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TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN EGYPT

A Thesis Submitted by

Asar Ismail Youssef Ismail

Submitted to the Department of International & Comparative Education
April 23, 2018
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts
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Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Including Children With Special Educational Needs in Private Schools in Egypt

A Thesis Submitted to
Department of International & Comparative Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in International & Comparative Education

by Asar Ismail

Under the supervision of Dr. Heba El-Deghaidy

Spring 2018
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes of general education teachers toward educating special needs students in inclusive classrooms in Egyptian private schools. It seeks to investigate the factors that might affect their views and attitudes towards inclusive education. In addition, it suggests some recommendations for having a successful inclusive system in Egypt. The study was conducted in three private schools in Cairo. The participants were ten general education teachers who were chosen based on their involvement in inclusive practices or teaching special needs students in their classrooms. The methodology utilized was the qualitative approach through conducting one to one semi structured interviews with the teachers. The findings of this study showed that most of the teachers demonstrated positive attitudes toward including special needs students in their classrooms. While two teachers out of ten held negative attitudes toward inclusion. Furthermore, teachers were found to hold more positive attitudes when there are a small number of students with special needs in each class and when their cases are not severe. In addition, the results indicated that school administration support, professional development and knowledge, severity of the disabilities, and teacher parent collaboration were common themes developed among the teachers to indicate the factors that affected their attitudes toward inclusion. This study is guided by the theory of “Planned Behavior” which suggests that an individual’s behavior is both predicted and influenced by intentions driven from three basic components; attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2005). The results of this study could raise awareness among policymakers of the importance of implementing inclusive education that suits all students in Egypt.
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List of Abbreviations

**ADHD:** Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

**ODD:** Oppositional Defiant Disorder

**SEN:** Special Educational Needs

**MOE:** Ministry of Education
1. Introduction

Students come from different social backgrounds and cultures and have different needs and abilities. Education should serve all students regardless of their differences in gender, race and disability. By placing them in the same classrooms, all students will learn from each other’s diversities and they will be exposed to new experiences (United Nations Development of Economic and Social Affairs., 2016). Within a group of students, one can find that a few of them suffer from mental or physical disabilities known as “special needs”. The Egyptian Ministry of Education defines students with special educational needs (SEN) as those who need special education for their development and progress which, in turn, goes beyond the common schools’ resources (Hassanein, 2015). However, from an international perspective, children with special needs are those who experience greater learning difficulties than other children from the same age group. Additionally, special needs children are those who have a certain disability that prevents them from learning and from using the available educational facilities in the same way as their peers can (Education Act, 1996 as cited in Fredrickson & Cline, 2009).

Children with special needs in countries across the world have been facing discrimination by being educated in special needs schools based on the myth that they all share the same needs, unlike their peers in regular education schools (Hassanein, 2015). As a consequence, numerous legislations have called for the right to educate special needs students alongside their peers in public schools. The first initiative started in the United States in 1975 with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law stated the right for all handicapped students to receive “free appropriate education” in public schools (EHA, 1975). Then, in 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) stated that schools should provide free education to all students in the “least restrictive environment” (IDEA, 1990). Moreover, in 2004, the previous law was reviewed to add that only children with severe disabilities will be educated in special education classes or separate schools. However, in this case, regular schooling will not be able to fulfill the satisfying outcomes (IDEA, 2004 as cited in Cagney, 2009).

Accordingly, education for special needs students has been transformed from segregation to what has become known as inclusive education.
The last two decades have witnessed the appearance and evolution of the term “inclusion” which calls for the integration of children with special needs in mainstream schools. In Egypt, the idea of inclusive education is relatively new to the educational system. It started in the late 1990s when the Ministry of Education included some special needs children in general education schools (Hassanein, 2015). The purpose of this was to minimize the problem of enrolling special needs students due to the limited availability of special education schools. Due to the absence of an adequate political and governmental vision for implementing inclusion in the Egyptian schools, special education schools are still the best option for students’ with special needs to receive education and to not be a burden on society (Hassanein, 2015; UNDESA, 2016).

Many research studies have suggested that inclusive classrooms benefit both the students with special needs and their peers as the experience of sharing enhances students’ learning process (Ross-Hill, 2009). However, the inclusion of special needs students in general classrooms is a very complex and controversial topic that has been much debated by teachers, parents and even school administrators. Each has different views and perceptions about inclusion and what is best for the students. Concerning the teachers’ attitudes, a great number of research studies have emphasized that teachers’ attitudes are one of the significant indicators in measuring to which extent inclusive education is successful (Al-Zyoudi, 2006; El-Ashry, 2009; Parnell, n.d.). Thus, the aim of this study is to shed light on this area as teachers are considered the backbone of inclusive education.

1.1 Current State of Inclusion in Egypt

The topic of including children with special needs in general classrooms is relatively new to the Egyptian educational context (El-Ashry, 2009). Issues facing the educational system in Egypt have created a vision that inclusive education is hardly a topic to be recognized and achieved (Emam & Mohamed, 2011). These issues are represented in the absence of qualified teachers, and the lack of facilities and differentiated curricula that can be adjusted to suit all types of students, all of which allow the presence of special needs students in different special education units (Emam & Mohamed, 2011). Hassanein (2015) reported that if teachers are not accepting of the idea
of dealing with special needs students in their classrooms, it would be impossible to have successful inclusive schools in Egypt. Awad (2016) added that Egyptian teachers who lack training and experience in special education would burden rather than facilitate the inclusion process. Moreover, the lack of facilities in Egyptian schools, including accessible school buildings and adequate curricula, is another issue to be considered (Janney, Beers & Rayens, 1995 as cited in Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Despite all of these issues, the Egyptian Ministry of Education (MOE) has shown great interest in inclusive education by developing inclusive initiatives for special needs students (Parnell, n.d.). According to Hassanein (2015), the process of integrating special needs students in mainstream schools started in Egypt during the late 1990s. These initiatives were applied in three ways; “partial inclusion”, “full inclusion”, and in non-governmental institution projects and private schools. In partial inclusion, students with special needs are integrated in special education classes in general schools. However, Gaad (2011) claimed that advocates of inclusion have some reservations over the terminology of “partial inclusion”. They believe that the terms ‘partial” and “inclusion” shouldn’t be combined together as, linguistically, inclusion supports the idea of fully including all individuals in the same setting. By adding ‘partial’ term, the core meaning of inclusion is negated thus “continuing practice of exclusion” (p.11). In the case of full inclusion, children are included in general classes where teachers are following inclusive programs to address all students. However, there are a limited number of students who can be fully included in general classrooms as this depends entirely on the severity of their disabilities (Hassanein, 2015). Finally, some private schools and non-governmental institutions follow inclusive practices under the supervision of the MOE. Despite all these efforts to enroll children with disabilities in general education schools, Hassanein (2015) mentioned that most students with special educational needs are still not fully included in general classrooms, and mainly receive education in special classrooms.

The MOE in Egypt implemented several pilot projects during the academic year of 2004-2005 in order to include children with intellectual disabilities in some general education classrooms. The term “intellectual disabilities” is commonly used in Egyptian policy and it is synonymous with learning disabilities and mentally retarded (Hassanein, 2015; MOE, 2014). The number of general education schools that offer inclusive
education is increasing compared to the relatively small percentage of children with special needs that were included in the Egyptian schools (Ministry of Education, 2012 as cited in Abdelhameed, 2015). This is due to the fact that the best setting in which to teach special needs students is at special education schools (UNDESA, 2016).

More efforts by the Egyptian MOE to promote inclusive education included developing the national strategic plan for pre-university education in 2014-2030 (MOE, 2014). One of the aims of this plan is both to include children with mild disabilities in well-equipped public education schools, and to develop more special education schools to that can accommodate students with more severe disabilities (MOE, 2014). Children with mild disabilities, as proposed by Parnell (n.d.), are those who have hearing and visual disabilities, or minor intellectual and physical disabilities. Until today, these plans are not supported with an actual vision or policy to aid in implementing inclusive education in Egypt (Abdelhameed, 2015; Hassanein, 2015). Still the term of inclusion is vague and considered as a taboo in Egypt and in the Middle East (Gaad, 2011).

1.1.1 Private and public schools. The experience of inclusion started gradually to take place in Egyptian public schools since the late 90s. In March 2002, the Egyptian Minister of Education declared that the ministry is taking the lead to implement inclusive systems in more than 270 schools across the county in collaboration with “the World Bank, UNESCO, Save the Children Agency (UK), the City Center and Caritas Egypt” (Ghoneim, 2014, p. 194). Also, he pointed that Egypt would be one of the leading countries in the area of inclusion if all schools fully include special needs students.

Following the ministerial declaration in 2002, the MOE announced a Ministerial Act in 2009 stating the right for students with mild disabilities to enroll in public and private schools (MoE, 2014). This decree announced the objectives of getting 5,040 schools ready to include 152,000 special needs students by the year of 2012 (MoE, 2008; MoE, 2014). However, in 2013, the ministry estimated that about 36,808 children with special needs receive educational serves in special education schools, while only 2,776 SEN students were registered in 452 general education schools across the country (Alkhateeb, Hadidi, & Al Khateeb, 2016; Hassanein, 2015). Therefore, according to Hassanein (2015), the overall special needs students enrolled in general schools across
Egypt remain semi integrated in regular classes and primarily educated in special education settings.

