

# Teachers' Perceptions of Educational Administrators' Support for Inclusive Education

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## Abstract

This paper investigates the perceptions of teachers in Saudi Arabia about educational administrators' support of inclusive education. The goal of this study is to provide a baseline of information for the ministry of education to enhance their professional development plan for administrators and teachers to adopt inclusive education for the purpose of increasing the number of students with disabilities in general education settings. The results in this study were almost converged between agreement and disagree with slightly more respondents agreeing that administrator support of inclusive education was present. The inferential results indicated a statistically significant difference between respondent degree area and recognition of administrator support of inclusive education. Significant differences occurred for both school and district administrators. Also, another statistical difference was found between respondent teaching grade and their recognition of administrators' support of inclusive education.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, administrators, special education

## 1. Introduction

Access and equal opportunities to education is one of the essential rights for everyone—including those with disabilities—in any community (Cole, 2017; The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Unfortunately, “everyone” hasn't always included those with disabilities. Now there are many countries in the world that have begun demanding inclusive education in their education systems (Waitoller & Thorius, 2015; Artiles et al., 2006; Clough, 2000).

According to Uditsky (1993) who states that in the inclusive education:

The student with a significant disability, regardless of the degree or nature of that disability, is a welcomed and valued member in the neighborhood school. The student is: taught by the regular classroom teacher (who is supported as needed); follows the regular curriculum (with modification and adaptation); makes friends; and contributes to the learning of the entire class [and] participates in all aspects of school life according to her interests and moves year to year with her peers from kindergarten through high school (p. 79).

Inclusive education will not be met without a comprehensive overhaul of the education systems in any countries. One such country is Saudi Arabia, which is the focus of this study. Many special education studies have found great advantages of inclusive education for students with and without special needs (Rojewski, Lee, & Gregg, 2015; Cole, Watdronek, & Majid, 2004; Westling & Fox, 2009). Also, more inclusive education will reflect our inclusive lives that exist in our families and communities (Kurth & Gross, 2015).

Educational administrators have a very essential role to create and support inclusive schools (Kennedy & Fisher, 2001; Loreman, 2007).

This study reports the recognitions of teachers about the administrators support either in the school district or in the same school they work on. For teacher recognition of administrative support (administrators in schools and district administrators) for inclusive education, responses converged between agreement and disagreement, with slightly more respondents agreeing that administrators supported inclusive education.

## 2. Methodology

This study examines the teachers' perceptions of the administrators support of inclusive education in Riyadh, Saudi

Arabia. The goal of this study is to provide a baseline of information for ministry of education to enhance the professional development plan for adopting inclusive education for the purpose of increasing the number of students with disabilities in general education settings.

The question of this study is: Are teachers' personal characteristics (gender, academic qualification, degree area, years of teaching experience, and grade instructed) related to teacher recognition of administrative support (administrators in school and administrators in the district department of education) for inclusive education?

The study includes teachers who teach in schools in Riyadh city, Saudi Arabia that include special education program(s). The total of the targeted sample size of this study was (N = 400) teachers. The data were obtained from 332 teachers, a response rate of 83%. See Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of participant personal characteristics

Variable	Total Number (N = 332)	Total Percentage (83%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	151	38%
Female	181	45%
<b>Academic Qualification</b>		
Bachelor	288	72%
Master	34	8%
Doctoral	10	3%
<b>Years of teaching experience</b>		
1–5 years	64	16%
6–10 years	74	18.5%
More than 10 years	194	48.5%
<b>Degree Area</b>		
Special Education	148	37%
General Education	184	46%
<b>Teaching Grade</b>		
First–Third grades	157	39%
Fourth–Sixth grades	175	44%

Quantitative data were collected in this study through closed-ended questions that was provided in an electronic survey. The survey that was used in this study was created by Dr. Petherbridge and applied in her study (Petherbridge, 2007). I revised the same survey after obtaining permission from Dr. Petherbridge.

