The Managerial Aspect of the Special Education Department at the Sunshine School

by

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Abstract

This study was designed to gather information about the practices of the principal at Sunshine School. Sunshine School offers a special education program for students with learning disabilities in addition to its regular program. Two techniques were used to gather information and guarantee the validity and reliability of the results. In order to collect information, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and distributed different questionnaires to teachers and parents of students with learning disabilities at Sunshine School. Interviews were conducted with two principals and 4 teachers at Sunshine School. The analysis of the results exhibited many similarities and few differences with findings of previous research. This study revealed that principal support was important to teachers' satisfaction and commitment to their jobs. Providing the latent with favorable work conditions and adequate resources also affected teaching and learning atmosphere. Leader's beliefs and views toward inclusion were major keys in the acceptance of enrolling special needs students at Sunshine School.
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I would like to dedicate my project to my wonderful parents who always believed in me and were always backing me and boosting my ego to be the person I am now. To my supportive husband and lovely children for their long trustful and faithful support. I hope you are all proud of me.
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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

A student has the right to have special education provided he/she has a physical or mental incapacity. Special education is a "specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability" (Turnbul, Turnbull, Shank, Smith & Leal, 2002).

In the early sixties, special education meant separate education (Turnbul et al., 2002). Nowadays, special education has evolved to the concept of "all students with disabilities are legally eligible to a free appropriate education suited to their needs and in the least restrictive environment" (Polloway, Patton, & Serna, 2005, p. 5).

Therefore allowing students with disabilities to be educated alongside their non-disabled peers and to the maximum extent possible is called inclusive education (Salend, 2005). Inclusion of students with disabilities in general classroom is being internationally applied. Many countries, including Lebanon, are implementing inclusive practices in their programs (Campbell & Oueini, 2001; Al Shammar & Yawkey, 2007; Al Attiyah & Lazzarus, 2007; Lakiss & Thomas, 2003).

Inclusion is a hard process. It demands effort in order to achieve it. For that reason, experts have identified many factors that can influence the implementation of inclusion. The principal's role and philosophy are key agents in realizing inclusion. Principals whose beliefs are aligned with the innovation philosophy, have a great influence on promoting inclusion and creating a vision that enhance teachers' commitment to achieve inclusive goals (Sindelar, Shearer, Yencal – Hopey & Liebert, 2006).

The school is a “system” where many members work together to create a “culture” (Guzman 1997, p 441). The leader of the school is the major key in forming
the school life style and customs (Sergiovanni, 1991). Leadership is the collaboration of the leader and his staff in every decision making to accomplish the targeted goals (Guzman, 1997). Several studies were conducted on the principal’s role and influence on inclusive schools (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1998; Guzman, 1997; Lasky & Karge, 2006). Barnett and Mondo-Amaya (1998) reported that the principal is an agent of change. Therefore, the leader must possess different competencies such as knowledge in special education, differentiated instruction, assessment, supporting and collaborating with the instructional team.

In a similar study, Lasky and Karge (2006) asserted that the principal must help in providing services and support to ensure that students with learning difficulties will have access to curriculum and to progress in it.

These researchers gave us insight into the effects and practices of the principal of the school and his/her relationship with his/her teachers and their influence on inclusive education in the school.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Inclusive education is receiving more attention internationally. There is a movement toward more inclusive schooling in almost every country, and there are many factors that experts have identified as supportive of the move toward inclusion (Porter, 2001).

With the increasing amount of students with learning disabilities, inclusion must be implemented in most of the Lebanese schools. In order to do so, major changes are expected in the principal’s and teachers’ role and students’ experiences. These changes require a better understanding of the relationship between the principal
and the teachers and its impact on the effectiveness of the inclusion program (Porter, 2001).

All these data attracted the researcher’s attention to choose this topic for research to be further investigated. The aim of this study is to better understand the practices of the principal and their influence on the inclusive school. It investigates the following areas in an inclusive school: the principal’s role and practices and how he/she influences the inclusive program in a school that offers special education.

One school was chosen for this research purposively because it has a program that offers special education and because of the researcher’s personal experience. To assure the school’s confidentiality, the school fictional name is Sunshine School.

1.3 Context of the Study

Learning disabled children in Lebanon have rights to education, set out in domestic laws on disability (No, 220, 1999) and education (No, 686, 1998) (Lakkis & Thomas 2003). The law 220 aims to enable the disabled to fully integrate and participate effectively in society. This law abolishes existing laws restricting the rights of the disabled and enables them to live like other citizens and enjoy the same rights.

In Lebanon most mainstream schools exclude children with disabilities. As a result, most disabled children miss out the opportunity to pursue good level of education and literacy (Lakkis & Thomas, 2003).

In this study, the focus of inclusion is on students with mild learning disabilities or special needs, that is, those pupils who have special learning needs and require additional help for learning.
It is important to note that many studies mix between the two terms special education and inclusion; these two terms overlap in this study. Also many studies combine special needs and students with learning disabilities.

The Sunshine School is a private school located in “Zkak El Blat” in Beirut, Lebanon. It was established in the year 2003 by a board of seven people. Its population is approaching 500 of whom 106 are students in the elementary school, 100 are in the middle school, and 215 are in high school. The school has 71 teachers of whom ten are pre-kindergarten teachers, twenty-six are elementary level teachers, seventeen are middle school level teachers, and twenty-three are high school level teachers. Moreover, there are seven special educators for the elementary level and eight special educators for the high school level. Sixty-three of these teachers occupy a full time job, while eight are engaged in a part time post. Fifty-six are regular teachers and fifteen are special education teachers.

The school has one principal, one academic dean, and one extra-curricular activities’ dean. Then every department has its own director. Sunshine School is divided into four departments that are distributed around the campus: the elementary, middle school, high school, and special education department. Moreover, there is a coordinator for every subject matter. Each coordinator should hold a university degree in either education or the subject matter of which he/she supervises (Bachelor of Arts in English literature, Bachelor of Sciences in Biology...)

The school principal had previous administrative positions. He had been a manager for a school for many consecutive years. He left the administration of the other school because he had a different vision and created, with six other members, a group that were among the first who initiated special education in Lebanon.
The special education department or integration and support department was developed due to the increasing number of students with learning disabilities. This department provides “a broad spectrum of support tailored on the individual’s needs”, and it covers all grades starting from kindergarten up to high school. Most of the kindergarten and elementary students follow push in programs (inclusive education), where supplemental aid is given in their classes, while middle and high school students follow ‘pull out’ programs. The latest are small group classes where students who have some difficulties in a certain subject can be invited in. It offers these students modifications and adaptations to the regular curriculum given to their classmates. The ‘pull-out’ programs take place outside the students’ classes in one-on-one setting or in small groups during some hours of the scholastic day. The pull-out programs include twelve elementary students, twenty-one middle school students, and thirty high school students (philosophy of the special education department at Sunshine School).

1.4 Research Question

One question will be studied in this study:

- What are the practices of the principal to promote an inclusive School?

1.5 Operational Definitions

In this study, inclusive education represents the belief that students with additional needs should be fully integrated into general education classrooms and schools and that their instruction must be based on their abilities rather than their disabilities (Wilson, 1999).

In addition to that Learning difficulties or disabilities mean that students with learning disabilities are those who have problems in the area of literacy such as reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and in the processing or assimilation of
a certain material. These students need accommodations and adaptations that will help them learn better, understand and express like their other peer students without disabilities (Nadjarian, 2007).

Moreover, Leader is the principal who is concerned with initiating changes in the school. He/she must have the ability to build emotional attachment with his/her followers, is charismatic and “visionary” (Snowden, Gordon & Alston, 2007). On the other hand, Leadership is determined by his/her practices, attitudes and beliefs rather than the position he/she is occupying (Snowden et al., 2007).

1.6 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Although the topic of inclusive education is far from being new in other parts of the world, there is currently a gap in the literature on this issue in Lebanon (Webbi, 2006). The researcher had difficulties finding research articles concerning this issue, that's why she found it was important to address relative factors concerning this subject.

Since there are no relative and reliable data or official studies in Lebanon about how to run an inclusive school, this project will examine the practices of the principal for providing a positive culture. School culture influences the catering of services to students with special needs (Taylor, 2005). To understand the concept of a school culture, two issues must be studied: the role of the principal, how he/she views himself/herself in the school, and how well the school meets the needs of the students (Taylor, 2005).

Inclusion is a central issue that must be addressed by all educators and professionals in the education field. This project will offer principals of inclusive schools an insight into their leadership role in providing the appropriate conditions for catering inclusive practices.
The following chapters include a literature review, the research methodology, analysis and discussion of data and a concluding chapter.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Several researchers examined the principal's role and its influence on inclusive education. In this study, the focus is on the following aspects: the theoretical background of inclusive education, the principal's philosophy and role, the inclusive culture, mentoring and working conditions. Diverse research regarding these topics was scrutinized.

2.1 Theoretical Background

In the early sixties, special education meant separate education. Today, this concept has changed because exclusion “violated the students’ rights to equal education opportunity” (Turnbull et al., 2002, p 16).

In the US, twenty five years ago, special education students were placed in "self-contained classes" for most of their school day and were educated "under the assumption that a specialized curriculum was required to meet their unique educational needs" (Hoover & Patton, 2005, p 28).

In 1975, parents, supporters and advocates of children with disabilities pushed the federal laws and state legislations to implement new rules for the whole concept of education (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2005). Education for all handicapped students act was then implemented, nowadays referred to as IDEA or individuals with disabilities education act, which was renewed in 1997 and then in 2004 (IDOL, 2006). IDEA law states that "all students with disabilities are legally eligible to a free appropriate education suited to their needs, and in the least restrictive environment", which in other words is inclusion (Polloway et al., 2005, p 5).
Allowing students with disabilities to be educated alongside their non-disabled classmates and to the maximum extent possible is called inclusive education (Salend, 2005). Rice (2006) said that Inclusion is giving more chances for students with disabilities to stay learn and spend time together with their non-disabled peers. An inclusive school is a place where every student feels he/she is a member of this school including those with disabilities and special needs (Salisbury & McGregor, 2005).

Since 1991, the inclusion issue began expanding beyond special education as such, and became a form of school reform (Villa, Thousand, Meyers & Nevins, 1996). Villa et al. (1996) reported that by fall of 1993, most American States were implementing inclusion at some level.

