origins of these emotions and what are their corresponding consequences on you as a person and professional?</p>	<p>1a. In some frameworks, emotions are classified as achievement emotions, challenge emotions, loss emotions, and deterrence emotions. Can your emotions be partially or completely classified based on this framework? Would you like to suggest additional classes?</p> <p>2a. Can you specifically relate these emotions to your personal academic and professional experiences?</p> <p>2b. Can you describe and reflect on some pleasant and stressful stories from your inclusive classrooms?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 1: Descriptive • Prompt 1a: Interpretive [Making sense of emotions through classification] <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 2/Prompt 2a, 2b: Interpretive [Causes/origins of emotions, links to academic & professional experiences, reflections on specific occurrences]

	<p>Behavioral Component of Attitude</p> <p>4. What typical instructional approaches (strategies, activities, and/or assignments) do you use in your inclusive classroom and how do you apply/customize them to serve your lessons' learning outcomes?</p> <p>5. What common assessment strategies do you use in your inclusive classrooms and how do you apply/customize them to serve your lessons' learning outcomes?</p> <p>6. What common classroom management strategies do you use in your inclusive classrooms and how do you apply/customize them to engage your students and maintain discipline?</p>	<p>1/2/3</p> <p>a. Based on what criteria do you select your approaches/strategies? What resources do you use for the best selection?</p> <p>b. How do you evaluate the success of your approaches/strategies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions 1/2/3: Descriptive [Instructional, assessment & management strategies] • Prompts 1/2/3 a, b: Interpretive [Selection & evaluation based on criteria]
<p>Core In-depth Questions; Addressing Research Question 2: <i>What kind of academic and professional support do the teachers believe they need to implement inclusion effectively?</i></p>	<p>3. In your opinion, how can universities prepare students pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education to become more competent in teaching inclusive classrooms?</p> <p>4. In your opinion, what kind of professional support in-service Early Childhood teachers need to handle inclusive classrooms</p>	<p>1a. You may wish to provide more specific details related to programs, curricula, courses, programs of study...etc.</p> <p>2a. You may wish to provide more specific details related to school-based training and/or other professional development opportunities/programs (e.g. launched by MEHE, CERD, local universities)</p>	<p>Question1/Prompt 1a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive [Providing descriptive details] • Possible Interpretive [Providing reasoning, justifications, significance, links to sources or experiences] <hr/> <p>Question2/Prompt 2a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descriptive [Providing descriptive details] • Possible Interpretive [Providing reasoning, justifications, significance, links to sources or experiences]

	effectively and who should provide this support?		
Closure <i>Supportive role</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything that we should have talked about but didn't? Please feel free to share any additional thoughts or clarifications you deem relevant and significant 		Could be descriptive or interpretative depending on participant's contribution.

Appendix G
Analytical Scheme Sample

Interview questions	A-priori Categories	A-priori Subcategories	Codes	Representative Quotes
Introductory	Teaching philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptualization of learning • Conceptualization of teaching • Goals for students • Implementation of the philosophy • Professional growth plan Reference: Chism, 1998	CL: Child driven teaching CT: Pedagogical resourcefulness GS: Life-long learners IP: Scaffolding	CL: “If children don’t learn the way we teach, then we should teach the way they learn by catering to their needs.” CT: “We teachers don’t only teach content. Teaching is about working with what we already have in the classroom using a variety of ways.” GS: “I expect my students to benefit from my classes in order to become life-long learners.” IP: “I check where my students are at and I set goals for them and try to elevate them.”
	Description of Professional Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons for becoming EC teacher • Enjoyed Experiences • Non-enjoyed experiences 	RBECT: Age attributes EE: Use of engaging strategies NEE: Planning for diverse needs	RBECT: “This age group is spontaneous. They are inquirers.” EE: “I love using activities, story-telling, games, and songs to teach them a certain lesson.” NEE: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “It is challenging at times having to cater to different needs in the same classroom.” 2. “It’s not easy setting the foundations. We are working with very young children who can’t really express easily.” 3. “We have to be tolerant. We can’t lower our expectations but we have to plan repeatedly and make