Descriptive statistics began with demographic characteristics, which cover teachers' gender, academic qualifications, years of teaching experience, grade, and area of degree. Then, the percentile scores for administrative support for inclusive education. A series of one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to find values of significance. MANOVA test whether there are statistically significant differences among groups on multiple dependent variables. Also, it can protect against Type I errors (rejection of a true null hypothesis) (French, Poulsen, & Yu, 2006). SPSS provides different statistic tests based on MANOVA, such as Pillai's Trace statistic, which was used to determine statistical significance at the  $p < .05$  level. When the MANOVA reveals statistically significant differences, then an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to identify the values of significance.

### 3. Analysis and Findings

In this section descriptive and inferential statistics will be provided. The descriptive statistics began with the percentile scores for both sections of the survey that cover: school administrative support and district administrative support for inclusive education. The second section covers the inferential statistics used to illustrate the results of MANOVA tests. In this section, significant responses to the questions are examined. Also, other results were identified using ANOVA. Independent *t*-tests were conducted to decide where differences between groups occur.

#### 3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Administrative support for inclusive education was covered in two parts. This question: (a) three sub questions that measured school administrator support for inclusive education and (b) three sub questions that measured the amount support for inclusive education from administrators in the educational districts. A five-point Likert scale was used in this section with each statement anchored from "strongly agree", to "strongly disagree". The results

show an apparent convergence of responses about school and district administration support for inclusive education.

### 3.2 School Administrator Support

- Statement (a1) asks about school administrator support of teachers in inclusive education classrooms. The responses that support this statement are slightly higher than other responses that disagreed with this statement.
- Statement (a2) shows responses that converge around the recognition of administrators that additional work is required to teach in inclusive classrooms.
- Statement (a3) evaluates the communication between administrators and teachers on the value of inclusive education. Most responses show that the communication is insufficient. See Figure 1.

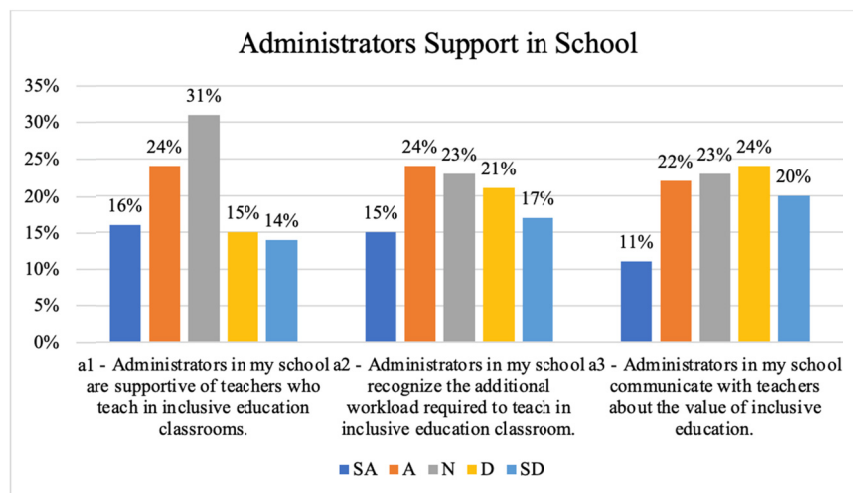


Figure 1. Administrators support of inclusive education in school

### 3.3 School District Administrator Support

- Statement (b1) asks about school district administrator support of teachers in inclusive education classes. Most respondents felt the district administrators were supportive, but nearly a third felt they did not, and another third had no opinion.
- Statement (b2) asks if school district administrators recognize the additional workload required in teaching inclusive classes. The responses are pretty even, with a slight edge going to respondents who thought the district administrators knew that the workload would be heavier.
- Statement (b3) asks if school district administrators communicate the value of inclusive education with teachers. The responses who thought the district administrators communicate the value of inclusive education with teachers are slightly higher than others who have no opinion or felt they did not. See Figure 2.