In 1994, UNESCO organized an international conference about inclusive education in Salamanca, Spain and inclusive education became of international importance. Ninety-two countries and twenty-five international organizations agreed that inclusion is essential to human worthiness and to integrating students with disabilities in mainstream or regular classes along side their non-disabled peers because it is very favorable for them (UNESCO, 1994).

In 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law. The main purpose of this law was to ensure that all children are able to meet high state standards in education (Hoover & Patton, 2005). This law had a vital influence on special education and pushed American States to fund "the development, expansion and improvements of special education programs" (Polloway et al., p. 5). Legislations stated that all public schools must cater special education to meet the needs of students with disabilities and if they weren't able to do so, to invite other agencies to assess and provide adequate services and ensure the necessary education for every child (Polloway et al., 2005).
However, although public schools had to abide by IDEA's conditions, private schools did not have to comply with its requirements. Private schools in the United States are independent of governmental control of curriculum materials, and for that reason, they don't feel obliged to disclose details of their practices to outside agencies (Taylor, 2005).

Thus, IDEA, international organizations, and conferences about special needs increased the understanding and awareness of people towards individuals with disabilities and the accommodation to their different needs in the school, workplace and the whole community (Polloway et al., 2005).

Inclusion might be full or partial. Full time inclusion is different from partial inclusion or mainstreaming. Full time inclusion means that students with disabilities are having the same education along side their non-disabled peers in the general education setting or classroom. Partial inclusion is when students with disabilities spend some time of their school day in the general education classroom and the other time in a separate special education program. Both, full and partial inclusion, are ways to educate students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (Idol, 2006).

It is also important to know that "self-contained classrooms" are also related to special education classes. These contain special needs students who will be "receiving treatment from a specialist, in an environment which is conducive to small specialist-client relationship" (p.34), which helps the student develop a sense of belonging more than when integrated into classrooms with fewer opportunities to meet their needs (Dixon, 2005).

Today, mainstreaming or inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classroom is being widely applied. Australia, the US and many European countries are implementing inclusive practices in their programs (Campbell & Oueini, 2001). In
the Arab Countries, there is also an increasing awareness about special education (Al Shammari & Yawkey, 2007; Al Attiyah & Lazzarus, 2007).

In Lebanon, inclusion efforts began in the eighties after an extensive lobbying by disability non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and by proponents of inclusion. In 1999, the Ministry of Education, with the help of UNESCO, addressed the topic of children with special needs (Webbi, 2006). In May 2000, after the supreme influence of organizations and pro-activist members of inclusion, the Lebanese parliament approved Law 220 which promotes inclusion of people with disabilities to proper education. In reality, this law hasn't been applied by all Lebanese Schools (Lakkis & Thomas, 2003).

Many researchers (Billingsley, 2004; Cruzeiro & Morgan, 2006; Parker & Day, 1997; Rice, 2006) are proponents of inclusive education, but few others disagree on its advantages (Bailey & Du Plessis, 1997; Kauffman, 1995). Bailey and Du Plessis (1997) argued that inclusion can be hurtful and interruptive to non-disabled students. In addition to that, Kauffman (1995) advised that students with multiple and severe disabilities should be placed in segregated rooms.

Therefore, there is a dissension of opinions about the benefits and drawbacks of inclusion in the regular schools (Bailey & Du Plessis, 1997).

2.2 The Principal's philosophy and role

According to Stainback and Stainback (1990), inclusion is a "philosophy and practice" (p. 3). It requires "team work, accountability, creation of a vision, influence and distributed leadership" (Attfield & Williams, 2003, p.30).

Studying the principal role is an important issue influencing the implementation of inclusion: "The acceptance of enrolling disabled students in general classrooms relies entirely on the beliefs and views of its instructional leader"
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(Bailey & Du Plessis, 1995, p. 131). Taylor (2005) concluded that the type of leadership style the school administrator follows, has a great impact on whether learning disabled students are gladly received or not.

Principals whose beliefs are aligned with the innovation philosophy have a great influence on enhancing teachers’ commitment to their jobs (Sindelar et al., 2006). For that reason, Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) and Guzman (1997), reported that the principal is an agent of change and must possess different competencies such as knowledge in differentiated instruction, assessment and evaluation, the know how to support and collaborate with the instructional teams at the school.

Therefore, the process of change takes time and a lot of team collaboration and obliges every member at the school to team up and work to help and educate students with learning disabilities with their non-disabled peers and in the best effective way. Therefore, to ensure this collaboration, the principal has to have the adequate skills to create conditions that promote special education. For that reason, the school administrator must understand the legal special education regulations regarding accommodation and adaptation of programs (Lasky & Karge, 2006).

Taylors’ findings are paralleled with Bass (1985) and Guzman’s (1997) who deduced that principals' opinions and approaches towards special education, influence teachers' behaviours toward students with learning disabilities and help them achieve the required educational goals. Guzman (1997) emphasized the importance of the principal in supporting and guiding his staff to implement inclusion. Sergiovanni (1991) suggested that setting clear beliefs and shared values increases teacher motivation to reach effective teaching and learning.
According to Bass (1985), the leader of the school can change teachers' beliefs towards inclusive schooling by inspiring and empowering them and helping them develop the necessary competence to achieve organizational goals. Moreover, Sergiovanni (1991) found that teachers' motivation and satisfaction are mostly affected by stimulation, appreciation, recognition of their efforts and collaborative decision-making. Research has shown that when faced with inclusion, teachers might feel pressured and un-capable to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in their classes (Ingram, 1997; Dixon, 2005).

Inclusion is a complex process and a demanding process to establish and implement. Therefore, its concept is not always understood by the school administrator and often resisted by teachers. And for that reason, its application is difficult to achieve (Sindelar et al., 2006). McLaughin and Caron (2006) in a study done on collaborative school practices discussed the importance of "shared leadership" (p, 302). For them, shared leadership means team-work and shared decision-making and planning, and applying it "promotes school improvement by tapping the different abilities of the various school community members while encouraging mutual reliance" (McLaughin & Caron, 2006, p. 6).

Thus, principals have major influence on stakeholders. They bring "resources and administrative connections to the table to address needed changes in rules and policies. Principals help approve changes that support more inclusive practices (Salisbury & McGregor, 2005, p 3). According to Yssel, Engelbrecht, Oswald, Eloff and Swart, (2007), parents are the primary stakeholders in the success of inclusive education (p. 357). For that reason, principals have to assemble “productive alliances, or strengthen the relationship with the parents or caregivers of these children" (Davern, 1996, p. 61). Davern (1996) added that "the interplay of these
complementary roles” can greatly affect students’ education and progress (p. 62). Principals should encourage meetings with parents to know more about the child as a whole (Ediger, 2006). Leaders should also stimulate parents' participation in the education of their child (Yssel, et al., 2007).

Moreover, Goor, Schween and Boyer (1997) studied principals' leadership and found that the school administrator’s attitude projects the beliefs and attitudes of an association. Therefore, the leaders' behavior and values towards inclusive education can support the innovation (Sindelar et al., 2006). In addition to that, Ingram (1997) stated that leadership behavior of the principal has a major role in promoting change in the school system. Thus, for inclusive education to happen the whole educational system must change (Taylor, 2005). And for the change to occur, researchers have called for the need of a "transformational leader". Transformational leaders can influence stakeholders to believe in their goals (Sergiovanni, 1991; Taylor, 2005). Therefore, if inclusion is to be, it has to be compatible with the spirit, goals and the vision of the school leader; thus, the whole school system (Porter, 2001).

Little research was done to examine the formal special education training or the practices of school leaders (Lasky & Karge, 2006). One of these studies was done by Davis (1980) who indicated that most of the principals interviewed in that study had never taken a course in special education and had never contributed in the education of students with learning disabilities.

In parallel studies, Praisner (2003) and Taylor (2005) emphasized the importance of the preparation program or training for school leaders to support inclusive practices and to lead the staff in implementing best strategies for educating students with learning disabilities. Praisner (2003) argued that administrators who had been exposed to the education of disabled students were more likely to encourage
inclusive education or learning in the least restrictive environment. In addition to that, Taylor (2005) concluded that the limited knowledge of the principal on special education issues makes the implementation of inclusive education very hard.

Implementing inclusion is a very hard process. Therefore it demands unusual work on behalf of the principal; he/she has a major role in influencing and motivating teachers to include disabled students in their regular classrooms (Ingram, 1997). Sindelar et al. (2006) found that successful adaptation of inclusive practices occurs when they are consistent with teachers' beliefs and when educators receive the adequate training for that.

2.3 Inclusive Culture

An effective school culture is difficult to achieve. Old beliefs and attitudes are difficult to change and develop. Since inclusion is also a complex process, trying to transform a school culture into an inclusive one is not easy (Snowden et al., 2007; Ingram, 1997). Sindelar et al. (2006) mentioned that the concept of inclusion was often resisted and misunderstood by teachers. Therefore, the leader of the school is the major key to explain and help in the application and implementation of inclusion (Salisbury & McGregor, 2005).

The school culture defines behaviors, values and beliefs that all members of an institution share (Snowden et al., 2007). To understand a school culture, two issues must be addressed: how principals view themselves and how well the school meets students' needs. The school's culture must be mentioned in the school mission statement and every member of the school should be involved in the improvement of this mission (Taylor, 2005). Yssel et al (2007) added that parents shall be "integral partners in developing a more inclusive system, where decision making and the responsibility for outcomes are shared" (p, 356).
On the other hand, Billingsley and Litrell (1994) stated that the support of the principal affects the perceptions and views teachers feel about inclusion. They concluded that absence of administrative support is one of the major causes for teachers to leave their jobs. House (1981) suggested that the ideal support to teachers will be by providing them with strategies they can use while teaching students with disabilities, by supplying educators with adequate materials, by giving tutors enough time to accomplish their duties, by showing them appreciation for their practices and considering their ideas. In addition to that, Dworkin, Haney and Dworkin (1990) showed that by providing teachers with feedbacks and including tutors in decision they take, principals would be decreasing feelings of stress and pressure that teachers might encounter while teaching students with learning disabilities. Mastropieri (2001) found that principals who listen to their teachers develop a sense of trust among them and establish open-communication and collaborative atmosphere.