In collaboration with the Egyptian MOE, the Ministry of Communications started a project to provide schools with different means of technology to aid students with special needs in their educational process (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2013). The initiatives took place in different special education schools for students with disabilities including 301 public schools following inclusive systems for students with mild disabilities. During the empirical steps of this project, only 35 inclusive public schools were supported with some technological requirements.

Moreover, the national strategic plan for the pre-university education in Egypt put some goals to successfully include students with special needs in all schools and provide adequate educational opportunities to meet their diversities (MoE, 2014). The plan stressed on obliges the international schools to accept students with special needs in their yearly plans starting the academic year of 2013-2014. Additionally, the plan underlined the essentially of providing well-equipped resources rooms in private and public schools to help in implementing an inclusive environment.

Recently in Egypt, a new law had passed to ensure the rights of people with disabilities in February 2018. The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first act that requires all educational organizations to embrace policies, which ensure similar opportunities for students with disabilities (Shalabi, 2018). The law provides many amendments to protect the rights of all students with special needs in receiving the same quality of education inside classroom. Supposedly, this law aligns with the treaty of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Egypt was one of 175 countries that affirmed the treaty (UNCRPD, 2006). In addition, the government sets a “criminal liability” on policy makers who break this law with a charge varying from 500 to 2000 Egyptian pounds (Shalabi, 2018).

Despite the fact that studies exploring the status of inclusion in private schools in Egypt have not been presented yet, some implications were found in a study conducted by Awad (2016) on evaluating the actual presence of inclusive system in some private schools. Findings of the study showed that not all students with SEN are included; in addition they receive low quality of inclusive practices.
Despite the efforts of MOE to implement inclusive system in public and private schools across Egypt, the actual number of students with SEN who included in schools is about 1% (MOE, 2014). The suggested plans and decrees are not backed by legislations to ensure the implementation of inclusion in all schools (Parnell, n.d). The current status of inclusion is yet vague and progress is still minimal. Therefore, it is empirical to develop effective plans and requirements to reach the desired outcomes. Also, it is urgent to work on the essential barriers that hinder the success of inclusion in Egypt.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The notion of including special needs students in general classrooms is not an easy aim to be reached in the Egyptian community, due to various challenges. The main challenge is presented in the absence of qualified teachers and differentiated curricula to meet the needs of learners with different abilities (Emam & Mohamed, 2011). Accordingly, there is not adequate attention or awareness of inclusive education in Egypt, despite the global shift regarding the implementation of inclusion in regular mainstream classrooms (Awad, 2016; Parnell, n.d.). Additionally, there is a huge debate among the education community about the importance of inclusion and its effectiveness for both special needs and general students (Murphy, 2014). Teachers have controversial beliefs and thoughts about teaching special needs students among general students in the same classrooms. Therefore, it is imperative to understand teachers’ views and attitudes toward inclusion. The results of this study could help teachers and administrators know more about inclusive practices and could raise awareness among policymakers of the importance of implementing inclusive education that suits all students in Egypt.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the attitudes of general education teachers towards educating special needs students in inclusive classrooms in Egyptian private schools. It seeks to investigate the factors that might affect their attitudes towards inclusive education. In addition, it suggests some recommendations for having a successful inclusive education in Egypt. Despite the availability of previous literature which examines teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion practices worldwide, still there are minimal studies on the attitudes of Egyptian teachers toward inclusive education in private schools. The findings of this study will add to the existing body of literature and
will increase the understanding that general education teachers have about the possibility of educating special needs children in their general education classrooms.

Therefore, the study sought to answer the following research questions.

**Research questions**

1. What are teachers’ attitudes toward teaching special needs students in inclusive classrooms in private schools?
2. What are the perceived factors that inflected their attitudes towards inclusive education?
3. What recommendations can be made to make the inclusive system happen in Egypt?

**1.4 Definition of Terms**

Main terms in this study are attitudes, special needs students, and special education. Thus, it is important to present their definitions as employed in this study.

- **Attitudes:** For the purpose of this study, attitudes are the person’s feelings and perceptions toward a person or object, which, in return, could affect his or her behavior towards this person or object later on (Cassady, 2011).

- **Special needs:** Due to the various debates concerning the main definitions and categories of special needs in the Middle East (Gaad, 2011), the researcher adopted one definition to be used in the context of this study. According to the Education Act (1996 as cited in Fredrickson & Cline, 2009), children with special needs are those who find more difficulty to learn than the rest of the children of his or her age, and those who have a certain disability that prevents them from learning and using the available educational facilities as their peers are able to do. The Egyptian MOE categorizes students with SEN as follows: students with physical disabilities, students with hearing and visual impairments, students with mild mental disabilities, students with Down syndrome or intellectual disabilities, and also includes other categories such as, ADHD, dyslexia, autism, and some learning disabilities (Hassanein, 2015).

- **Special Education:** According to Gaad (2011), “special education is a process that aims at meeting the individualized needs of all students in a manner that helps each one reach his or her potential” (p. 82).
2. Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of literature presented by previous studies that examined teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about inclusion in Egypt and across the world. Firstly, the history of inclusion and some educational practices will be presented briefly. This section will mention some international laws that call for the rights of educating special needs students in mainstream schools. Then, various definitions of inclusion will be proposed along with the importance of inclusion on students’ personality and learning progress. After that, the barriers that could be hindering the implementation of inclusive practices in Egypt and worldwide will be discussed. Finally, teachers’ mixed attitudes toward inclusive education and the factors that are suggested to influence these beliefs.

2.1 History of Inclusion

Before the 1970s, children with special needs were educated in special educational units that were entirely separated from general educational schooling (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005). The 1970s’ had witnessed the implementation of new laws concerning the status of special needs education by proposing some initiatives towards the application of inclusion. This started in 1975 when the Education for all the Handicapped Act (EHA) was passed in the United States. This law confirmed the right for all handicapped students to receive “free appropriate education” in public schools alongside with their non-disabled peers in the “least restrictive environment” (EHA, 1975, p.779,792). In 1997 the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was introduced to stress the idea of integrating students with disabilities in mainstream schools. However, its effectiveness was limited, and based on the nature of the types of disability. The law stated that to;

“the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from regular environments occurs only when the nature or severity of disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be attained satisfactory” (IDEA, Sec 612 5A).

Shortly after, in 1994, representatives from different governments around the world held a conference for special needs education in Salamanca, Spain in order to support the right for special needs children to be educated alongside their peers in general
classrooms (Newton, Carbridg, & Hunter-Johnson, 2014). The statement stressed on the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms in creating healthy educational environments for all students, avoiding discrimination and providing education for all (UNDESA, 2016). More serious steps concerning children with special needs were adopted in 2001 through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA). Despite the fact that this law did not stress on the idea of inclusion, the law specified the importance of eliminating the gap between children with disadvantages and their peers (Nagle, Yunker & Malmgren, 2006 as cited in Ross-Hill, 2009).

A further development in the area of inclusive education took place in 2006 through the treaty of the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006). This treaty ensured that all students with disabilities have the right to receive free education in general education schools (UNCRPD, 2006, article 24). The treaty has been affirmed by 175 counties across the world and Egypt is one of them.

In 2015, a step forward towards inclusion was presented in the Sustainable Development 2030 Agenda. This agenda included 17 goals with 169 targets, was adopted by the Member states of United Nations, and called upon the importance of not leaving a child without education (UNDESA, 2016). The call for Goal Number Four highlighted the importance of inclusive education for both special needs and regular children and how diversities promote lifelong experiences and learning (UNDESA, 2016). All the previous legislations suggested that, by law, regular schools are mandated to create a homogeneous educational environment among all students despite the fact of their different abilities and needs (Ross-hill, 2009).

**2.1.1 Policies regarding teachers’ statues in inclusive environments.**
Internationally, there is expanding interests focusing on applying inclusive systems in all schools. The movement towards inclusion depends on implementing some principals and sharing a common vision among all parties relevant to the inclusive process. In order to reduce barrier toward practicing inclusion, active collaboration between all education community members should take place to translate this vision into practice (UNESCO, 2009). Teachers are one of the essential parties who work as keys to create a successful inclusive education. Therefore, it is important to help teachers to understand their role in
the inclusive education and that including students with different needs is considered an opportunity more than a problem.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with UNCRC calls for providing educational equity among all children (UNCRC, 1989). They provide goals to educate and train teachers to support students with special needs. The framework ensured that there is a need to provide continues training for teachers to raise the value of teaching worldwide.

In Namibia, the MOE launches “the Sector Policy on Inclusive Education” to ensure that all children have the right to receive the needed educational support in mainstream schools across the country regardless of their disabilities (Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, 2013). Also the policy aims to create an inclusive environment suitable for all teachers and students who have been marginalized. To achieve the required objectives of this policy, one of the guiding principles is to develop the status of teachers by providing the following support; relevant training programs for pre service and in service teachers before they begin their teaching career, provide trained specialists and teacher assistants to help teachers when needed and provide new differentiated instructions and teaching methodologies to upgrade teachers’ skills (Sector Policy on Inclusive Education, 2013).