				adjustments to make sure that we are meeting goals.”
	Conceptualization of diversity in education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of diversity • Significance of diversity 	UD: Categories of diversity SD: 1. Diversity as real life model 2. Diversity as inspirational 3. Inclusion for collective knowledge	UD: “Children come from different families; they have different abilities, behavior, and appearance.” SD: 1.1 “Diversity is a very natural and normal component in education.” 1.2 “Students in the classroom are being prepared for the real world.” 2.1 “Diversity is inspiring.” 2.2 “Young children need to be exposed to differences that make everyone interesting in their own way, and learn to appreciate them.” 3. “Peers learn from each other naturally. They might not do it on our watch.”
Core In-depth [RQ 1]	Cognitive attitudinal component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterization of disability • Characterization of inclusive education • Effect of beliefs on characterizations • Effect of experience on characterizations 	CD: Incompetence CIE: 1. Nobody is excluded 2. Teacher’s attitude 3. Inclusive school culture EBC: Positive attitude EEC: 1. Limited academic knowledge 2. Empowering professional experience	CD: 1.1 “Disability is the inability to do something.” 1.2: “These children are in need for support, reassurance, and comfort to complete certain activities or tasks.” CIE: 1. “Keeping nobody out of any learning task.” 2. “We all have our fears in inclusive education no matter how much we are prepared academically and professionally. But as long as we have a positive attitude towards these children then we can get somewhere.” 3. “It’s more about the whole school environment that will

				<p>allow inclusive education to succeed or not.”</p> <p>EBC: “The Lebanese society has changed a lot when it comes to appreciating and tolerating disabilities but we still have a long way.”</p> <p>EEC:</p> <p>1. “I did not learn sufficient knowledge regarding inclusive education unfortunately in my courses at university.”</p> <p>2.1 “I attended workshops were I was a participant and at other times I was the facilitator.”</p> <p>2.2 “I have decent knowledge now in what inclusive education is about.”</p>
Affective attitudinal component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of emotions regarding inclusion • Classification of described emotions • Causes and origins of described emotions • Effect of experiences on emotion development 	<p>DERI: Diverse emotions</p> <p>CDE:</p> <p>1. Optimism</p> <p>2. Pressure</p> <p>CODE: Stressful experiences</p> <p>EEED: Academically unprepared</p>	<p>DERI: “I have mixed feelings at different times. I sometimes feel hopeful and excited. At other times I feel worried.”</p> <p>CDE:</p> <p>1. “I became excited and hopeful when I started seeing that I am able to deal with both cases in the same classroom. My students helped me with that because they were cooperative.”</p> <p>2. “Sometimes it is challenging to cater to different needs all at once especially when the disability is a difficult or severe case.”</p> <p>CODE: “I was once challenged by my disabled student’s behavior during a group visiting the school.”</p>	

				EEED: “I was not feeling well prepared academically to cater to different needs in the classroom.”
	Behavioral attitudinal component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of inclusive instructional approaches/strategies • Description of inclusive assessment approaches/strategies • Description of inclusive management approaches/strategies • Criteria for adopting approaches/strategies and resources • Evaluation of approaches’/strategies’ success. 	<p>DIAS: Evidence-based instructional approach</p> <p>DIAAS: Assessments as on-going activities</p> <p>DIMAS: Positive reinforcement</p> <p>CAASR:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning objectives 2. Diagnostic assessments 3. Interest and competence <p>EASS: Collective evaluation</p>	<p>DIAS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 “I do not stick to a single strategy or approach.” 1.2 “I make use of flexible learning resources and other types of targeted strategies that are effective for students’ with different learning needs.” <p>DIAAS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 “I use assessments to report on my students’ progress rather than evaluate them.” 1.2 “I would prepare the appropriate assessment for disabled students to be done with the support teacher.” <p>DIMAS: “I like to use a class behavioral chart where the whole class needs to cooperate to get an award later on.”</p> <p>CAASR:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Sometimes students are not able to understand a certain lesson in a certain way. This is why we teachers should try different ways that suit their learning styles.” 2. “For every concept I teach, I have a diagnostic assessment that I conduct.” 3. “In my lessons I try to integrate what my students are interested in so that they enjoy learning.”

				<p>EASS:</p> <p>1.1 “At the end of the day, we would discuss and reflect on our day.”</p> <p>1.2 “The whole team would plan together for the lesson bringing our knowledge and ideas all together.”</p>
Core In-depth [RQ 2]	Academic Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for pre-service teacher preparation • Supportive justifications for suggestions 	<p>SPSTP: Inclusive related courses</p> <p>SJS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Character education 2. Practicum course 3. Case studies 	<p>SPSTP: “University courses should be preparing the pre-service teachers in practical ways and not just theories.”</p> <p>SJS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Pre-service teachers still haven’t encountered what they have learned about. Most importantly, they should know different character they might encounter in the classroom.” 2. “Having a thorough exposure in observing inclusive classrooms is what all pre-service teachers need.” 3. “Case studies include observing or reading about a disability case, proposing solutions, analyzing what is being done and what should be done, and reflecting.”
	Professional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for in-service teacher training • Supportive justifications for suggestions 	<p>SISTT: Taking initiatives</p>	<p>SISTT:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 “Workshops should be very far away from lecturing teachers only about the materialistic approach.” 1.2 “Choose people who inspire you in the field.”