Moreover, Salend (2005) concluded that teachers, who view their work environment positively and have a positive relationship with their principal, are more committed to their jobs. Additionally, Billingsley (2004) suggested that the principal who supports his/her teachers and staff, creates a positive school culture, thus positive work conditions where teachers can teach students in a better atmosphere.

According to Ediger (2006) open-communication, openness, politeness and acceptance are qualities needed to be well communicated by the principal and the teachers. For Ediger (2006), lack of trust among school’s personnel is a major problem. Therefore, administrators and teachers must cooperate and collaborate together and not work in competition.

Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006) proposed that leaders influence teachers' accepting students with special needs in their classes, and to accomplish this task, the
principal should communicate this mission and monitor students' progress. Davern (1996) suggested that "all school members should understand and convey clear messages that they are happy to have the special need kid in their classroom and that they hold high expectations for the child's achievement" (p, 61).

In addition to that, Ediger (2006) said that the school leader must be visible and present on school premises because his/her attendance adds value to the efficiency and credibility of the school.

2.4 Mentoring

Mentoring beginning special educators has a direct impact on these teachers' seeing and believing that their roles and jobs are manageable. Mentoring can increase teachers' satisfaction and self-confidence especially in inclusive practices when newly implemented (Whitaker, 2000). Lee et al. (2006) state that mentoring is the process in which a more skilful person serves as a role model, guides, encourages and counsels a less experienced one.

Mentoring is focusing on the support and needs of beginning teachers by more experienced ones (Billingsley & Singh, 1998). Therefore, supporting novice teachers and giving them adequate feedback and resources are important factors to satisfy teachers and develop in them great commitment to teaching (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff & Harniss, 2001).

Furthermore, Billingsley, Carlson and Klein (2004) suggested that mentoring is a key factor in the improvement of the quality of education students receive. It can take many forms such as working closely with a more experienced teacher, adaptation and orientation, formal and informal feedback and meetings with colleagues. Lee et al. (2006) suggested that mentoring is very important because it helps novice teachers
face difficulties and challenges they might encounter while teaching students with learning disabilities or special needs.

2.5 Working conditions

The cause of teachers quitting their jobs was the result of stress and frustration they faced while teaching students with learning disabilities. Work challenges are manifested mostly among teachers with the least training years in special education (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). They suggested that improving teachers' commitment to their jobs and increasing their job satisfaction requires the promotion of creativity and variety, like giving teachers choices and exposing them to new instructional techniques and encouraging them to use different strategies.

In addition to that, Nelson, Maculan, Roberts and Ohlund (2001) stated that lack of parental involvement, shortage of principal support and excessive paperwork are main sources of teachers' stress and dissatisfaction. Therefore, principal's recognition is a major contributor in the intent of teachers to stay in the field of special education. They reported that special educators are at risk for quitting their jobs because of high frustration and stress levels and that attrition rate affects the quality of education received by students with learning disabilities (Nelson et al., 2001).

If work conditions are not favorable, teachers will be less committed to teaching and gradually will shift to another profession. Therefore, the administrator develops organizational conditions that facilitate their work in the school (Billingsley, 2004). Thus, the leader, who supports his/her teachers reduces a big part of the difficulties they might encounter (Gersten et al., 2001).

Moreover, Singh and Billingsley (1998) found out that administrators who share educational goals and beliefs and encourage professional development succeed
in the creation of an inclusive school. Billingsley (2004) stated that teachers who like the school they are working in, have higher chances to stay in their jobs. He added that condensed responsibilities and lack of support prevents teachers from functioning effectively.

Factors associated to staying in the field of special education include higher salaries, reasonable demands and collegial support. Low salaries, negative school culture, stress, work overload and lack of appreciation are high contributors for school attrition (Billingsley, 2004).

2.6 Conclusion

Since every country has its own characteristics, values and conditions, there is no perfect recipe for the development of a unique inclusive education model to be applied everywhere and anywhere. Porter (2001) notes that most countries are adopting effective, well-described and researched strategies that can be accommodated to each school’s program and leaving behind what is not working effectively with the countries’ local conditions.

Salisbury and McGregor (2005) discussed the major characteristics for applying a good model of inclusive practices. The leader of the school must have a vision, adequate skills, incentives to initiate inclusive practices, proper resources and a clear action plan to be able to implement inclusion. Any variable missing will not promote the success of inclusive practices.
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Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section presents the methodology that was used to address the research question. Research design, sample and sampling methods, instruments and data analysis will be demonstrated.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher has chosen to conduct a case study to know more about the principal’s role in an inclusive school. The case study is the preferred strategy when the researcher wants to retain “meaningful characteristics of real life events”. It involves “the observation of an individual unit, a group, a community or even an entire culture” (Burns, 2000, pp. 459-460). It is a qualitative research in which a specific unit is observed and studied while collecting the maximum amount of data (Burns, 2000; Fraenklpin & Wallen, 2003).

Using multiple sources of evidence is the major strength of the case study approach (Fraenklpin & Wallen, 2003). In order not to become dependent on one respondent’s answers, the case study investigator must use many ways for the evidence of the affirmation or contrasted data (Burns, 2000). Sources of evidence in this study were documents, interviews, and questionnaires.

However, as any other form of research, the case study has also its disadvantages. Its greatest disadvantage is the researcher’s views and opinions which may influence the direction of the findings and the conclusion of the study (Burns, 2000). To avoid this to happen, the researcher must triangulate to ensure the validity and reliability of the information (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007).
Triangulation means using multiple data collection ways to ensure the evidence of this information (Burns, 2000). The researcher must then compare and contrast the findings gathered from the different instruments used and see if they match or contradict previous findings of other research (Fraenklín & Wallen, 2003).

3.3 Sampling

Non-probability sampling means that the researcher can’t specify the probability of including every part of a certain number of inhabitants. This form of sampling is very popular in case studies (Burns, 2000). The usual form of non-probability sampling is called ‘purposive’ which means that a particular specimen has been chosen by the researcher to investigate, for acquiring more understanding and knowledge about the specific sample (Burns, 2000; Fraenklín & Wallen, 2003).

The researcher has chosen the principals and some teachers at Sunshine School because they are the people most involved and knowledgeable about the inclusive practices in that particular school.

3.3.a Sample

The sample for the teachers’ questionnaires included five novices and fifteen veteran, middle and high school teachers of whom four were special educators and sixteen were regular ones at the high school level which is the focus of this study. Eighteen of these participants were female, and two male. Their ages varied between 23 and 48. Most of them hold a Bachelor of Arts in education or in a specific subject (e.g. Bachelor of Sciences in chemistry or Bachelor of Arts in English Literature). Veteran teachers had previous experiences while novice teachers started teaching in Sunshine School directly after their university graduation.
Twenty questionnaires were distributed by the head of special education to teachers. All questionnaires were filled and returned to the researcher by the principal of special education department.

The sample for the parents' questionnaire included ten parents. These parents were chosen by the researcher, with the help of special education department, because their children have learning disabilities. Only five parents responded to the questionnaires, while the other five did not return it.

Two interviews were conducted with the principal and the head of special education department at Sunshine School, and four other interviews were conducted with two regular and two special education teachers that volunteered for the interview when asked by Mrs. R.

Each member was interviewed individually. Principals' interviews were done separately in their offices while teachers' interviews were audio-recorded separately in the office of the principal of special education. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed.

Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were based on the research question and developed from the review of literature of similar case studies.

### 3.4 Instruments

To describe the practices of the principal as a key person in an inclusive school, the researcher has chosen to use three data collection instruments: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and school documents namely the mission statement of the Sunshine School and the philosophy statement of the integration and support department. The many sources of evidence added depths to the research question: the questionnaires and in depth interviews with the principals and teachers provided a broad perspective of the research question (Moor, 2000).
Both interviews and questionnaires concentrated on answering the research question stated earlier: “What are the practices of the principal to promote an inclusive school?”

3.4.a. Questionnaires

Questionnaires are series of questions which come in many forms such as stating the answers in role of importance, multiple choices, and personal opinions (Wengraf, 2001). The item response format of the questionnaires in this study was a Likert Scale containing the following values: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree.

Questionnaires serve the purpose of attaining knowledge about ways of thinking and convictions of the respondents (Schloss & Smith, 1999). They are important because the researcher does not have to be present at the stage of filling out. This preserves the anonymity, efficiency, precision and objectivity of the answering process (Munn & Devec, 1995). However, prejudice for or against and the opinion of the researcher can still enter the making of the items of the questionnaire (Burns, 2000). Items included information about the school’s climate, principal and his attitudes towards teachers, parents and students, work conditions including bonuses, vacation, etc. Parents’ questionnaires included eleven questions, while teachers’ questionnaires included twenty six questions.

The researcher has designed two different forms of questionnaires. The same one was distributed to twenty teachers, whereas a different questionnaire was distributed to ten parents. Parents’ questionnaire included items only to get information about the principal and the services provided at Sunshine School.
3.4.b. Interviews

In this case study the researcher interviewed two principals (the head of special education department and the leader of Sunshine School) and four teachers teaching students with learning disabilities. The Interview with the principal lasted thirty minutes. The interview with the head of special education department lasted twenty-five minutes, while teachers interviews’ length varied between fifteen and twenty minutes each.

Interviews are helpful means for gathering knowledge or facts (Burns, 2000). They provide a vast angle of the research question (Moor, 2000). In case studies, interviews are important, as they inform about people and their actions and behaviors (Burns, 2000; Fraenklin & Wallen, 2003).

For this case study, the researcher has chosen the personal type of interviews which means that interviews were conducted on one to one basis because they give the researcher more knowledge and control of the interview by asking the respondents longer and open-ended questions to make clear a particular issue (Fraenklin & Wallen, 2003; Oppenheim, 2003). Case studies interviews usually use open-ended or semi-structured interviews so that “the respondent will be more of an informant than a respondent” (Burns, 2000, p.467). Respondents give important intuition and understanding to the researcher about a specific concern to be studied (Burns, 2000).

Like any other research method, semi-structured interviews have disadvantages. Walliman (2005) stated one of the chief drawbacks of semi-structured interviews is the time limit that leads to the decrease of the number of participants.