In developing teachers’ education towards more inclusive education, Promoting Inclusive Teacher Education Advocacy Guides was developed to support the importance of pre-service teacher education for inclusion (UNESCO, 2013). It was hoped to improve the status of teacher education to help in developing more inclusive systems. Pre-service education is essential for teachers to accept diversities, provide the highest quality education for all students and face numerous social difficulties that may exist inside classrooms (UNESCO, 2013). It suggested that when teachers acquire inclusive education primarily in their teacher education, they are more likely not to view teaching inclusive classroom as a burden.

In Egypt, the National strategic Plan for the Pre-university Education aimed to include students with mild needs in all schools and provide students with special needs with high quality of educational opportunities (MOE, 2014). One of the goals of this plan is to offer training programs for 408 teachers at schools undergoing inclusive practices in
order to include all grade levels by the academic year of 2013-2014. The plan aimed to provide the targeted teachers with professional development programs to enhance their educational statues to meet the inclusive requirements. Additionally, it intended to supply the teachers with new educational strategies and instructional methods required to sufficiently integrate all kinds of students.

2.2 Definition of Inclusion and its Impact on Students’ with SEN Learning

Before the term “inclusion” was introduced, the first move towards educating special needs students in mainstream schools was known as “integration”. In some countries like Canada and the United Kingdom, “integration” has been used to refer to practices of inclusive education and continues to be used until now (Porter, 2008 as cited in Murphy, 2014). However, in this study, the term “integration” is based on educating special needs students into regular schools, but in separate classrooms for special education (Murphy, 2014). This approach did not respond to the special needs advocates’ desire that students with SEN should receive the same educational opportunities as their peers (UNESCO, 2005). Thus, the term “inclusion” has been suggested to represent a deeper value (meaning) of social integration presented in equal educational opportunities for all students without discrimination or oppression (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Because there is no clear universal definition of the concept of inclusion in Arab countries, including Egypt, several suggested definitions by researchers who tackled the idea of inclusion in their studies are discussed below (Alkhateeb, Hadidi, & Alkhateeb, 2016). Alkhateeb, Hadidi and Alkhateeb (2016) and Newton and Hunter-Johnson (2014) mentioned in their studies that the ideology behind inclusion is the integration of diverse students together within a regular classroom despite their disabilities or differences, so that they can share the same education and classroom experiences. Blecker and Boakes (2010) defined inclusive education as “educating students with disabilities in general education programmes with their non-disabled peers” (p. 435). According to Laluvein (2008), the term “inclusion” not only refers to relocating special needs students coming from special education contexts into regular classes but also it “implies a whole school approach to social relations and production of meaning reached through processes of negotiation between parents, teachers and children” (p. 35). Furthermore, Awad (2016) agreed with Laluvein’s (2008) understanding about inclusion adding the importance of
knowing how to educate all learners, discarding barriers and encouraging full participation. While, UNESCO (2005) defined inclusion as a “dynamic approach”, seeing student diversities as a good opportunity to learn and not a problem that everyone should avoid. The variety of definitions detailed above shows that there is no common explanation or definition of the concept of inclusion. This also indicates that defining the concept is based on the way the concept is understood and implemented in different settings. It also might be indicative of how individuals interpret the concept of inclusion according to their cultural background. Finally, the definition of inclusion is changing over time, thus, educators and stakeholders should understand the core meaning of “inclusion” to know how it should be applied (Gaad, 2011).

The aim of inclusive education is to enable teachers to see students’ diversities as a challenge and to provide equal participation opportunities to all types of students in regular classrooms (UNESCO, 2005). In this view, many studies highlighted the benefits of inclusive education in having a better social life and higher academic achievements for all students despite their different abilities (Hassanein, 2015; Parnell, n.d.; UNDESA, 2016). As an indication for the success of the inclusion approach, elementary school teachers reported that their students’ academic level had remained consistent and in some cases increased after including special need students in their classrooms (Idol, 2006). Overall, the parents of non-disabled students in the Peck, Staub, Gallucci, and Schwartz (2004) study found that the impact of inclusion on their children was remarkable. They noticed that since their children joined the inclusive classrooms, their sense of acceptance and appreciation of the needs of others and their understanding of people’s differences had increased. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) believe that inclusion aims to reshape the culture of mainstream schools to accommodate the needs of all learners and ensure that all students belong to the same society. Thus, instead of living in a marginalized society, inclusion would aid special needs students to interact with their peers in the same surrounding environment and eliminate the social barriers between them and the outside world (UNDESA, 2016).

2.3 Barriers of Implementing Inclusive Education

Parnell (n.d.) suggested that barriers that hinder the implementation of real inclusive practices in general classrooms should be examined in order to analyze the
main needs and issues of inclusion in Egypt. Accordingly, a number of studies have suggested some barriers that could be hindering the process of inclusive education in Egypt and other countries. These barriers could be related to; the negative attitude of teachers and parents towards inclusion, the lack of support from leadership and policy makers, and the lack of suitable physical environments for special needs students (Abdelhameed, 2015; Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Awad, 2016; Ghoneim, 2014; Hassanein, 2015; Parnell, n.d.). Some researchers stated that teachers, as well as parents, who hold negative attitudes towards inclusion, are considered to be the primary barrier that is delaying the success of implementing inclusion (Abdelhameed, 2015; Hassanein, 2015; UNDESA, 2016). For example, Peck, Staub, Gallucci and Schwartz (2004) mentioned in their study that some parents of non-disabled children believe that including children with special needs in general classroom is waste of money. They also added that regular schools are not a place for educating children with severe disabilities and feel that it is unfair for their children to be educated in such an environment. According to Ghoneim (2014), lack of parental awareness about the significance of inclusive system may hinder the implementation of such system across the Egyptian schools. It seems that parents believe that inclusive education does not exist in Egypt, and even if it did exist would not be beneficial (Abdelhameed, 2015; Awad, 2016). Factors affecting teachers’ negative attitude towards inclusion will be discussed in detail later in this study.

It has been noted that regular education teachers believe that solving problems related to inclusion requires intervention from administrators who deal with special education teachers (Hammond & Ingalls, 2003 as cited in Ross-Hill, 2009). Further, Emam and Mohamed (2011) mentioned in their study that the lack of support that school administrators show to teachers and the lack of awareness of inclusive education make it difficult for a concept like inclusion to be realized. In other words, Egyptian schools cannot offer inclusive education as long as their leaders are not knowledgeable or experienced enough to create an inclusive environment (Ghoneim, 2014). Janney, Beers and Rayens (1995) reported that the presence of accessible school buildings and adequate educational materials that are appropriate for special needs students could help develop a positive attitude toward inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Finally, the inclusion policy is going through many trials and its success is still ambiguous and intangible in
Egypt (Abdelhameed, 2015; Gaad, 2011). Therefore, it is important to shed the light on the views and attitudes of teachers towards inclusion as it is believed that a positive attitude could be an indicator for the success of inclusion (Newton, Carbridg, & Hunter-Johnson, 2014).

2.4 Teachers’ Attitudes about Inclusive Education

Teachers are critical for the success of inclusive education (Newton, Carbridg, & Hunter-Johnson, 2014). In fact, the views and attitudes of teachers toward inclusive practices and their capability to teach a diverse pool of students in the same classroom are significant elements that should be examined. According to Hammond and Ingalls (2003), it is crucial to examine teachers’ attitudes towards educating students with disabilities in general classroom settings as their views could negatively affect the idea of inclusive education (Newton, Carbridg, & Hunter-Johnson, 2014).

Based on previous studies, teachers have displayed mixed views about the idea of including students with disabilities in general education classrooms. According to a study by Newton, Carbridg and Hunter-Johnson (2014) on primary and high school teachers in the Bahamas, primary school teachers held negative attitudes toward inclusion, claiming that their public education already has problems and that educating special needs children could be a burden on both the teachers and the school administration. However, the majority of secondary school teachers were supportive of the idea of inclusion, emphasizing that children will learn to accept each other and to acknowledge their differences by having children with disabilities in the same classroom. Another study by Blecker and Boakes (2010), suggested that teachers seem to support inclusive education but only under certain conditions mainly relate to the presence of appropriate professional development and teaching experience to assist them to teach students with different abilities. Similarity, Avramidis and Norwich (2002) review of the literature relating to the perception of teachers towards the inclusion of special needs students suggested that most teachers have accepted the idea of inclusion under certain conditions related to teachers’ experience and training, the severity of the student’s disability, and the level of administrative and peer support. Moreover, even in Turkey, the results of a study by Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010) revealed mildly negative attitude of some teachers towards the inclusion of special needs students into general classrooms. However, the rest of the
teachers demonstrated positive attitudes toward inclusion, adding that they are willing to attend professional development programs to enhance their knowledge about educating special needs students (Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). Thus, according to the findings mentioned in earlier studies, most teachers across the world would accept the idea of inclusion if they received adequate trainings and programs related to the area of special education. Furthermore, it seems that teachers’ prior experience in the field of special education and acquisition of professional development programs are essential factors that could detect their acceptance or rejection of the concept of educating special needs students in their mainstream classrooms.