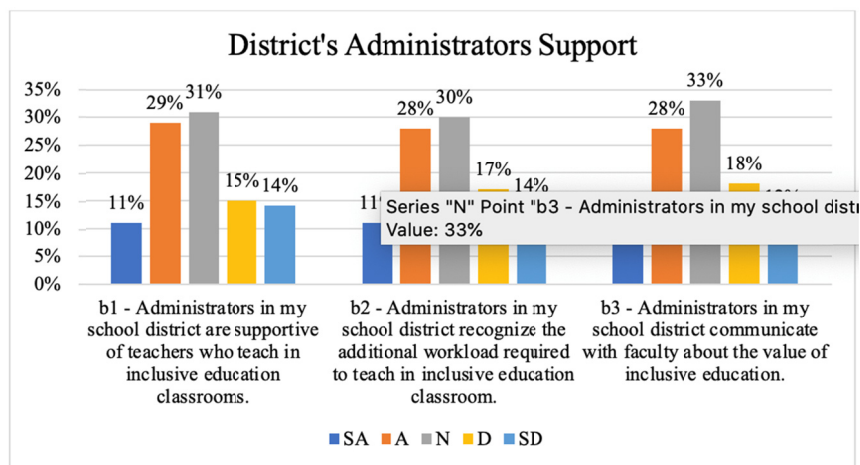


Figure 2. District administrator support for inclusive education

### 3.4 Inferential Statistics

The research question that been intended to answer in this study is: Are personal characteristics (gender, academic qualification, degree area, years of teaching experience, and grade instructed) related to teacher recognition of administrative support (administrators in school and administrators in the district department of education) for inclusive education?

The independent variables were gender, academic qualification, degree area, years of teaching experience, and the grade teachers instructed. The dependent variables were school administrator support and district administrator support.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to assess the relation between gender, academic qualification, degree area, years of teaching experience, and the grade teachers instruct, and teacher recognition of administrator support (administrators in school and administrators in the district’s department of education) for inclusive education.

Table 2 presents the results, summarizing Pillai’s Trace test results of the MANOVA for teacher recognition of administrator support for inclusive education.

Table 2. Pillai’s Trace test results of MANOVA for teacher recognition of administrator support for inclusive education

Independent Variables	Value	F	df	Error df	Sig	Eta
Gender	.003	.534	2	329	.587	
Academic Qualification	.010	.826	4	658	.509	
Years of teaching Experience	.015	1.258	4	658	.285	
Degree Area	.044	7.653	2	329	.001	.044
Teaching Grade	.022	3.632	2	329	.028	.022

Note. Findings that approach statistically significant depending on the p value: Significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

### 3.5 Test Results for Null Hypotheses

*H0 1.* There are no statistically significant differences in how teacher gender affects their recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education.

#### Finding

Pillai’s Trace test shows no statistically significant difference between gender in teacher recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Thus, recognition of school and district administrator support was not influenced by respondent gender. Therefore, null hypothesis H0 1 was accepted.

*H0 2.* There are no statistically significant differences in how teacher academic qualification affects their recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education.

*Finding*

Pillai’s Trace test shows no statistically significant difference between academic qualification teacher their recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Thus, academic qualification did not influence respondent recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Therefore, null hypothesis *H0 2* was accepted.

*H0 3.* There are no statistically significant differences in how years of teaching experiences affects teacher recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education.

*Finding*

Pillai’s Trace test shows no statistically significant difference between years of teaching experience and teacher recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Thus, years of teaching experience did not influence respondent recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Therefore, null hypothesis *H0 3* was accepted.

*H0 4.* There are no statistically significant differences in how teacher degree area affects their recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education.

*Finding*

Pillai’s Trace test shows statistically significant difference between degree areas in teacher recognition of school and district administrator supports for adopting inclusive education. Thus, degree area did not influence respondent recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Therefore, null hypothesis *H0 4* was rejected.

ANOVA determined the exact differences between the dependent variables (school administrators and district administrators). Table 3 displays the significance values of teacher responses about administrator support based on their degree area.

Table 3. ANOVA significance values for administrator support for adopting inclusive education by degree area

Dependent Variable	Type III SSS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta
School Administrators	19.530	1	19.530	14.847	.000	.043
District Administrators	5.387	1	5.387	4.686	.031	.014

Note. Findings that approach statistically significant depending on the p value: Significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level

ANOVA results showed that significant values were found for school administrators (see Table 3). District administrators turned up one significant value (see Table 3). The independent variable, Degree Area, is dichotomous, so a *t*-test was conducted to compare means among degree areas. Table 4 displays the means of special education and general education teachers in their recognition of school and district administrator supports for adopting inclusive education.