3.4.c Documents

The mission statement of the school and the philosophy statement of integration and support department at Sunshine School were thoroughly read and
studied by the researcher. These documents were submitted to the researcher by the principal of the special education department of the Sunshine School after taking the authorization of her principal. These documents are important because they gave the researcher information about the school philosophy and its practices.

3.4.4 Ethical Issues

All data collection techniques demand some ethical issues (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007). One way of ensuring the ethical value of gathering the data was that the researcher had to explain to her participants that their name would be kept anonymous; therefore, to guarantee their privacy (Oppenheim, 2003).

For interviews the researcher followed and respected the appropriate ethical issues which are: confidentiality, risk assessment, and trustworthiness of the researcher (Campbell & Groundwater-Smith, 2007).

Before starting the study, an oral authorization was granted from the director of Sunshine School and the head of special education department to be able to proceed with it.

3.5 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the best method to be used is “content analysis”, which means: “studying human behavior by analyzing communications, usually through a process of categorization” (Fraenklín & Wallen, 2003, p.506). Content analysis is the most helpful and practical method to use to get knowledge about a certain subject. It is a technique to gather detailed data about a specific concern (Fraenklín & Wallen, 2003; Burns, 2000).

How was content analysis done in this study? After collecting the data of the questionnaires and interviews, the researcher placed the data in different categories and then compared them to the themes of the philosophy statement of special
education and the mission statement of the Sunshine School. Dichotomies and similarities between different sources of evidence were written and analyzed to assure the triangulation process (Burns, 2000). The researcher organized the data by topics. Four categories were created by the researcher. These main sections were composed of: the principal’s philosophy and role, inclusive culture, mentoring, and working conditions. By developing adequate categories, the researcher could compare the information to make easier to understand what she was investigating all about (Fraenklin & Wallen, 2003). Developing several categories that are separated helped the researcher place the information gathered in the category where it fitted so that she could compare and contrast the data with the information presented in the literature review of similar studies.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

One way of establishing reliability and validity in a case study is triangulation (Fraenklin & Wallen, 2003). Triangulation is using multiple data collection methods to guarantee the verification and proof of these facts (Burns, 2000). The researcher used different sources of evidence which are questionnaires, interviews, and school documents. Case studies usually have only internal validity which is evaluated by the triangulation process. External validity is hard to achieve in case studies since generalization is difficult from a single case. The researcher also compared and contrasted her findings to outcomes of previous studies (Burns, 2000).

The following chapter will present the results of the participants’ answers collected from various methods of evidence used by the researcher in her study.
Chapter 4

Findings

Results of the instruments used in this study were organized into 4 categories and then compared to findings presented in the literature review. Categories will be as follows: principal's role, inclusive culture, work conditions and mentoring.

4.1. Principal's Role

A range of variables were included in the questionnaires and interviews to examine principal's role including how far he listened to his students' parents and teachers, how much he supported and provided them with adequate materials.

Findings and analysis of the findings were as such:

The majority of the sample teachers give considerate attention to their needs (70% agreed and 20% strongly agree, whereas 10% disagreed).

The majority of the sample teachers agreed they were included in what goes on the school (65% agreed, and 15% strongly agreed, whereas 20% were undecided).

The majority of the sample teachers also agreed that the principal provides them with adequate materials for special education (65% agreed, and 30% strongly agreed, whereas 5% were undecided).

The greater number of teachers agreed that their principal was a facilitator to their teaching tasks (60% agreed, 10% strongly agreed, and 20% were undecided, whereas 10% disagreed).

The larger number of sample teachers agreed that principal maintains high expectations for the learning disabled kids (65% agreed, and 35% strongly agreed).

When asked about the principal's leadership and to which extent teachers thought it influences special education, 80% participants agreed it did and 20% strongly agreed.
When the researcher asked parents to evaluate their perceptions of principal's support and concern regarding their worries, 80% of parents agreed and 20% strongly disagreed that he did. Moreover, 40% of parents agreed that the school provides them with suggestions regarding their child's education, 20% strongly agreed, whereas 40% disagreed.

Also when parents were asked to judge if the principal was aware of the stress they face while bringing up their child, 80% of parents were undecided and 20% agreed that he was.

When the researcher interviewed and asked the teachers whether the principal was involved or not and aware of their job and duties, all of them answered: "Of course! Of course! He does... Through the coordinator!... Through meetings...". Also when the researcher asked the respondents if they were included in decision-making and how they were included in what goes in the school, one of the respondent said: "Well you know, it's a democratic school, everyone has his opinion and that goes for the most number, therefore, the whole school". Another teacher declared: "Teachers are involved in planning specials days and occasions". Another said: "Each teacher is part of the department and we are all working together, we are like a chain". Another commented that it was "through the coordinator". Only one teacher disagreed that principal's leadership influences teachers. She thought that it was the other way round.

The Head of Special Education Department (Mrs. R.) revealed that principalship means "working as a team" and her duties were to coach and help teachers reach the educational objectives set in the school. When she was asked to define her role in inclusive settings, she emphasized again the importance of "sharing the same philosophy, same goals and vision".
In answering the question about the school's belief and policy towards inclusive practices, the Head demonstrated she totally esteemed and believed in inclusive practices. She highly recommended inclusion because it taught kids without disabilities the concepts of tolerance and diversity.

Mrs. R emphasized the fact that every child has the right to proper education and that the school's mission was to help the child reach his full potential. Her reply is paralleled with the philosophy statement of the school that mentions: "The mission of our school is to create a nurturing environment where students will be guided toward becoming meaningful contributors to an ever-diverse society".

When the researcher questioned Mr. S, the principal, about his current role as a leader, the administrator made it very clear to the researcher to explain to everyone his mission and to make sure that everybody understood his vision, so as to assure the solidarity and application of their vision "so that we are pretty sure of the solidarity... the knowledge ... so that we project it to the outside correctly, without projecting it wrongly!"

The researcher asked Mr. S to define his role as a leader of an inclusive school. The administrator replied that his role was to understand, to support and to communicate the vision to all his staff and not to think that they were making favors to those special kids: "A lot of teachers complain... My job is to help them understand... that it is part of their job! It's very important they should know, what they are doing is not a favour!". "They complain about something they are not used to, something they don't know..." Thus the principal's role in promoting inclusion is reflected in Mr. S. answers.
4.2. Inclusive Culture

A range of questions and topics were raised to evaluate the culture in Sunshine school. Results and analysis to these topics were as such:

The majority of the sample teachers agreed they like the school in which they are working (65% agreed, and 30% strongly agreed, whereas 5% were undecided). The larger number of teachers agreed that principals engage in meaningful conversations with them (55% agreed, 15% strongly agreed, and 25% were undecided, whereas 5% disagreed).

Most of the teachers agreed that principal gave them enough time to collaborate with each others (85% agreed, and 15% strongly agreed).

Almost half of the participants could reach the principal when ever they had a problem (45% agreed, 5% strongly agreed, and 25% were undecided, whereas 25% disagreed).

Half of the participants agreed that principal help those in promoting new forms of teaching and learning (50% agreed, 10% strongly agreed, 20% were uncertain, and 10% disagreed, whereas 10% strongly disagreed).

When the researcher asked teachers to assess the level of collaboration between the colleagues and to which extent they took in consideration each others views, 70% agreed and 30% strongly agreed on that.

Also when asked about whether the principal fostered a caring atmosphere and a high level of cooperation among teachers, students and their families, 75% of the respondents strongly agreed and 25% agreed on that.

Moreover, 65% of the teachers agreed that the principal was open-minded to their views and willing to cooperate, 25% strongly agreed, whereas 10% were undecided.
When parents were asked about whether the principal fosters a caring environment and a high level of cooperation among students, teachers and families, 80% of the parents agreed the principal does, and 20% strongly agreed. Less than half of the parents agreed that the principal and his teachers include them in decisions they take concerning their child education (40% agreed, 20% were undecided, while 20% disagreed). The majority of sample parents disagreed that the principal and his teachers were open-minded to their points of views (60% disagreed, and 20% were undecided, whereas 20% agreed). When respondents were asked to judge if teachers accepted their criticism concerning certain teachers strategies, 40% agreed, 20 strongly agreed, whereas 40% disagreed.

When parents were asked about the presence of the principal on school premises whenever they go to school, 60% strongly agreed, 20% agreed, whereas 20% were undecided.

When the researcher asked the teachers whether their principal was supportive or not, all of them replied: "Of course, ... He is a very good listener ... 100% supportive... Very very very supportive...". Also when the researcher asked the teachers to describe their relationship with the principal one of the teachers said: "I don't feel... that he is the principal and I am the teacher... You know it's more like a friend to friend relationship". Another one responded: "Oh, he is very human, we have a precious gift in the school, it's the principal himself", the third one said: "Neutral" and the fourth replied: "We try to make the best out of our time, to plan together..." In other words, the teachers focused on the importance of collaborative work.

The Head of Special Education Department, Mrs. R, showed a lot of understanding and caring towards her teachers: "You know sometimes they came to my
office crying... *You know the level of frustration becomes very high... Sometimes I even stop the class and ask her to take a break...*" She also mentioned that she was there for them to listen to them and help them find solutions: *"We sit and talk... We try to find solutions..."

Regarding the issue of recruitment of teachers and whether they have to be specialized in inclusive practices, the principal, Mr. S, said he wouldn't mind they were regular or general teachers as long as they would accept teaching special needs and that the child must be their full responsibility.

The principal emphasized the fact that the whole school must be involved: *"They have to know, they are part of it!"

Concerning the school’s belief with regards to inclusive education, the principal showed, he believed and esteemed those kids with special needs. Those kids are members of the society and their job as a school was to teach and help them reach their full potential: *"Once you accept the fact that special needs exist... We believe that those kids exist... Many successful elements of the society have or had learning disabilities... Our job is to help them have the maximum benefit of education...”*

### 4.3. Work Conditions

Many variables were included to examine working conditions at Sunshine School including salaries, bonuses, and workload. Findings and analysis of the findings were as follows. The majority of the participant teachers agreed that principal was aware of the workload they face (65% agreed, 15% strongly agreed, whereas 25% were undecided, and 5% disagreed).

The larger number of the participant teachers agreed they like the school in which they are working (65% agreed, 30% strongly agreed, whereas 5% were undecided).
When asked about whether the teachers needed an assistant to help them in their work, 25% agreed, 5% strongly agreed, 15% were undecided, 25% disagreed and 30% strongly disagreed.