Studies that have examined teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education have not only been conducted outside Egypt. Indeed, there are several studies on Egyptian teachers that offer an insight into their attitudes towards, and understanding about, inclusion of children with special needs in Egyptian mainstream schools. A study conducted by El-Ashry (2009) on the attitude of Egyptian general education teachers to inclusion in Egypt showed negative views toward inclusive practices. Teachers refused to educate special needs children in their regular classrooms, especially those who were mentally retarded or suffer from some behavioral or emotional disorders. In her research on the attitude of general and special education teachers toward the inclusion of mentally retarded students in general classrooms in Egypt, Abdelhameed (2015) stated that the general findings of her study showed negative results for both sets of teachers. Special education and general educators tend to demonstrate negative attitude toward including students with mental disabilities in their classrooms. They believe that inclusive education is not beneficial for either the students with SEN or their peers.

Other studies have examined the perception of Egyptian teachers regarding the placement of children with disabilities across different types of schools including; special education schools, residential care institutions and inclusive education schools. The majority of the teachers favored the special education schools option over the other two types of schools for special needs students. The residential care institutions were the second most popular option, followed by inclusive education schools, thus revealing the negative attitude teachers’ displayed toward inclusive education (Egyptian Teachers’ Attitudes towards Inclusion, n.d). In fact, it seems that placing special needs students in
special education schools or residential care institutions is almost automatic within the Egyptian community (Gaad, 2011). Fear of failure when teaching special needs students makes teachers merely reject the whole idea of including students with SEN in their mainstream classrooms, and this in turn may exacerbate negative attitudes of inclusion (Gaad, 2004 as cited in Gaad, 2011). Earlier studies have shown that the attitude of teachers regarding inclusive education is influenced by several common factors that will be discussed in the section below.

2.5 Factors Affecting Teachers’ Attitudes

Despite the fact that there has been a global shift to inclusive education practices, many teachers, still have doubts and misconceptions about the implementation of such practices in their own classrooms (Blecker & Boakes, 2008). Research has suggested some common factors that could be influencing teachers’ attitudes towards inclusive education. These factors include; the teacher’s personal experience and previous knowledge in dealing with special needs, the severity of the student’s disabilities, teacher’s gender, the school environment and level of support available, and the grade level taught (Adams, Harris, & Jones, 2016; Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Hassanein, 2015).

2.5.1 Teacher’s gender. The findings of Al-Zyoudi’s (2006) study suggested that there is a slight difference between the attitudes of male and female teachers. Females were more positive than males towards educating children with special needs in inclusive classrooms. However, another study conducted in Egypt showed the opposite, as male teachers held more positive attitudes towards inclusion than female teachers (Hassanein, 2015). It indicates that teachers’ attitude toward educating children with special needs may be influenced by their gender but it is not necessarily that female teachers would have more positive attitudes than their male counterparts but clearly males and females differ in their responses.

2.5.2 Teachers’ experience and knowledge about inclusion. Teachers’ experience and knowledge about inclusion is one of the major factors that can influence the attitude of teachers toward inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). It has been acknowledged that teachers who know how to interact with students with special needs are usually those who have previously received training programs or had previous
experience in this area (Awad, 2016). For example, a study that researched special and general teachers stated that both types of teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusion because they lacked experience and knowledge of teaching students with SEN (Abdelhameed, 2015). It could be that this is due to their limited knowledge of SEN, as another study suggested that teachers believe that if they received the proper training and knowledge about how to deal with special needs children, the probability of them holding positive attitude towards inclusion will increase (Hunter-Johnson, Newton and Cambridge, 2014). Several teachers in Ross- Hill’s (2009) study concluded that their participation in special education training programs had helped them to accept students with special needs in their regular classrooms and had promoted the importance of inclusion.

2.5.3 The severity of students’ disabilities. It has been suggested that the different types of students’ disability could be one of the most important factors that could influence the attitude of Egyptian teachers toward inclusion (Al-Zyoudi, 2006). The findings showed that teachers are nearly positive about the idea of inclusion. However their views favored the inclusion of children with physical disabilities in regular education, rather than those with other types of disabilities. They also concluded that not all special needs children could be included in regular classrooms. This of course contradicts the idea of inclusion that states that all children should receive the same education in the same schools (Hassanein, 2015).

2.5.4 Grade level taught. It has been reported that teachers’ attitudes towards the possibility of educating special needs students in regular classrooms can differ according to the grade level they have been teaching (Rose-Hill, 2009). For example, according to Murfy’s (2014) findings, teachers at primary schools are more likely to teach special needs students compared to teachers at secondary schools. A study by Idol (2006) provided evidence that grade level could be a factor that affected teachers’ attitude towards educating special needs students. Echoing Murfy’s (2014) findings, primary teachers in Idol’s (2006) study were more likely to favor inclusive education than some of the secondary teachers studied who were not supportive of having inclusion classrooms. It can be assumed that these results are due to the relationship that exists between a special needs student and his teachers. For example, primary teachers spend
more time with their students, unlike teachers who teach older age groups (Hassanein, 2015). Therefore, a certain relationship arises between primary teachers and students with SEN due to their daily interactions which make these teachers understand their students and learn how best to respond to their needs. According to Hassanein’s (2015) review, some scholars found that differences between the attitudes of primary and secondary teachers depended on the breadth of curriculum they taught. In other words, secondary teachers tended to concentrate on subject matter rather than student’s needs and differences which make their attitudes more negative than primary teachers.

2.5.5 School environment and administration support. Teachers claimed that the idea of including special needs students in regular classrooms could be more achievable if the school buildings were well equipped to receive students with disabilities (Al-Zyoudi, 2006). In addition, teachers held positive attitudes towards educating special need students if those teachers were able to receive the required support from the school administration. As an educator, the support and encouragement of school administrators could raise the morale of teachers and their commitment to their workplace. If school heads supply their teachers with guidance and the tools required to deal with students with special needs, teachers will demonstrate positive attitudes toward inclusion and will accept special needs students in their classrooms.

2.5.6 Teacher - parent collaboration. A positive teacher- parent partnership is considered as a basic component to achieve inclusive practices (EAHCA, 1975). The fundamental presumption of such a collaboration is that educators and parents should cooperate to give children with special needs the best possible guidance and education (Adams, Harris, & Jones, 2016). However, most of the time teachers and parents demonstrate a wide range of thoughts and attitudes that sometimes results in miscommunication. As suggested by Staples and Diliberto (2010), the tension between teachers and parents might affect the educational progress of special needs students. The research has shown that cooperative parents might have a direct impact on teachers’ attitudes towards children with special needs (Ahmmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012). A study performed in Bangladesh proved that parental collaboration of students with and without disabilities had a significant influence on teachers’ attitudes towards including special needs students in the general education classroom (Ahmmed, Sharma, &
To conclude, the reviewed literature suggested some factors that influence the attitudes of teachers toward including students with special needs. Thus, it is hoped that by identifying such factors, this study will prompt some implications to support teachers and students.

2.6 Theory of Planned Behavior

This study is guided by the theory of “Planned Behavior” which was firstly proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985 which developed from the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1991). The theory of planned behavior suggests that an individual’s behavior is both predicted and influenced by intentions driven from three basic components; attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 2005) (see Figure1). In other words, it shows that person’s willingness to perform certain actions is related to his/her positive attitudes, taking into consideration the presence of normative beliefs and perceived variables related to his/her prior favorable experiences and beliefs towards this behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

In this theory, Ajzen suggests that attitudes tend to refer to an individual’s favorable or unfavorable evaluations of a certain object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Attitudes towards the behavior suggest that “attitudes develop reasonably from the beliefs people hold about the object of the attitude” (Ajzen, 1991). Generally speaking, one’s behaviors and actions could be predicted by measuring one’s positive or negative attitudes toward those behaviors. In relation to this study, teachers are more likely to accept the idea of inclusion if they evaluate its performance positively, while they are unlikely to accept the inclusion of students with SEN if they hold negative attitudes toward it.

The concept of subjective norm is another determinate that influences person’s intention to accomplish a certain behavior. It is "the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior" of interest (Ajzen, 1991, p. 188). Subjective norm reflects an individual’s views about what important people believe to which extent the individual should perform or shouldn’t perform a given behavior (Ajzen, 2005).

The third component of the theory of planned behavior is the perceived behavioral control. This factor refers to the sense of self- efficacy an individual have to perform a certain behavior (Ajzen, 2005). It also indicates people’s beliefs to have more
probabilities and resources to perform the behavior of interest (Ajzen, 2005). In addition, Ajzen and Fishbein, (1977) claim that there are some aspects that shape individuals’ control beliefs to perform a given behavior. These aspects could be related to “another person, a physical object, a behavior, or a policy” (p. 889). As per this study, the more opportunities and resources teachers believe themselves to have, the greater possibility to display a behavior, subsequently the more prominent behavioral control on condition (Ajzen, 1991).

Therefore, the above theory supports the assumption that there could be several factors influencing teacher’s attitudes towards inclusion. As per the theory, teachers intended to accept the idea of inclusion when they demonstrate positive attitudes towards it and when they believe that they have the needed resources and support to do so.

Figure 1: The Theory of Planned Behavior. Source: (Ajzen, 2005, p. 118)
3. Methodology

The study aimed to explore general teachers’ attitudes and views toward inclusive practices in private schools in Egypt. It investigated the possible factors that could be influencing their attitudes toward inclusion. In addition, it suggested some recommendations to have a successful inclusive education in Egypt. The researcher decided to employ a qualitative methodology by interviewing the targeted participants in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the topic. The present study sought to answer the research questions below:

1. What are teachers’ attitudes toward teaching special needs students in inclusive classrooms in private schools?
2. What are the perceived factors that inflected their attitudes towards inclusive education?
3. What recommendations can be made to make the inclusive system happen in Egypt?