Table 4. Means of participants based on degree area about administrator supports

DV	Degree Area	N	M	SD	Sig
School Administrators	Special Education	148	2.70	1.09	.000
	General Education	184	3.19	1.19	
District Administrators	Special Education	148	2.90	1.05	.031
	General Education	184	3.16	1.09	

Note. N = Sample number; M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation; Sig = Significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

The *t*-test showed that general education teachers tended to agree that administrators support inclusive education, while special education teachers tended to disagree.

*H0 5.* There are no statistically significant differences in how the grade teachers instruct affects their recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education.

*Finding*

Pillai’s Trace test shows statistically significant difference in the relationship between grade teachers instruct and teacher recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Thus, the grade

teachers instruct does influence respondent recognition of school and district administrator support for adopting inclusive education. Therefore, null hypothesis  $H_0 5$  was rejected.

ANOVA was conducted to determine the exact differences and to find out which dependent variable (school administrators or district administrators) caused the differences. Table 5 displays the significance values of the responses about administrator support based on the grade teachers instruct.

Table 5. ANOVA significance values for administrator support for adopting inclusive education by the grade teachers instruct

Dependent Variable	Type III SSS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta
School Administrators	7.211	1	7.211	5.331	.022	.016
District Administrators	.449	1	.449	.385	.535	

Note. Findings that approach statistically significant depending on the p value: Significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

The ANOVA results showed significant values for school administrators. The independent variable is dichotomous, so a *t*-test was conducted to compare means. Table 6 displays the means of teacher responses for first grade through third grade and fourth grade through sixth grade.

Table 6. Mean for responses of participants to school administrator support based on the grade teachers instruct

Dependent Variables	Degree Area	N	M	SD	Sig
School Administrators	First grade–Third grade	157	2.82	1.18	.022
	Fourth grade–Sixth grade	175	3.11	1.15	

Note. N = Sample Number; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Sig = Significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

The *t*-test result indicated that responses of teachers who taught Fourth through sixth grade tend toward agreeing that School Administrators do support inclusive education, but responses of teachers who taught first through third grades felt that the support is insufficient.

In conclusion, the descriptive statistics, the responses almost converged between agreement and disagree with slightly more respondents agreeing that administrator support of inclusive education was present. The MANOVA test results indicated a statistically significant difference between respondent degree area and recognition of administrator support of inclusive education. Significant differences occurred for both school and district administrators. The *t*-test showed that general education teachers tended to agree that administrators support inclusive education, while special education teachers tended to disagree. Therefore, the null hypothesis  $H_0 4$  was rejected.

In addition, in research question two the MANOVA test confirmed another statistical difference between respondent teaching grade and their recognition of administrators' support of inclusive education. Based on the *t*-test the significant was found in just in School Administrators. Responses of teachers who taught Fourth through sixth grade tend toward agreeing that School Administrators do support inclusive education, but responses of teachers who taught first through third grades felt that the support is insufficient. Therefore, the null hypothesis  $H_0 5$  was rejected.

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

For teacher recognition of administrative support (administrators in schools and district administrators) for inclusive education, responses converged between agreement and disagreement, with slightly more respondents agreeing that administrators supported inclusive education.

The one-way MANOVA test results indicated a statistically significant difference between respondent degree area and recognition of administrative support of inclusive education ( $p = .001$ ). Significant differences occurred for both school and district administrators. The *t*-test showed that general education teachers tended to agree that administrators support inclusive education, while special education teachers tended to disagree.

The one-way MANOVA test confirmed a statistical difference between respondent teaching grade and recognition of administrative support of inclusive education ( $p = .028$ ).

Based on the *t*-test, a significant difference was found for school administrators. Teachers of fourth through sixth grade tend to agree that school administrators do support inclusive education, but teachers of first through third

grades felt that the support is insufficient.