The majority of the participant teachers agreed on the working conditions in terms of vacation (55% agreed, and 45% strongly agreed).

Few teachers agreed that working conditions were acceptable in terms of promotion and bonuses (35% agreed, 25% strongly disagreed, whereas 35% were undecided, and 5% disagreed).

The larger number of teachers agreed that working conditions were acceptable in terms of working hours (55% agreed, 30% strongly agreed, whereas 5% were undecided, and 10% disagreed).

The majority of teachers agreed that principal gave them enough time to complete their paperwork (75% agreed, 20% strongly agreed, and 5% were undecided).

Most of the participant teachers agreed that paperwork and routine duties interfere with their time of teaching and planning (60% agreed, 25% were undecided, whereas 15% disagreed).

When the researcher asked the teachers about their school and what they like in it, 3 out of 4 replied: "The friendly environment in which lots of teachers are understanding..., rules are caring... Principal is understanding... My colleagues...

Everything... The atmosphere... My students".

When the researcher asked teachers about the work conditions at Sunshine school and if they were favorable enough to keep them there as teachers, the first teacher replied: "Oh Yes! Actually I had many offers outside the school but I am so comfortable with the system here... and with the teachers...the whole atmosphere... I love my students... They are very honest people in terms of money... I've tried other
schools... They are businesses... Here, it's a different story... They care about us as individuals!". The second one answered: "Yes, I feel so comfortable here!" and the two others said: "Yes, of course!".

When the researcher asked teachers about the resources and their availability and if they had sufficient technical assistance, 3 out of 4 said: "Yes, but you have to order them in advance!" The fourth said: "They are abundant here in the school and whenever we ask for help, they provide for us workshops... They are very helpful!"

The principal, Mr. S, was also very careful not to overload and overwhelm teachers. When he felt they were pressured, he tried to find solutions to diffuse these feelings: "we are very careful with the load... So we directly do something about it... We reduce the number of regular students or the number of special kids in the class..." He seemed ready to assist them with all the resources, and workshops to help them reduce this fear. "We send them to workshops... We send him/her an assistant...!", "So as not to rebel!"

4.4. Mentoring

Mentoring was assessed by asking teachers, while filling the questionnaire, to rate (1 to 5) ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree, conditions that enhanced mentoring. Also many items regarding mentoring were raised in the interviews. Findings and analysis of the findings were as follows. The majority of participant teachers agreed that veteran teachers shared information and knowledge about their practices with new ones (55% agreed, 15% strongly agreed, 10% were undecided, whereas 10% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed). Most of the teacher participants agreed they were receiving in-service training and technical support (60% agreed, 20% strongly agreed, 10% were undecided, whereas 5% disagreed, and 5% strongly disagreed). The majority of teacher participants agreed
they were receiving collegial assistance (65% agreed, 20% strongly agreed, and 15% were undecided).

Also when the researcher asked teachers about mentoring conditions, one of the teachers replied: "Well, it's not mentoring as such, or mentor to teacher... It's more give and take!" 2 out of 4 said: "It's usually the coordinator who advises us..." The last one said: "When we ask for help, they are extremely helpful".

To sum up, this chapter presented the results of the data gathered from a questionnaire distributed to teachers, another questionnaire distributed to parents, and different separate interviews conducted with the principal and Head of the integration and support department and four teachers at Sunshine School.

The following chapter will include the discussion of the above findings by comparing them to the latent in the literature review.
Chapter 5
Data Analysis and Discussion

Discussion of data was organized into four categories and compared to findings presented in the literature review. Categories are principal's role, inclusive culture, work conditions, and mentoring.

5.1 Principal's Role

Most of the teachers agreed that the principal gave them considerate attention to their needs. Despite that Mr. S is a supporter of inclusion, he did not deny the fact that there are more professionals who would have a better understanding than him towards inclusion practices. These findings are parallel with Lasky and Karge (2006) who showed that the principal must have adequate skills to create conditions that promote inclusive practices.

Moreover, teachers agreed that the principal was aware of the workload they face. Mr. S and Mrs. R also agree that teachers should not be overloaded with work. This matches Guzman's (1997) findings who believed that the principal support and encouragement were very important because they influence teacher's motivation and behaviours towards children with special needs.

The majority of teachers believe that they were included in what goes in the school. This also was reflected with the principals and the Head's interviews. They believed in shared decision making and collaboration. This outcome replicates Sergiovanni’s (1991 belief that empowering teachers and including them in decision-making increases teachers' motivation and involvement in teaching.

Nearly every teacher agreed that the principal was a facilitator to their teaching tasks. This was also demonstrated in the principal and Head’s answers that they are
The comments of Mr. S, the principal, concerning his role as a leader of an inclusive school concur with Sindelar et al.’s (2006) findings that inclusion was a hard process and was often resisted by teachers, and to Salisbury and McGregor (2005) who believed that principals help in approving changes.

Teachers pointed out that principal leadership had a great influence on the inclusive practices. This is consistent with previous findings which assure that principal’s beliefs and values are key factors in accepting children with special needs in inclusive settings (Sindelar et al., 2006).

Ediger (2006) found out that teacher and principals should collaborate together and establish a culture of trust and open-communication that will enhance inclusive practices. These are demonstrated in all participants' answers such as when they pointed out: "As the proverb say, one for all and all for one!... My colleagues are soooooo cooperative! Of course... We cover for each other, support, advise each other...".

5.2 Inclusive Culture

The majority of teachers' opinions about the school were positive. This finding is analogous to Salend’s (2005) findings that teachers who viewed their work environment positively were more committed to their jobs.

Teachers believe that the principal engages in meaningful conversations. The participants highlighted that the principal does give them enough time to listen to them and provide them with feedback. This decreases the feelings of stress and being overwhelmed that they might encounter while teaching students with special needs. These outcomes are like Mastropieri’s (2001) that principals who listened and communicated with their staff developed a positive collaborative atmosphere and Ediger’s (2006) that administrators and teachers must cooperate together to develop a
sense of trust and open communication. These findings, as well, coincide with McLaughlin and Caron (2006) and Ediger’s (2006) about the importance of shared leadership and collaboration between the staff members. A similar finding was that Mrs. R understands and collaborates to help teachers find strategies to solve their problems. These findings match Salend (2005), House (1981), Billingsley and Litrell (1994), and Mastropieri’s (2001) about the importance of the principal’s support to his teachers.

On the other hand, the majority of parents believe that the principal fosters a caring environment and a high level of cooperation among their families and the school but they are aware that the principal and teachers are not really open-minded to their points of views. These findings are opposed to Yssel and al.’s (2006) findings that leaders should stimulate parents’ participation in the education of their child.

The only few teachers thought that the principal can offer them help when they face a problem. These findings contradict Dworkin et al.(1990) who believed that the principal who gave enough time to listen to his tutors and provided them with feedback would be decreasing feelings of anxiety and overwhelm that teachers might encounter while teaching special needs. While as both principals, Mrs. R and Mr. S, believed that they were always there to offer help to their concerns.

Half of the participants agreed that the principals helped them in promoting new forms of teaching and learning. This is also relevant to what the principals claimed. These findings are consistent with House’s (1980) that the principal who showed teachers appreciation and encouraged them to use different strategies, he/she would be giving them his/her ideal support, thus providing a positive atmosphere for teaching and learning.
5.3 Work conditions

Most of the participants agreed that they like the school environment where they are working. These results match Billingsley’s (2004) that teachers who liked the school they work in, had higher chances to stay in their jobs.

Only few teachers thought working conditions were acceptable in terms of promotion and bonuses. The principal, Mr. S, tried to avoid answering directly the question concerning the promotion. He favored non-discrimination between teachers. These findings contradict Stempien and Loeb’s results (2002) that encouraged promotion and creativity because they were important factors to engage and involve teachers in their jobs.

The majority of participants stated that their work was manageable and that they had reasonable demands. The principal, Mr. S, demonstrated how much he was careful not to overload and overwhelm teachers. These responses are similar to Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1998) and Guzman’s (1998) that the principal is an agent of change and must know how to provide support and collaborate with his instructional team. It also resembles Nelson et al.’s (2004) that reasonable demands are important because they are big contributors of stress and dissatisfaction. These outcomes match Billingsley’s (2004) that condensed responsibilities prevented teachers from functioning well.

Mr. S emphasized that the whole school must be involved in inclusion and that they were not making any favor to students with special needs. These findings are similar to Taylor’s (2005) that for inclusion to happen, the whole educational system must change.
5.4 Mentoring

Teachers’ answers about mentoring are in harmony with Gersten et al.’s (2001) that mentoring and giving teachers adequate feedback and resources were important factors to satisfy teachers and develop in them great commitment to teaching.

Most of the teachers agreed that they were receiving collegial assistance. Mrs. R showed that she was ready to guide and coach her colleagues when needed. These findings complement Whitaker’s (2000) that mentoring had a direct impact on teachers in helping them see and believe that their roles were manageable.

The following chapter will present the final conclusion of this study. It will also contain limitations of the study and recommendations for future research on similar topics.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1. Conclusion

The aim of this study is to better understand the practices of the principal and his influence on the application of inclusion practices at Sunshine School. This study examined the practices of the principal of the Sunshine School by collecting data from interviews, questionnaires, and the school’s documents. The researcher found out that the leaders’ beliefs and views are major keys in welcoming students with special needs in a particular school. This study also revealed that the principal support was important because it influenced teachers’ commitment and satisfaction. Providing teachers with reasonable working conditions and adequate resources also affected the teaching and learning atmosphere. Furthermore, the results exposed that the teachers believed that their principal is a leader because he encourages collaborative team work and distributed leadership.

To sum up the results of this research, we must know that certain factors have great influence on applying inclusive practices. One of these is the principal as a key factor in implementing this change. Since inclusion is a hard process to implement and needs a lot of collaborative efforts within the school system as a whole, the administrator shall provide favorable work conditions for teaching and learning. The leader must reduce teachers’ workload and stress and provide them with resources for teaching and learning to improve their training and knowledge.

In addition to that, the principal must have the know how to support her/his colleagues. He/she should create positive atmosphere to promote a constructive climate for teaching and learning. Leaders of inclusive schools are responsible for
cultivating leadership at all levels and to promote shared understanding and decision-making about inclusive practices. Principals play a major role in influencing parents, teachers, stakeholders and students to think and behave in an inclusive way.