Such research questions require utilizing the qualitative approach when considering the following; a) research design, b) context and participants, c) data collection instrument and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The use of qualitative methodology was most appropriate to investigate the main questions of this study. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is designed to explore participants’ views, feelings and experiences about a certain problem or phenomena. It is also designed to obtain data from a small group of participants which is relevant to the number of participants in this study. Part of choosing this approach was that qualitative research enabled the researcher to be part of the process; in the center of the fieldwork. It gave the researcher the opportunity to invest more time in the study setting which in turn helped in the understanding of teachers’ feelings and impressions about the phenomena (Patton, 2002).

3.2 Context and Participants of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the attitude of teachers toward educating special needs students in regular classrooms in Egyptian private schools. Therefore, the study was conducted at three different private schools. All three schools where located in Cairo and offer the American curricula to its students. Mostly, the language used for
instruction and daily communication is English language except for Arabic and Religion classes. Also, the schools have a special needs policy that indicates the number of students with SEN enrolled in each school.

The participants for this study were teachers from different disciplines, genders, and teaching stages and had different years of teaching experiences. This variation helped to explore the factors affecting teacher’s attitudes towards inclusion. The names of the schools and participants were kept anonymous and both were informed about the confidentiality of the interviews. The criteria of including specific participants in the study was based on their involvement in inclusive practices or teaching special needs students in their classrooms as the study focused on the topic of inclusion. The rationale behind including teachers from different disciplines or could be termed ‘general’ rather than special education teachers was that some studies revealed that general education teachers tend to hold more negative attitudes towards inclusion than special education teachers (Abdelhameed, 2015). This made the researcher eager to gain a deeper understanding of their mindset and the possible factors that could be influencing their attitudes.

In order to obtain a representative sample, non-probability sampling approach was utilized to select certain participants in order to fulfill the specific criteria of the study. Creswell (2012) recommended that researchers should choose members who offer valuable data for the validity of the study. Therefore, convenient sampling was conducted as it depends on collecting data from members who are “conveniently accessible to participate in study (Creswell, 2012). Convenient sampling allowed the researcher to acquire the relevant knowledge from the suitable participants. As mentioned previously, the criteria of including teachers was based on their involvement in inclusive practices or their teaching of special needs students, making the usage of convenient sampling essential.

The anticipated number of informants was from 10 to 15 depending on their willingness to participate and their availability. The researcher contacted five private schools which follow the inclusive system across Cairo, through sending an email explaining the purpose of the study. Only three school administrators replied stating their willingness to allow the teachers to participate in the study. In order to start conducting
the interviews, the researcher visited the schools which will contribute in the study. The only participants in the interview were the available teachers who did not have a busy schedule at that time. Across the three schools, the researcher found that female teachers who teach inclusive classrooms are more than male teachers. Therefore, it was difficult to examine teachers’ gender as a factor affecting teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion. The overall number of participants was ten teachers who accepted the researcher’s invitation to conduct interviews.

The targeted interviewees were nine female teachers and one male teacher working across different private schools in Cairo. The reason behind having only one male teacher is that the study was conducted on teachers working in the primary stages, from kindergarten to grade 6. Usually, it is very common to find more female teachers in the early stages than male teachers, thus most of the participants were female teachers. Moreover, five teachers were working at school A, Three teachers in school B and two teachers in school C (see Table 1). To maintain confidentiality, the researcher coded the participated teachers as T1, T2, T3…etc. (see Table 2) and schools A, B, C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of the Interviewed Teachers in each School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
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<td>5</td>
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Table 2

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<th>Teachers’ coded by School</th>
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<tr>
<td>T1, T2, T3, T4, T5</td>
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<tr>
<td>T6, T7, T8</td>
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<td>T9, T10</td>
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School A

School B

School C

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The process of gathering data was through conducting one to one semi structured interviews using open-ended questions. The reason behind choosing interviews is that it
would enable the participants to express their opinions and views about the topic (Creswell, 2012). The reason for conducting individual interviews rather than focus groups interviews was the participants had different schedules and thus, it would be impossible for the researcher to arrange an interview at a time suitable for all. Also, by conducting individual interviews, the amount of possible group pressure was decreased, making the teachers more opened to expressing their thoughts and views. For the purpose of the study, semi structured interview questions gave flexibility for the researcher and the teachers to go into deeper discussions about various topic dimensions, something that couldn’t be done through surveys or questionnaires. Using interviews also allowed the researcher to manage the interview process by asking further questions for clarification and to receive the needed types of information (Patton, 2002).

Before collecting the data, the researcher obtained the approval of the International Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A) and the Center Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) to conduct the study (see Appendix B). The researcher also took the approval of the school principals to collect the data in their schools. After receiving the permission of the school, all of the teachers were asked to sign an informed consent form prior to conducting the research (see Appendix C). The researcher explained orally the rights of the teachers to withdrawal anytime and that their responses will be confidential.

After receiving approval from the participants, all interviews were held in English language upon the teachers’ request. Teachers approved having the interview recorded. All conducted interviews were audio- taped and then transcribed. The Thematic Analysis Model was used to analyze the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the process of data analysis, the researcher read the collected data carefully to gather the related ideas. Before moving on to the initial coding process, the researcher had expected to generate themes from the literature on which the interviews were designed. However, there are generated themes which arise from the data analysis on which the researcher did not expected to find. Thus, the expected themes lead to generate codes and the researcher extrapolated the related data and highlighted some quotes that might serve the research objectives. Finally, themes were generated and categorized by relevant research questions.
The interviewed teachers were given codes based on their total number, while schools were given letters. In total, there were ten teachers and three schools. Five major themes and one minor theme were developed. The generated themes were used to answer the two research questions of the study.
4. Findings

This chapter discusses the research results that reveal the attitudes of teachers toward including students with special needs in their classrooms. In addition, the findings provided some factors that might facilitate or hinder their attitudes towards inclusion. The information gathered from individual interviews developed a set of themes to answer three research questions. Each question was answered through themes generated by the participants in the individual interviews. Firstly, the theme of teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion answered the first research question. Secondly, the themes of teachers’ professional development and knowledge, severity of need, school administration support and facilities, parents’ collaboration and the number of SEN students answered the second research question. Finally, the theme of teachers’ recommendations answered the third research question.

4.1 Finding of Research Question One

In this section, the gathered data from interviews revealed one main theme and three sub themes that answered the first research question (see Table 3). Each sub theme is explained in detail below.

Table 3

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<th>Generated Themes under Research Question One</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. What are teachers’ attitudes towards teaching special needs students in inclusive classrooms?</td>
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4.1.1 Theme one: teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion.

As indicated in Chapter one, attitudes are the person’s feelings and perceptions toward a person or object, which, in return, could affect his or her behavior towards this person or object later on (Cassady, 2011). During the interviews, the attitude of teachers toward inclusion was a common theme discussed by the participants. Their attitudes
toward the idea of inclusion varied between acceptance and refusal. Sometimes their views were mixed and this revealed the reasons behind their behavior. According to their varying attitudes towards inclusion, the following section presents an analysis of these attitudes. This was divided into three sub themes i.e., positive attitudes towards inclusion, negative attitudes towards inclusion and positive attitudes with limitations towards inclusion.

**A) Sub theme one: positive attitudes towards inclusion.** Only three teachers, T6, T7, and T8, exhibited positive attitudes regarding inclusion and were convinced of the importance of implementing inclusive education. These three teachers accepted and welcomed the idea of having students with special needs inside their classrooms. They also emphasized the positive contributions of inclusive education regarding social interactions and the academic progress of special needs children.

On the question of their understanding of the concept of “inclusion”, the three participants displayed that they had a good understanding. They reported that all children, regardless of their differences, have the right to receive the same quality of education with the same teacher and classroom without being physically excluded. According to T8, the presence of inclusive education in Egypt is essential in all schools as classrooms should not just include students without special needs. In this case, “we are basically categorizing the future society”. In addition, T6 added that it is biased to shelter special education children from the outside world by putting them in separate classes and banning them from mingling with their peers. She concluded her comments by saying that “special needs children need to know that they have things that make them special rather than things that need to be treated in a special way”.

Moreover, T6 noted the necessity of inclusion in helping all students to “cooperate, learn and work together”. She elaborated more by mentioning that inclusion is important not only for students with SEN but also for the other students and teachers. It is important for students with SEN because it helps them to deal with “variety of people in their community and it gives them self-confidence to deal with everyone”. Furthermore, it encourages the other students to accept people's differences, appreciate diversities and not to keep their distance whenever they see people with special needs. All three teachers agreed that they like to be challenged and teach in an inclusive
environment which will present different trials every day. As acknowledged by T7 and T6, if teachers are not challenged, they would not get the best out of themselves. If they have special needs students in their classrooms, they would need to be more creative through using differentiated instructions and activities.