There was statistically significant difference between degree area and grade instructed in teacher recognition of school and district administrative support for adopting inclusive education.

In this study, the results on teacher recognition of administrative support for inclusive education were almost evenly divided between agreement and disagreement, with agreement having a slight edge in recognizing administrative support of inclusive education. Among teachers, 37.3% agreed that school administrators support inclusive education, while 37% found the support insufficient. Nearly 40% recognized the support of district administrators for inclusive education, while 30% did not.

The study's inferential statistics proved that special education teachers tended to find the administrators support of inclusive education insufficient ( $M = 2.8$ ), while general education teachers tended to have no opinion about administrator support of inclusive education ( $M = 3$ ).

According to previous research (Andrews & Lupart, 2000; Bauer & Brown, 2001; Loreman, 2001; Loreman et al., 2005; Raymond & Loreman, 2005; Loreman, 2007), school or district administrators are very important to creating inclusive schools, but without clear legislation that supports inclusive education, they will have difficulty in enhancing inclusive education. Having policies and/or legislation that clearly supports inclusive education is useful in encouraging inclusive education and gaining support from schools and district administrators (Kennedy & Fisher, 2001; Loreman, 2007).

Students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia have the right by law to have free educational services in all levels of education. In examining the Saudi Disability Welfare Law (2000), I found it lacked clear support for inclusive education. The Saudi Disability Welfare Law article 2 (Educational Aspects) states, "Provide educational services in all levels of education from preschool, general education, technical education, and higher education in the way that meets the abilities and needs of the disabled. Facilitate the enrollment and continued evaluation of the curriculum and the provided educational services" (The Ministry of Labor and Social Development, 2000, p. 2).

In Saudi Arabia, the extent of the needs and challenges of the disabled cannot be accurately tracked because a clear definition of disability does not exist, and the country lacks a standardized and unified database of people with disabilities. Also, the awareness is lacking for issues related to working with and educating people with disabilities, as well as the obstacles they face. Furthermore, most work environments do not have accommodations for people with disabilities (Transformation Program Vision 2030, 2016).

Saudi Arabia is now moving toward a more inclusive vision known as Vision 2030 that aims to create a vibrant society, thriving economy, and ambitious nation (Vision 2030, 2016). Therefore, the government of Saudi Arabia created a National Transformation Program (Vision 2030, 2016). According to the National Transformation Program for Vision 2030 (2016), this vision "was adopted as a methodology and roadmap for economic and developmental action in the KSA" (p. 7). In Vision 2030 the government focuses on 8 objectives related to education reform:

- 1) Provide education services for all student levels.
- 2) Improve recruitment, training, and development of teachers.
- 3) Improve the learning environment to stimulate creativity and innovation.
- 4) Improve curricula and teaching methods.
- 5) Improve students' values and core skills.
- 6) Enhance the educational system's capability to address national development requirements and to meet labor market demands.
- 7) Develop creative financing methods and improve the educational system's financial efficiency.
- 8) Increase Private Sector Participation in the Education Sector (National Transformation Program 2030, 2016).

Also, this program under theme number six (Labor Market Accessibility & Attractiveness), the second strategic objective is to integrate people with disabilities into the labor force. This objective aims to "remove obstacles that hinder people with disabilities from integrating into the labor market by providing opportunities, establishing infrastructure, and developing their professional and social skills" (Transformation Program for Vision 2030, 2016, p. 80). One strategy that the Saudi government included to achieve this objective is improving and supporting legislation, policies, and classifications by establishing the Authority of Caring for Disabled People to provide necessary services to the disabled (Transformation Program Vision 2030, 2016).

Thus, the support of administrators in schools or districts will be sufficient if current special education's legislation clearly supports inclusive education. School leaders will need to do more to encourage inclusive education, understand the workload, and organize collaboration between special and general educators. Also, school and district leaders can help develop support systems by connecting school communities with other organizations that advocate for the rights of the disabled to create an inclusive culture in schools and society. Vision 2030 promises improvement for the disabled, especially in legislation and policies for educating students with disabilities.

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