6.2 Limitations

The findings of this study need to be interpreted with care because many factors can limit their validity. First, only one school that caters inclusive practices was examined. These practices also may not reflect the practices in other schools throughout the country and worldwide. Second, the interviews conducted represent opinions of the individuals who were specifically questioned. Therefore, they may not symbolize or represent others' viewpoints in the same school.

For future studies, the researcher recommends more direct observations and interviews to be conducted in different schools in order to develop a broader understanding of inclusive practices.

It is also important to note that many elements were excluded from the analysis of findings, factors such as teachers' years of experience, types of principal's support and student teacher ratio.

6.3. Implications for practice

This study has implications for implementation of better inclusion.

First, of all, the Ministry of Education should ensure that school leaders are fully knowledgeable of the reason for decision for inclusive practices and their educational and social benefits (Porter, 2001). For that reason, principals should be encouraged to take courses or undergo training including in service training in special education to enhance successful practices (Taylor, 2002). Principals should have great knowledge on special education topics and strategies to help and boost the staff's practice and morale (Lasky & Karge, 2005).
Moreover, principals must encourage mentoring and provide workshops especially for beginning special educators and provide them with strategies that will help them cope and reduce the stress and frustration they might encounter while teaching students with special needs (Taylor, 2005).

In addition, the principal must understand that inclusion is a collaborative process to be able to achieve goals, and should involve teachers, parents, students and stakeholders.

Principals must also support their staff and teachers by listening to their needs, showing them appreciation, establishing with them open-communication and developing a culture of trust that enhances a better atmosphere for teaching and learning (Billingsley, 2004). Novice special educators must listen, observe and establish close relationships with more experienced teachers in that field (Stempie and Loeb, 2002).

Finally, since inclusion is a difficult process that needs time, then it should be provided with good work conditions, such as improving teachers’ salaries and giving those more opportunities that will increase their satisfaction, thus their intent to stay in their jobs and better involvement in teaching.

6.4. Recommendations for Future Studies

Four issues emerged from the conversation with the principal which are the following: discrimination from others (sometimes parents), tolerance, and problem of space inclusive schools face and the effectiveness of teachers. These topics might be thoroughly studied in the future.
References


Appendix A

Dear Participants,

I have chosen the topic of "the principal's role in creating an inclusive school" as part of my MA Project.

I would really be grateful if you can spare a few minutes to fill in the questionnaire.

Any information about yourself or your name will remain confidential and will not be exposed at any time.

Your time, help, effort and collaboration will add value to my study.
Please circle the most appropriate:
Circle 1, if you strongly disagree
Circle 2, if you disagree
Circle 3, if you are undecided
Circle 4, if you agree
Circle 5, if you strongly agree

1) Do you like the school in which you are working?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

2) Does the principal give considerate attention to your teachers' needs?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

3) Does the principal engage in meaningful conversations with you?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
4) Does the principal provide you with suggestions that enhance your teaching?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

5) Is the principal aware of the workload you face everyday?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

6) Do you feel included in what goes on in the school?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

7) Are the working conditions acceptable in terms of vacation?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
8) Are the working conditions acceptable in terms of promotion and bonuses?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

9) Are the working conditions acceptable in terms of appreciation?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

10) Are the working conditions acceptable in terms of working hours?
    1- Strongly disagree
    2- Disagree
    3- Undecided
    4- Agree
    5- Strongly agree

11) Does the principal provide you with adequate material for special education?
    1- Strongly disagree
    2- Disagree
    3- Undecided
    4- Agree
    5- Strongly agree
12) Does the principal give you enough time to complete your paperwork?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

13) Does the principal give you enough time to collaborate with teachers?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

14) Can you reach the principal whenever you need him/her or have a problem?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

15) Thinking about your total job, to what extent do you agree that you need extra help (assistant)?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
16) Thinking about your workload, to what extent do you feel your routine duties and paperwork interfere with your time of teaching and planning?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

17) Does the principal give you feedback on your teaching?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

18) Does the principal facilitate your teacher's task? (Ex: Give you more time, stimulate understanding...)
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
20) Does the principal maintain high expectations for the learning disabled?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

21) To which extent do veteran teachers share information and knowledge about their practices with new ones?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

22) Does your principal foster a caring environment and a high level of cooperation among students, teachers and families?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

23) In your opinion, to what extent are you receiving collegial assistance and collaboration from other teachers?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
24) In your opinion, to what extent are you receiving in service training and technical support from other teachers?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

25) To what extent is your principal open-minded to your points of views and willing to cooperate and compromise?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

26) To what extent are your colleagues open-minded to your points of views and willing to cooperate?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Undecided
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
Dear Parents,

I have chosen the topic of “the principal’s role in creating an inclusive school” as part of my MA Project.

I would really be grateful if you can spare a few minutes to fill in the questionnaire.

Any information about yourself or your name will remain confidential and won’t be exposed at any time.

Thank you for your time, help and collaboration. All of these will add value to my studies.
Please circle the most appropriate:
Circle 1, if you strongly disagree
Circle 2, if you disagree
Circle 3, if you are undecided
Circle 4, if you agree
Circle 5, if you strongly agree

1) In your opinion, do you think that special education is affected by the principal’s leadership?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

2) In your opinion, does the principal foster a caring environment and a high level of cooperation among students, teachers and you (families)?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

3) In your opinion, do you think that the principal maintain high expectations for your children?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
4) Is the principal aware of the stress you face bringing up your child?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

5) Does the school provide you with suggestions that enhance your child’s learning?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

6) Do the teachers accept your disapproval about certain teaching strategies?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

7) When you go to the school, do you often see the principal walking on the school premises?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
8) Does the principal give you enough time to listen to your concerns about your child’s education?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

9) Do the teachers give you enough time to collaborate and listen to your concerns about your child’s education?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

10) In your opinion, to which extent do the principal and teachers include you in the decisions they take concerning your child’s education?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree

11) In your opinion, to what extent do the principal and teachers are open-minded to your points of views and are willing to cooperate?
   1- Strongly disagree
   2- Disagree
   3- Uncertain
   4- Agree
   5- Strongly agree
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
(PRINCIPAL)

1- What are your main roles as a leader?
2- What is the current role of the principal in the field of inclusive education?
3- How do you envision the principal's role in that field?
4- What is your role in the professional development, mainly special education, and mentoring in specific?
5- What is the school's belief and policy with regards to inclusive education?
6- What is your vision for improving the special ed in your school?
7- How would you describe your school's mission?
8- Please estimate how many hours a week you spend on issues related to inclusive education?
9- What resources do you have at school to support needs of special educators?
10- How do you retain special education teachers in your school considering all the stress and workload they face?
11- What is the most effective thing that you do for special educators in terms of working conditions? (Ex. Promotion, bonuses, scholarship of their children?)
12-In your opinion, do you give considerate attention to your teachers' needs? (Ex: Listen to them, provide them with suggestions?)

13-How do you stay up to date on current special education practices?

14-What are the main problems you face in managing the special ed department?

15-What is your vision for improving the special ed in your school?
Appendix D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
(TEACHERS)

1- What do you like in the school where you are working?

2- Does the principal know what do you do? How?

3- How are you included in what goes in the school?

4- Is your principal supportive? How?

5- How would you describe your relationship with the principal?

6- Are necessary materials available when you need them?

7- In your opinion, do you think that special education is affected by the principal's leadership?

8- Are your colleagues helpful? Do they cooperate with you when you need them?

9- Do you feel that your work load is manageable?

10- Do you think that your routine duties and paperwork interfere with your teaching? To what extent? Please explain.

11- Do you think that the working conditions at the school are favorable enough to keep you as a teacher there? How? Please specify.

12- In your opinion, are you having sufficient technical assistance and support or mentoring, by other teachers, more experienced in the field of special education? How? Please explain.
Interviews with Directors

Interview I with Mr. S

What is your current role as a leader of an inclusive school?

One to have a clear cut vision and idea for what we stand for... and to make sure everybody understands it and then... to communicate that vision to the external but then we have to be... pretty... pretty sure of the internal... Ah... solidarity or knowledge of that... that purpose or vision so that to project it to the outside without projecting it wrongly.

So, how do you portray this vision to... your internal staff... or to your school as a whole?

At the beginning... that goes with the philosophy of the school that has to be clear for everyone. Ah!... you have to... get the people who are more involved... I mean those in the special ed department... to explain things to the rest of the staff... example in workshops... workshops are... what it means,... it is to help teachers understand... to become part of this... to become involved, to know and understand any phrase that is used in special needs... to know what it means and the specific difficulties... what do they need..., how to detect them. Hallak you are not going to create professionals out of them but at least they start getting involved, they start to see what they can do about it, see its limitations, and see how unlimited some cases are... and they have to know what works, what works and what doesn't and then what we intend to do about that case. In that way, they feel part of it... it's basically, basically everybody has to be involved. Inclusive school means everybody, everybody is involved. Ok, we have professionals but yet, it's also everybody's job!
How do you envision your role in that field?

My role in that field is ... you know... communication!!... Once you have communication and understanding,... and you explain what are the major things or problems. You know a lot of teachers complain... complain about something they are not used to do, they don't know how to handle... so, my job... my job is to help them understand... that this is part of their job!!! (with a high pitch). That is rule number one! It's very important..., it's very important to know that what they are doing is not a favor.

So when you want to hire teachers for inclusive schooling, you hire only special educators?

No! No! Of course not! We have both, special educators and regular teachers. But am taking about regular teachers. They have to know that they might have special ed student in their class. And in that case the child has to be under their full responsibility... they will have all the professional help needed, but they are..... They have to know, they are part of it!

So, workshops about special education issues are attended by regular and special ed teachers?

Of course! Usually workshops are done by the special educators to explain to regular education teachers... Ah... They help them... Also they should listen to them, especially when they resist., and say we don't know how to handle... you know, we can't overload teachers... If they feel stressed out..., we really have to pull back..., because at the end of the day, they will rebel. We don't want that to happen... So my job is to keep encouraging them, help them... and not to overload them... And having a very close eye at every room temperature...

So, how do you keep or retain special educators and general ones, now that you have mentioned overload and stress they encounter?