In their responses, the participants shed the lights on the vital role teachers’ play to make an inclusive classroom successful. They were devoted to the belief that it is their responsibility to educate all students in their classroom. T7 expressed her feelings about SEN students by explaining that teachers shouldn’t label each child, instead they should figure out how to treat this child the way he or she deserves. T8 mentioned: “The teacher is the key for everything and if the teacher is not smart enough and makes everyone believe that I’m giving you your space, but at the end it is one space that we are sharing, things will not go smoothly”.

They all concluded that a teacher should be aware of her students by providing the best educational experiences for all special needs students, which will ensure that all students benefit from each other and become more engaged. However, if the teacher refuses to include children with SEN in her classroom, it is probably going to make the presence of SEN students a burden on both the teacher and the other students. “Giving special needs students a small model of life in their classroom is a way of paving them to the future” (T8).

B) Sub theme two: negative attitudes. Findings showed that two teachers held negative attitudes towards inclusion. Both T9 and T5 did not prefer teaching special needs students in their mainstream classrooms. They were devoted to the idea that special needs students need to be separately educated. The reason for this is that they will not receive what they should gain from adequate education in general classrooms. They emphasized the fact that SEN children require special guidance and instructions by specialists to help with their outbursts and anger. T5 mentioned that “Special needs students are not functioning properly and that's why we call them special needs and that’s why they need specialists”. Furthermore, both teachers were concerned about their qualifications as they believed that special education schools offered teachers that were trained to handle all types of cases and needs. They noted that it is difficult for them and students without special needs to be included together under the same roof.
Moreover, when they were asked about their feelings towards SEN students, T5 replied: “I feel sorry for them, but, at the same time, I won’t be able to help neither them nor other students if they are all in the same class”. While T9 said; “I found it very challenging working with special needs kids. I feel that it will work for them if they receive instructions outside the general classroom”. They also have many concerns about the real benefits of inclusion on students without special needs. They expressed that being educated alongside with special education students will constrict the learning process of other students. T5 found that children with SEN hinder the educational process of other students as she will lose control over the whole class by taking extra time to discipline SEN students. Thus, general students wouldn’t be able to concentrate on their lessons and she wouldn’t be able to focus on them in an inclusive classroom situation. T9 agreed that being in an inclusive setting is not fair for those students without special needs. He feels that being in an inclusive classroom would affect the general students academically and behaviorally. Supporting the idea that special needs students hinder the achievement of other students, T9 commented:

“I believe that they would make the learning process really difficult. Sometimes it gets other students bored if you have to get children with SEN settled in the classroom, it is not only about the base of the instruction, but sometimes is to get them calm and work with others and perceive the educational context. Unfortunately, if a child with SEN would be absent, I would find it so much easier for me to work and manage the classroom”.

Based on the teachers’ responses, it would be difficult to have successful inclusive education in Egypt as long as teachers are not welcoming the idea of including special needs students in their classrooms (Hassanein, 2015).

C) Sub theme three: positive attitudes with limitations. The findings of this study indicated that there are can be significant obstacles for teachers who display generally positive attitudes to fully accept the idea of inclusion in education. Among the teachers who participated in the study, five of them, T1, T2, T3, T4 and T10, stated that they believe in the inclusion of special needs students in the general classrooms and they support the advantages of inclusive education. Ultimately, their positive attitudes were
supported by some of their comments when asked about their feelings and views of inclusion. T3 stated: “I think inclusion is beneficial for both normal and special needs students because this is the world we are living in, a world full of diversities”. She also believes that it is very rewarding as a teacher when witnessing progress in their psychological and academic development. While T1 added: “I believe that it should be inclusion in our schools. Building a character accepting differences is very important for education”. T10 further asserted that inclusive education helps to raise the general students’ sense of gratitude regarding what they have and helps children with SEN not to feel so isolated.

Despite their positive attitudes, there were certain aspects that prevented the five teachers from entirely agreeing upon teaching special needs students in an inclusive setting. When asked about their attitudes towards different types of SEN students, the teachers highly recommended that not all types of SEN students could be included and that special education schools are the best educational placement for those students with critical disabilities. They feel that including such students in an inclusive classroom would cause harm than benefit them. As noted by T4, children with Down syndrome cannot be included in general classes as they need special education teachers and require some medical intervention. On the contrary, she supported the inclusion of students with ADHD and ODD if their cases are mild and generally harmless. T2 added that there are some special needs children with significant needs who are being bullied and neglected by their peers in the classrooms. This has a very negative psychological effect on the children and gives them a feeling of exclusion. The teacher feels that it's more harmful for certain types of SEN student to stay in general classrooms than to stay in a place where they can receive the needed support i.e.; in special education classes.

Furthermore, some teachers have concerns about the safety of the classroom environment when including children with aggressive or violent behaviors. T3 and T1 openly expressed their support of having SEN students in their classes as long as they are not harmful or dangerous. They explained further that these types of SEN students are those who have behavioral disorders that result in them becoming violent or dangerous towards themselves and others. In this case, they don't prefer to have such students inside their classroom and they don’t believe that this is what the concept of inclusion aims for.
While T4, T10, T3 and T1 teachers expressed opinions regarding the number of SEN students in each inclusive classroom. They all stated that it is problematic to have too many special needs students in one class as it is too overpowering for the educational system and transforms the whole school into a special education school. T4 stated that it is too much to expect a teacher to handle more than two SEN students in each class. She said that she would not be able to follow up with other students if she is overwhelmed with a huge number of students with SEN. As T1 mentioned; “I have two ADHD and one autistic student in my classroom and I have five slow learners or more and I had those who are academically poor and high achievers. This is too much for a teacher!”

On mentioning whether the presence of students with SEN hinders or helps in the learning process of other students, more than one agreed that it depends on the severity of the students’ disabilities. T3 assumed that as long as SEN students are harmless, their presence is essential so that other students see them and feel that they are fortunate and can appreciate the things they have. Additionally, T1 highlighted that “autistic and dyslexic students might progress academically if they mingled with high achiever students”. T4 agreed with T1, stressing that those SEN students with mild disabilities would develop and grow better when they deal with other students. She clarified that it is healthier for students with SEN to interact with other students to be more sociable and gain self-confidence. To summarize the above responses, some teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion; but demonstrated concerns about the inclusion of students with certain significant disabilities and the number of SEN students inside the classroom.

4.2 Findings of Research Question Two

There are some factors mentioned by the teachers that contribute to their attitudes towards inclusive education. These factors have been collected into five generated themes. The information gathered from the interviews revealed themes which will answer the second research question (see Table 4). The following five themes emerged from the interviewees’ responses.
Table 4

*Generated Themes under Research Question Two*

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<th>Research Question Two</th>
<th>Generated Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. What are the perceived factors that inflected their attitudes towards inclusive education?</td>
<td>1. Teachers professional development and experience</td>
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<td>2. Severity of need</td>
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<td>3. School administration support and facilities</td>
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<td>4. Teacher parent collaboration</td>
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<td>5. Number of SEN students</td>
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4.2.1 **Theme one: Teachers’ professional development and experience.** One of the main factors that had a great impact on teachers’ attitudes towards including children with SEN in their classrooms is their professional development and previous teaching experiences regarding inclusion. The majority of the interviewed teachers stated their desire to obtain further professional development training to aid them in dealing with SEN students in an inclusive setting. As T4 reported; “acquiring more workshops and trainings related to special education will enrich our knowledge as teachers to teach different types of SEN students”. Conversely, some teachers suggested that their overall qualifications do not equip them to teach all special needs students. As T10 mentioned: “I feel that I’m not qualified enough to teach children with SEN and this sometimes hinders me to deal with them”. Thus, it can be assumed from the teachers’ responses that there is a relation between their positive or negative attitudes towards inclusion and their prior knowledge and experience regarding special education.

Firstly, the findings have shown that the teachers who demonstrated positive attitudes towards inclusion had a minimum of four to thirteen years of experience in teaching SEN students. Besides their teaching experience, about six of those who displayed positive attitudes had acquired appropriate professional development or had attended psychology programs relevant to special needs education. During the interviews T3, T2, T8, T6, T1, and T4 mentioned how these professional training workshops
prepared them to perform better with students with special needs in their classrooms. They also described how their attitudes regarding inclusive education changed after they attended special education courses. As expressed by T1, courses related to special education taught her how to be more patient to the students’ needs and to analyze their problems in order to help them perform better. Furthermore, she implied that her teaching experience helped her to understand different types of special needs students and how to make them feel comfortable with other students. T8 and T2 were more positive about their abilities as teachers after they obtained different types of professional training and gained more experience with SEN students. T8 commented: “Before being acknowledged with what is going on with SEN students, I felt sorry for them! Their behavior was abnormal and I had no idea what is that and what I supposed to do. Now, my feelings are different. I started to be analytical and professional in dealing with them. I started to be more positive about inclusion”.

Adding on to what T1 and T8 had mentioned, some teachers seemed to agree that they understood more about what triggers SEN students and the nature of each condition after they finished their professional training programs. For example, after she had completed a psychology course on autism, T4 declared that she can differentiate between the different spectrums of autism and meet the challenges that might arise from these diverse of types. Regarding ADHD, T6 said: “the first time I attended the ADHD course, I didn’t know what is ADHD and after I finish the course I realized that I had two of my students had ADHD and I didn’t know about their disorders”.

Secondly, the findings gathered from the interviews revealed that the two teachers (T5, T9) who were not in favor of inclusion had only two years of teaching experience and had not attained any educational qualifications prior to practicing teaching. They articulated that they lacked ability to teach special needs students. T5 stated that it is so difficult to deal with SEN children as she lacks knowledge and she is not acquainted with all the teaching approaches required to handle them. She added that special education teachers are more qualified and have the ability to adapt to each disorder. In addition, T9 doubts his teaching qualifications in dealing with SEN students. He reported that he does not have authentic explanations concerning children with SEN behaviors and the proper attention they need. He stated: “I still feel that I’m not qualified to teach them. I believe
this is because I lack experience and I didn’t attend any courses related to special education”. It can be implied from the teachers’ comments that they lack experience of dealing with SEN children and, thus, both teachers expressed the importance of obtaining training related to special education to become better acquainted with new teaching techniques. T5 noted that “It is beneficial to take some basic workshops or trainings, at least one course that focuses on special education. Experiences will come by time but courses are a must”.

To conclude, it seems from the data gathered that prior professional training and courses regarding inclusion could be one of the primary factors that affect teachers’ views about inclusion. Significantly, teachers who held positive or negative attitudes toward inclusive education expressed the need for more professional training about special education to allow them to be more qualified better equipped to meet the needs of SEN students.

4.2.2 Theme two: Severity of need. The severity of disability was determined as a challenge facing teachers in an inclusive setting. According to the findings, some teachers displayed limited understanding of all types of special needs, although they were more familiar with certain behavioral and mental disorders like ADHD, ODD, Epilepsy, Dyslexia, Autism and Down syndrome. Thus, it was quite difficult to accurately examine the impact of the severity of the disabilities on teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion.

In this theme, teachers’ attitudes differ based on whether the special needs of a student in their classroom are mild or severe. However, teachers who truly believed in inclusive education had a brighter image and a wider understanding of the importance of including all SEN students, regardless of their level of disabilities. When questioned about their attitudes regarding the different types of SEN students, T6, T7 and T8 responded that they believe in the power of general education teachers to educate students with all levels of special needs as long as they’re qualified. They added that the presence of various types of SEN students helped them to use differentiated instructions to meet all needs of learners. T8 declared: “I don’t have any problems teaching all types of special needs in my classroom. If the teacher is fully aware of what her kids need and how to deal with them, she will properly going to have a successful inclusive class”. T6 embraced the idea of including students with special educational needs in her class. She
believes that “if a teacher is well trained and works in a system supports inclusion, she or he will be able to deal with all kinds of special needs students”. Although T7 considered that teaching more severe levels of SEN students might be a challenge for her, she acknowledged that it will motivate her to make sure that each student gets the education that he or she deserves. Thus, the severity of the special educational needs is not a factor affecting these teachers who fully exhibited positive attitudes toward inclusion.

As mentioned previously in theme one, five (T1, T2, T3, T4, T10) out of the ten teachers interviewed had positive attitudes toward including special needs students in their classrooms, but expressed that there are some special needs cases which are difficult for them to handle, especially those students who exhibit violent and harmful behaviors due to their disability. When questioned about their willingness to teach all SEN cases, T3 and T10 expressed that they welcome all types of SEN students as long as they are not significantly violent or aggressive to others.

The five teachers reported that severe cases of autism and ADHD would be better served in special classes as their conditions might cause harm to everyone around them. T1 stated that students with severe cases of SEN shouldn’t be included with general students especially for those who have severe autism. She explained: “That’s why there are still special education schools in Europe”. They include severe types of SEN students and they give them different curriculum and activities unlike the regular schools”. T10 accepts moderate cases of behavioral disorders like ADHD or ODD as long as they have peaceful manners and can cope with others without hindering their learning process. T2 articulated that “the violent students could harm other students and in this case we can’t maintain the safety of other students. You can’t predict their actions”.

T2 and T1 preferred to teach students with physical disabilities over students with mental disorders like Down syndrome and severe cases of autism. They expressed that it is more challenging to deliver information to those who have serious mental disorders as they require more effort and specialized facilities. T4 agreed with T2 and T1 that an autistic child with a severe condition cannot benefit from the same inclusive opportunities as students with other types of SEN. She commented: “sometimes they don’t have eye contact and they can’t focus with the teacher. In this case their inclusion is useless as they need extra care and guidance from a specialist teacher”. The findings were not surprising
as prior research had mentioned that some teachers favored the inclusion of students with certain kinds of disabilities over other disabilities (Hassanein, 2015).

Moreover, it can be expected that teachers with negative attitudes towards inclusion are not welcoming to the idea of educating SEN students alongside other students in the same classroom. Their range of comments indicated their concerns about the unexpected behaviors that might be displayed by specific types of SEN students in classrooms. As reported by T5:

“We can’t include those have severe disabilities in an inclusive environment. They are needed to be separated especially because the very dangerous situation you’re putting the teacher and other students in. You don’t know when anything would happen if you have a severe case”.

On mentioning the education of students with severe SEN in general classrooms, both teachers held significant concerns about the inclusion of autistic children. Both teachers had bad experiences of teaching autistic children. Specifically, T9 stated: “I feel that I can’t communicate well with autistic students. For autistic children, it is so hard to have normal kids around them”. T5 reported that there is a large spectrum of autism which is best dealt with in special education environment. Therefore, this group of teachers assumed that the presence of special needs students may establish problems in mainstream classrooms.

4.2.3 Theme three: School administration support and facilities. The findings indicated that there is a strong relationship between teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion and the level of administrative support they receive from their school. This implied that the support and guidance offered to teachers by the school administration could be one of the factors affecting their attitudes towards inclusion (Awad, 2016). Moreover, teachers who feel the support by their school administration demonstrated positive attitudes towards including students with special needs. When asked about the types of support they receive from their school administration, five out of the eight teachers who believed in inclusion indicated that their school offered both physical and emotional support. T8 reported that her school policy gives her great support as whenever she faces a problem with the special needs students; the school principal takes the lead and provides assistance. She quoted: “I believe that I’m lucky enough to work under the supervision of
my school principal who gives me all the support needed”. T3 and T7 indicated that they received support in the form of appreciation of their efforts with SEN students. T3 stated that her school understands that she is doing her best and that they appreciate her work regardless the output. She added that her school provides her with the necessary facilities, such as the technology required to help SEN students better understand the lessons. T7 added: “definitely there is a lot of support from my head and the upper management. They really do appreciate that teachers are trying their best to meet all students’ needs”. The kind of support that T8 and T6 receive from their school administration differs from what has been mentioned previously. T6 noted that her school provides them with special education courses and training to keep them updated with all types of SEN children. Additionally, the classes are well equipped with technology and safety facilities.

Another area that was revealed during the interviews contradicts with the findings mentioned above. Teachers T2, T10 and T4 reported that they did not receive enough support from their school administration. However they displayed their desire to include SEN students in their classrooms. T10 pointed out that her school lacks the presence of a counselor or a specialist to diagnose the cases of SEN students in her class. She said: “sometimes as teachers we need reports to help us how to deal with special needs kids. The counselor is not always there to help.” T4 indicated that her school needs to offer adequate special education courses to widen her knowledge about inclusion. T2 added: “the school doesn’t care about providing workshops or trainings to guide the teachers to deal with SEN students. I need to receive the needed support regarding special needs students”. Moreover, T2 raised her doubts about the implementation of a real inclusive system in her school. She believes that the idea of inclusion requires an effective school management team that is ready to prepare its teachers to educate students with SEN.

On asking about the school facilities, T1 criticized the infrastructure and the lack of facilities for special needs students. She reported that her school is not well equipped with academic materials and proper buildings to suit all the students’ diversities. Overall, the desire for adequate school support and facilities and more professional development was clear amongst these teachers.

Other teachers’ responses proved the connection between teachers’ attitudes and school administrative support. T5 and T9 expressed negative attitudes about their school
administrative support. Despite the fact that both teachers are working in different schools, they do not receive the needed support to help them deal with SEN students. T9 stated; “my school does not have a detailed plan on how to integrate these students in the classroom. They just put the kids in the classroom and let the teacher deals with it”.

4.2.4 Theme four: Parental collaboration and support. The findings revealed that parental collaboration is another factor that had an impact on the attitude of teachers toward dealing with special needs students. This theme was generated when teachers were asked what additional support they believe is required for inclusion to be successful. All of the teachers who displayed positive attitudes responded that lack of parental cooperation could be a barrier to help the students with special needs. However, it wasn’t proven that the lack of parental support might generally affect their overall positive attitude about the importance of inclusion.

T7 believed that there should be a mutual support between teachers and parents. She elaborated that she would be more inclined to help children with SEN if they received help and support at home. She commented: “if it is one sided support from me and there is a block, then it is like I’m hitting a wall and bouncing back”. Furthermore, T3 and T1 mentioned that parents and teachers should share a common bond and implement a shared plan to help students with SEN to progress. T3 commented: “I have taught 3 dyslexic students. One of the parents was really helpful. Before we started the academic year, she presented a medical report of his case and she of course guided me and helped me a lot”. T4 continued that other parents refused to help her to diagnose the student’s condition. She believed that this would negatively affect her ability to educate these children.