How do I keep them... Hum! First of all... we are very very careful with the load. Second,..., we listen to them. Basically they come to me and say look! I have 20 kids in my class and 4 of them are students with learning disabilities, I
can't handle the class!! So directly..., directly we have to do something about it. Either we reduce the number of the regular students in the class or the number of special needs in the class..., or send an assistant to that teacher... you know this is my main job. I have to listen to teachers. Sometimes, I split classes; I deride or open new sections... So if you want inclusion to work..., you have to be generous with teachers. I don't mean generous in terms of money, no generous in the number of teachers. You need to have many, good qualified ones.

What is the most effective thing that you do or did for special educators in terms of working conditions?

Pause... Again I would go back to listening to their problems and assuring their needs, ... and... not to overload them... Yaaani..., the most important thing is not to overload them especially in terms of the number of students with special needs.

What about promotion and bonuses and scholarity of their children?

We do this for everybody!

Ah, Ok!

What is the school's belief and policy with regards to inclusive education?

Pause... we believe ... at least in every school has..... this school,... students with special needs! Whether they want to admit it or not! That's a different matter!..., but once you accept the fact that special needs students exist... you can either accept those kids or not!..... and most schools do that! Or if they take those kids, they keep them for a while and then they give up! Which is a huge, huge problem, you know? They are not making those kids any favour.

In our school, we believe that those kids exist and they are part of the society. We believe..., that a lot, many successful parts of the society used to be part of these students... very successful members in the society... and our job, is to keep those kids and help them have the maximum benefit of education! Our job is to teach the rest of the kids, or regular kids, accept those special kids..., in
terms of tolerance... you know many cases, no! Some cases... special ed kids are obviously..... we can feel and see they are different... So it's a great direct way of teaching other kids tolerance..., or accepting others..., and that will allow them later on accept people of different religions, of different abilities or looks,... of different culture or race...

What is your vision for improving the special ed in your school?
Pause... The biggest one... is space! Space is... Special kids need 2 to 3 times more space than regular ones. If a regular student takes x space, a special need student needs 3x. Yaani..., so if you have space, and you want to take 200 regular students and among these you have 10 special needs kids, then, you will have to reduce the number of regular kids to 50 instead of having 100. you know special needs kids need sometimes 1 on 1 tutoring... Ah... Special needs need more classes... you need also space for the speech therapist, space for the occupational therapist... So space is always a problem!

Ah really, I didn't know that you have a speech therapist and an occupational therapist working as full timers at the school?
The speech therapist is always here. The occupational therapist comes here once a week. Because at the moment..., she is mainly working with the teachers... So again space is always a problem. For example now we have 2 full floors for special needs.... And the problem in the future is that.... We can't expand! We don't have anymore rooms... And as long as we can't create more space, our main target now is to expand the material and resources. By improving the material and resources, you do a better job...

How would you describe your school mission?
Pause... I think it's in the school moto.

Sorry, what? I don't know what moto means!
It's the slogan! The slogan of the school! We believe that every child is special in a way and we have to help every child reach his potential, whatever that is!
Excellent!...
Please estimate how many hours a week you spend on issues related to inclusive education?

... It's really very difficult to estimate that ... because it's..., since special needs kids are integrated in general classrooms, we don't discuss... we don't think or differentiate any more the special need kid from the regular one! We think either that child is doing well or not, being special or regular! We can't really separate and say this time is for that regular kid and the rest is for the special needs...

But I mean, how much time do you spend on inclusive issues? Plus or minus?? *If you want, I would say, my by quarter of my time!*

How do you do it usually?

*Mainly..., mainly I deal with it with the head of the special ed department. We collaborate with each other...*

Do you usually go to classes, see and observe how teachers are giving or handling their classes?

*In cases where I... Yaani... I do it like the others! I don't visit classes because they have special needs... It's a normal procedure.*

Do you do it formally? I mean do you tell the teacher in advance that you are coming?

*No, I do it informally... I don't pretend that I am a specialist in that field... you know, there are a lot of people who know better than I do in this field..., and it's mainly the head of special education's job to do so. She is more involved... She knows much better than I do!*

So, mainly you coordinate with the head of special ed on these issues?

*Yes!*
What resources do you have at school to support needs of special educators?
Hinni... They have... They have some hands on materials that help them. They have things like videos... They have visual materials... In elementary, we have special books but you know, when we talk about middle and high school, material becomes less available. We have to compromise... We have to search, or rearrange certain books...

Do you give considerate attention to your teachers' need?
Yes definitely! By the way, we have teachers who were or who had special needs in their childhood.

Wallah! That is excellent! Like this they can feel better with students with special needs.
Yes of course!

How do you stay up to date on current special education practices?
Mainly with the coordinator or the special ed department.

What are the major problems you are facing in managing the special ed department?
Really, the major problem is the society! People have to be aware or to know more about special education! The problem is that we don't have enough schools in Lebanon that cater special education.

But I mean, what are the main problems you encounter while managing the special ed department in your school?
... You know... I don't really think we have a problem... Our problem is the pressure of people who are trying to enroll their kids here... Somehow... In other words,... We are probably victim to our success!... Many parents come to enroll their kids without telling us or hiding away that their kids have special needs. We discover that... you know once the number of special needs gets higher than a certain ratio... the whole thing collapse... We don't want to increase the number of special needs more than 20%!
So you expect more honesty and transparency from parents?
Of course! You know, you sometimes can get shocked! Sometimes I have parents who have special needs kids and imagine! Imagine they will be the ones who are discriminating their own child. Can you imagine?? Or they will tell me: "Pleas! Don't put our child with kids who have more disabilities or have a severer case!... Ah, Aie! This sentence really scares me! I mean, my God! How could someone else accept somebody else's child??... They should be the most understanding!...

How strange!
So to conclude our conversation, what are your main roles?
My main role is... Sorry but is said main roles?

Ha! Roles! Basically in this field, there is no black or white. Second, you have to accept and believe that there are people who know much more than I do in the field of special education..., and you have to listen to them..., listen to, because..., at the end, at the end of the day my job is to make sure... that the ratio... we don't want to increase the amount of special needs more than 20% of the whole population of the school. We have to take in consideration, if we want to do a good job I mean, to take in consideration the number of special needs to the number of regular ones. Also the number of special needs to the numbers of special educators... As I already told you, we don't want to overload teachers... There are certain key numbers one has to keep a close eye on. I mean the ratio of special needs to the ratio of special educators, also to the numbers of teachers..... Long Pause.....
Don't bite all what you can chew! Very important! If people are desperate..., you know I feel with them,.... but we have a certain potential we can't go beyond it! We have to keep a balance between special needs and regular kids.

In that case then what do you do? Do you refer them to other schools?
Yes! You know I want the best for my students...
One more question please. What is your role in the professional development?
Special education and mentoring in specific?

_Basically... you should not expect people to do what you really can't do! I mean... If you expect people to be hard workers, you have to be a hard worker! If you expect them to be tolerant, you have to be their role model!... Teachers should love and respect their students. How do you want a teacher to respect his students if for example you disrespect him?... It doesn't make sense! I expect from my teachers what I expect form myself!_

What about teachers' mentoring?

_We basically..... As you progress with the school... Oh my God, what is the word?... At the beginning... very very few teachers left our institution may by only 3 or 4%... you know we work as a team, we help each others tremendously... the only thing that scares me is if a teacher doesn't have a problem. This worries me! To ask for help... for me... I take it as a positive thing... The teachers who ask for help are teachers who care! They are... They want to learn and progress... That's why we have to keep encouraging them..._

Thank you so much for your time and collaboration! Thank you!
Interview II with Mrs. R.  
(Head and coordinator of special education department)

What are your main roles as a leader?
*Here in the school as a leader means working as a team. We are one unit together! I should work with teachers, guide them and help them reach our objectives!*

What is the current role of the principal in the field of inclusive education?
*We share the same philosophy. We share same goals. We have to have same vision!*

How do you envision the principal’s role in that field?
*Pause... Ah! The principal... your know... He doesn't follow each, step by and everything step... Ah... He monitors... He monitors the process of education of special needs kids, but through our assessment, and mainly my assessment and supervision.*

What is your role in the professional development, namely mentoring?
*First, my role is to provide and foster the needs of my teachers so they can, you know, of course, foster the needs of their students. This is the way it works. You know teachers; face a lot of frustration in that field! My job is to make them comfortable... So we can reach the objectives we want... we also provide them with workshops, seminars and meetings... meetings every other day... Ah! Sometimes workshops are outside the school... in universities for example...*

But what about mentoring?
*I am their role model. It's not only modeling how they should work with these students but..., they have be conscientious and have the moral ethics to do the job... you know... We work as a team. We always help each others...*

What is the school's belief and policy with regards to inclusive education?
We believe in inclusive education! We believe in the least restrictive environment meaning that, students with special needs need to be integrated in a regular setting... And for regular kids, they have to learn to accept them! This process or integration teach regular kids tolerance, accepting diversity, I mean accepting... Integration means Diversity!

What is your vision for improving the special ed in your school?
How to improve it... Actually I have more than one vision! One of these visions is to provide a decent education for those kids after they graduate from this school. The question that is always backing in my mind is... what is next? What are those kids going to do after? Our job is not only to support and teach those kids from Grade 1 till Grade 12,... you know, we arranged with a university,... to provide a degree for special needs..., with our supervision of course... So already one of my vision is already established... Now my other vision is to talk to French Universities... My main vision is to talk to as many universities and help my students do something, do a proper career...

How do you describe your school mission?
Ah... We have... Every student has right to a proper education and our mission is to help him reach his full potential! This is our mission.

Please estimate how many hours a week you spend on issues related to inclusive education?
How many hours a week?! How many hours a week?! It depends when! At the beginning of the year..., mid-year..., when we change the IEP...

No, I mean in general, how many hours a week do you spend on issues related to special education?
At least 10 hours!

How do you retain special education teachers in your school considering all the stress and workload they face?
Again! Working as a team! This is related to the first question right?
Yes, of course they are all related...

I understand the level of frustration they face... It's not an easy job... Lots of tolerance is needed... And Persistence... And dedication... you know sometimes a teacher comes to my office crying! She gets really burned out! The level of frustration sometimes gets too high! So we sit and talk, we talk about it. We try to find solutions to her problems or find other alternatives... sometimes I even stop the class and ask her to take a break, and ask somebody to substitute her...

Your know if this happens from time to time, it's Ok but if it happens always, I have to see or reconsider if this teacher is really capable of handling or teaching students with special needs.

And how do you access that, or how do you do that?

It depends ... How many times she gets frustrated... Is she doing the right thing?...

What is the most effective thing that you did or do for special educators in terms of working conditions?

Effective thing... What did I do? Actually, we separated the elementary special education teachers from the high and middle school teachers. Like this they become more focused..., and more dedicated to their jobs. What else?... Ah...

We expand their knowledge by sending them to workshops... We also send them each year to Europe... We send 2 to 3 teachers to attend and educational committee, a conference of 2 days...

How do you stay up to date on current special education practices?

Internet! Mainly internet!

What are the main problems you are facing in managing the special ed department?

Basically the numbers of teachers! You know it's very hard to find qualified or real qualified teachers in that field... you don't know how difficult it is!
I just want to ask you one more question before we conclude our conversation please. Why do you have self-contained classes if you really believe in inclusive education?

*You know self-contained classes exist also in the states. It's not us who invented this. As you know, there are some kids who have severe learning disabilities and who can't follow the regular class. You know their cognitive and academic abilities..., their level is less than regular kids... they can't follow a regular curriculum. We design for them, according to their abilities, a curriculum. We design for them IEP's. But look, we try to integrate them as much as possible, example in physical education classes, Art, social skills...*

Thank you very very much for your time and cooperation!
Interviews with Teachers
Interview with Teacher # 1

What do you like in the school where you?
Actually I like the friendly environment in which..., in which lots of teachers
are understanding... And the rules, and the policies..., policies are really
caring, understanding... Also, our principal is very understanding... He
appreciates the good work... That's it!

Does the principal know what do you do? How?
Of course! Every department has a coordinator and this coordinator is the
connection between the principal and us teachers. Also every week we have a
meeting altogether so I guess he’s aware of everything that goes in the school.

How are you included in what goes in the school?
Well each teacher... each teacher is part of the department, and we are all
working together, we are like a chain. So by one way or another everyone is
involved in the work and activities of the school.

But what about decision – making?
Well actually it's a democratic school. That is what I guess. Everyone has his
own opinion and that goes for the most number, therefore, the whole school.

Is your principal supportive? How?
Yes! Yes! Of course he is! Actually I have been with him in many occasions
outside the school. He is a very good listener.

But I mean in the school?
Well, if he feels I am on the right track, he is very supportive and if he's not, I
have to convince him. He is very flexible.
How would you describe your relationship with the principal?

He is very human. You know I have taught in many schools and I know how other principals are and act. I guess, we have a precious gift in the school... It's the principal himself!

Hamdallah

Are necessary materials available when you need them?

Yes, every year we have a meeting for each department and the resources and material they need. Yes... They always give us the necessary materials but of course, we have to order them in advance... you know the procedure.

In your opinion, do you think that special education is affected by the principal's leadership?

Of course! Every department, and especially the special ed department, needs a lot of attention and patience and understanding... And I guess all of these are abundant in the school.

Are your colleagues helpful? Do they cooperate with you when you need them?

Ya! Ya! We are working as a team. As the proverb says, one for all and all for one! They are all very supportive up here! And if I need help, I can ask anyone of my colleagues and especially the coordinator, Mrs. R... she is very very supportive... Everybody here is supportive!

Do you feel that your workload is manageable?

Actually we have managed to... to devide... the timing between us as a department, so really; every person feels he has the necessary time to finish his job.

Do you think that your routine duties and paperwork interfere with your teaching? To what extent?

Actually every job has its own routine. Yaani... To a certain extent I believe that... you know... Everyday something happen, I mean things that break the routine.
But I mean, teaching kids with learning disabilities or special needs, does this give you more paperwork to do, to correct?

Yes of course! The preparation for those kids takes much more time than regular ones. You know, every student has his own level; his own needs... so we need to plan our lesson accordingly. So... it depends how many special needs kids I have in the class. This makes the work sometimes double or triple...

Do you think that the working conditions at your school are favorable enough to keep you as a teacher there? How? Please specify.

Yes! Actually I had many offers outside the school but I am... I am so comfortable with the system here... and with the teachers... the whole atmosphere... I love my students... I think that's a good reason to stay in the school.

But what about the promotion and bonuses...?

Well let's say they are very honest people in dealing with financial matters really... As I told, I taught in different schools and I feel these schools are businesses. Really pure businesses. But in this school, they care about us, we don't feel we are a number; on the contrary they care about each and every member.

In your opinion, are you having sufficient technical assistance and support or mentoring by other teachers, more experienced in the field of special education? How? Please explain.

Well, I have been teaching kids with special needs for 5 years and every day you learn new things. I know we have to take in consideration the materials, books, resources... Actually they are abundant in the school and whenever we ask for help, they help us. If we ask for workshops or for more knowledge about special needs they provide us... They are very helpful.
But I mean assistance from other teachers more experienced than you are in the field of special ed?

*Usually it's the coordinator.*

Thank you very much for your time and support.
Interview with Teacher #2

What do you like in the school where you are working?
**I like the campus, my colleagues, and the department I work in...**

Does the principal know what do you do? How?
**Am sure he does. Through the coordinator. He always have feed backs about our work.**

How are you included in what goes in the school?
**Through the coordinator.**

Is your principal supportive? How?
**100% percent. For example if you do something good he praises you... stuff like that...**

How would you describe your relationship with the principal?
**Teacher and principal... I don't feel... you don't feel that he is your principal and you are a teacher... you know it's more like a friend to friend relationship.**

Are necessary materials available when you need them?
**Yes... if not, we can order if there's something we need and we don't have it here.**

Like what?
**You mean what material?... Hands on activities... And since I am a science teacher, I need extra things for the lab like for example transparencies... you know we were supposed to do some outings this year but we couldn't because of the situation...**

In your opinion, do you think that special education is affected by the principal's leadership?
**Yes of course it's affected.**
How?

Through the feedback that the coordinator give to him and the communication between all of us... what's going to happen with that student, how we are going to deal with him... Everything.

Are your colleagues helpful? Do they cooperate with you when you need them?
Yes! Yes they are sooooo cooperative. You know it's my first year in special education.

Really, so you are a regular teacher then? You are not specialized in special education? Did you take any training in special ed?
... Pause... Some workshops... I attended many workshops... And you know this is my fifth year of teaching at this school. In some classes I gave I used to have special needs. Example ADHD students... I was very close to those kids. I really like them. It was then, when the administration asked for me and thought I could work with them in the special ed department. You know because of the special head of the department, I am very happy here. Really, am very happy.

May God Bless her then!

Do you think that working conditions at this school are favorable enough to keep you as a teacher there? How?

Yes!

How?

Everything, the most important thing is... is that I feel very comfortable here!

Thank you for your time and cooperation.
Interview with Teacher #3

What do you like in the school where you are working?
I like the campus,..., ah! The setting, the city school, I like my department,..., the organized system, the children here....

Does the principal know what do you do? How?
Ah, yes, am sure he does. Through the coordinators of course!

How are you included in what goes in the school?
Through the coordinators, we are asked to volunteer.

Volunteer in what, decision-making, giving them new strategies for teaching and learning..., in what?
In planning special days and occasions... Actually we have one coming up next week.

Is your principal supportive?
Ah, yes, very supportive!

Does he listen to your needs, does he support you...?
Ah... I needed him once for support and he really supported it me and... it was a personal need! Either than that.... professionally in the school, it’s usually through the coordinator.

How would you describe your relationship with the principal?
Ok..., I usually coordinate with the head of department... We... try to plan together... Ah... I try to report to her everything in detail... Ah... We always meet about everything that goes on... Ah, professionally, we... try to make the best of our time to meet and plan things together.

Are necessary materials available when you need them?
Most of the time yes!
In your opinion, do you think that special education is affected by principal's leadership?

No, I don't think so.

I think that teachers affect him more.

I think you didn't get my question. Do you think that special education is affected by principal's views, behaviors and attitude towards welcoming kids with special needs in your school?

Am not sure about that question, I think it's the other way around. I think we affect him!

But usually it's the other way round, if the principal accepts kids with special needs, he influences teachers?!

Ha! Ha! There's something fishy in that question! I can't answer this question...

Are your colleagues helpful? Do they cooperate with you when you need them?

Most of the time, yes.

Do you feel that your workload is manageable?

Yes!

Do you think that your routine duties and paperwork interfere with your teaching? To what extent?

No.

Do you think that working conditions at this school are favorable enough to keep you as a teacher there?

Pause... Yes... Ha! Ha! Ha!

In your opinion, are you having sufficient technical assistance or mentoring by other teachers?

Oh yes! Yes! Yes!
Interview with Teacher # 4

What do you like in the school where you are working?
*The environment and the atmosphere.*

Does the principal know what do you do? How?
*Usually yes, through the coordinators.*

How are you included in what goes in the school?
*Through school meetings.*

Is your principal supportive?
*Yes*

How?
*Ah! Through personal things I went through, he was extremely supportive and understanding.*

How would you describe your relationship with the principal?
*Ah! Neutral...*

Are necessary materials available when you need them?
*Yes if you order them in time.*

In your opinion, do you think that special education is affected by the principal's leadership?
*Yes of course, if he doesn't believe in the special education than this department won't be existing.*

Are your colleagues helpful? Do they cooperate with you when you need them?
*Yes! We cover for each other... We support each other... We advise each other.*

Do you feel your work load is manageable?
*Yes to a certain extent! Sometimes it's over, but it's the way the department here is...*
Do you think that the working conditions here are favorable enough to keep you as a teacher there?

Yes!!

Please specify?

The atmosphere is nice... the workload although it's heavy, it's bearable... coordinators are... understanding it's a really relaxed atmosphere...

What about bonuses, promotion, vacation..?

Vacation it's usually the school vacation, summer vacation...

Bonuses and promotion...??...

Not yet...

Ha... Ha!!

In your opinion, are you having sufficient technical assistance or mentoring by other teachers, more experienced than you do in the field of special education?

It's not mentoring as such, or mentor to teacher. It's the coordinator who is there, who advises you. It's give and take! It's not the mentor who tells you do this, do this, do this...

Thank you for your help!