Also expressed was the denial teachers faced when they confronted parents about their children’s needs. Teachers believe that this attitude could prevent them from helping the children and, thus, they would ignore their presence. Parents feel ashamed and “sometimes they cover up the problem. Even when we ask them to take them to a specialist, they would refuse” (T9). To summarize, it can be comprehended from the previous findings that lack of parental involvement might act as a barrier between the teachers and the efficient help and guidance they provide.
4.2.5 Theme five: Number of students with SEN. A minor theme has been generated from the findings and considered as a factor affecting teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion is the number of students with SEN in each class. The number of special needs students in each class was one of the biggest challenges facing some of the teachers in the research. As expressed by T6: “I believe that only 20% max should be included in each classroom. If you have lots of disabled students, you won’t give them the attention they do need and deserve”.

Analysis of the data showed that only four teachers reported that their attitude may differ according to the number of SEN students in the classroom. These teachers demonstrated earlier that they accept the idea of inclusion as long as the number of SEN students is limited compared to the number of other students in the same classroom. T3 stated that it is impossible for her to handle vast numbers of special needs students alone. She feels that “two cases are more than enough! They need proper care and a lot of attention”. T1 and T4 further commented that even if they had extra help or more teachers to assist, it would not help with significant numbers of SEN students. When she was asked about her feeling toward special needs students in her class, T10 noted that the imbalanced number of SEN students in her class would make her feelings worse. T10 noted that “there shouldn’t be too many special needs students in the class. One or two are enough to be controllable”.

4.3 Findings of Research Question Three:

The information collected from the interviews revealed one themes which will answer the third research question (see Table 5). The following theme emerged from the interviewees’ responses when asking the teachers about their recommendations to make inclusion happen in Egyptian schools.

Table 5

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<th>Generated Theme Under Research Question Three</th>
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<td>3. What recommendations can be made to make the inclusive system happen in Egypt?</td>
<td>1. Teachers’ Recommendations</td>
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4.3.1 Theme one: Teachers’ recommendations. When asking about their recommendations for having a better inclusive education, all teachers put great emphasis on teachers’ education. All teachers expressed their willingness to acquire more training related to special education. They believed that such training and extra courses will allow them to better understand the wide spectrum of special needs. As T10 mentioned; “professional development programs will help me to be more professional teacher and deal with SEN students much easier”. They recommended that special education courses should be offered to all teachers by the Egyptian MOE on an annual basis. T5 stated that “teachers should take at least one course related to special education. To learn about SEN students and how to deal with them even if they are not teaching special needs”. T1 and T3 believed that one of the problems that confront the success of inclusion is that teachers are either educated or qualified enough to deal with all students’ diversities. They also added that teachers need to be aware of all types of disabilities to freely meet each student’s need.

Continuing on the idea of educating teachers, the participants requested that the quality of the support offered by school administrators should be increased. They believed that it is the school responsibility to provide teachers with the necessary resources and, professional development programs that would allow them to upgrade their skills to deal with SEN students. As mentioned by T7: “the school should keep the teachers up to date with all new teaching methodologies throughout offering workshops regarding special education”. Additionally, T9 mentioned that schools should provide teachers with experts and specialists to give them trainings to help them to handle students with SEN. T9 and T4 added that having special education teachers and psychologists to follow up with and guide the teachers would help to maintain a fortunate inclusive classroom. T3 continued by stating that the availability of special education teachers’ assistance is important, until the teacher has the sufficient experience or knowledge that allows teachers to deal with SEN students. As declared by T6; “it would be beneficial for teachers to cooperate with special education teachers to share experiences and help the students”. Moreover, T2 believed that Egyptian schools are neither equipped nor designed to deal with special needs students along with other
students. In consequence, she requested that school managements should be more prepared to apply inclusive education through providing adequate educational facilities for both teachers and students. “It is harmful more than beneficial to have children in schools where they call themselves inclusive systems” as mentioned by T2.

Another suggestion has been raised by the teachers that contribute to the success of inclusive classrooms. Half of teachers believe that parents should be more educated about the symptoms and diagnosis of different kinds of disabilities. Also, they emphasized that knowing their needs and problems would train the parents to deal with their special education children. Moreover, this will help in including the children among their family members in a healthy and appropriate manner. T10, T7, T5, T3 and T1 demonstrated the importance of educating parents to raise their sense of understanding about different types of disabilities and its symptoms. T7 mentioned that policy makers and school administrators should raise awareness among parents, and provide them with the needed workshop to help them to communicate with their SEN children. Asking about her suggestions for having a successful inclusive education, T10 mentioned; “it is very beneficial for us as teachers to interact with parents who are aware of their children’s disabilities and know how to deal with their needs”.

Furthermore, T3 and T1 mentioned that parents and teachers should share a common bond and implement a shared plan to help students with SEN to progress. Teachers suggested that it would help them to deal with SEN students if their parents are fully aware of their children’s cases and are not in denial. T3 added that parental collaboration would help to better communicate with SEN children. As reported by T5: “parents should be aware of their children cases to help them and to help us”. Therefore, parental involvement and collaboration are recommended to help school staff and administration implement a successful inclusive system.

Finally, teachers recommended that schools need to provide well trained teaching assistants (shadow teachers) for children who need extra guidance in their learning progress. Some of the interviewees complained that their schools are hiring shadow teachers who are not qualified to communicate with SEN students. T3, T6 reported that shadow teachers lack experience regarding special education and thus have a negative impact on the students. “Shadow teachers are useless if they are not certified” as noted by
T8. T6 added that shadow teachers need to know more about different kinds of children disabilities as, sometimes, teachers need assistance when SEN students lose their tempers. T3 agreed with T6 adding that she always needs qualified shadow teachers to accompany children with special needs especially those with severe cases. Therefore, they articulated that shadow teachers should be more qualified to deal with special needs students and to adequately assist in an inclusive environment.
5. Discussion

The aim of the study was to investigate the attitude of teachers toward including special needs students in mainstream classrooms. Additionally, this study explored the factors that could affect their attitudes towards inclusive education and their recommendations for having a successful inclusive system in Egypt. The main findings of the study indicated that the majority of the participants held positive attitudes toward inclusive education. However, only three out of ten teachers accepted the idea of full inclusion of children with special needs in the general education classrooms. Five participants showed positive attitudes toward including SEN students with certain reservations, mostly dependent on the severity of the disability and the number of SEN students inside the classroom. However, two teachers did not support the inclusion of special needs students in the general classrooms.

Despite the fact that no studies were found that tackled the attitudes of teachers in Egyptian private schools, similar findings were echoed in the previous literature. Teachers who are likely to demonstrate positive attitudes toward inclusion are those who had many years of teaching experiences, and had acquired appropriate professional development programs to assist them to teach students with different abilities (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Awad, 2016; Blecker & Boakes, 2010; Emam & Mohamed, 2011). Similarity, in this study, findings indicated that the eight participants who held positive attitudes toward inclusion had a minimum of four to thirteen years of experience in teaching students with special needs. Also, about six of those teachers had acquired professional development or had attended some workshops relevant to special needs education. Similar to the study of Ross-Hill (2009), the findings of this study found that professional training programs had helped the teachers to deal with special needs students in their regular classrooms and had promoted the importance of inclusion.

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) review of the literature and studies by Al-Zyoudi (2006) and El-Ashry (2009) suggested that teachers would accept the idea of inclusion under certain conditions related to the severity of the student’s disability, and the level of administrative support. Like these studies, some teachers demonstrated their desire to contribute to inclusive practices, yet there were not welcoming the idea of teaching students with severe disabilities. They believe that special education classrooms are the
best setting for them to receive education that suits their needs. For some teachers, school support wasn’t the main factor affecting their attitudes negatively toward inclusion. Some reported that they don’t receive enough support from their school administration; however they displayed their desire to include SEN students in their classrooms. Other studies did not highlight the number of special needs students as a factor affecting the attitudes of teachers toward inclusion. Unlike the previous studies, the findings showed that half of the teachers did not favor teaching in an inclusive environment while having unreasonable number of SEN students inside the classroom.

Moreover, studies that researched teachers’ attitudes toward inclusive education reported that teachers would hold negative attitudes if they lacked experience and knowledge of teaching students with SEN (Abdelhameed, 2015; Idol, 2006; Rakap and Kaczmarek, 2010). The findings of this study are similar to studies conducted earlier regarding teachers’ negative attitudes. In this study, the findings gathered from the interviews showed that the two teachers who were not in favor of inclusion had only two years of teaching experience and had not attained any educational qualifications prior to practicing teaching. Also, both teachers expressed negative attitudes about their school administrative support as they do not receive the needed support to help them deal with SEN students. In their study, earlier mentioned by Emam and Mohamed’s (2011) that the lack of support that school administrators show to teachers and the lack of awareness make it difficult for them to accept the inclusion of SEN students in their classrooms.

Current research on the topic of inclusion supported the idea that there are many aspects that contribute to the varying attitudes of teachers toward inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Blecker & Boakes, 2008; Hassanein, 2015; Ross-Hill, 2009). As outlined earlier in Chapter Two, these factors related to the teachers’ knowledge and their adequate background of inclusive practices, the severity of the needs, the school administrative support and facilities, the level of parental cooperation and support, and finally the number of SEN students in each class. In this section, teachers’ attitudes will be examined according to the multiple factors that affected their attitudes.

Firstly, the findings indicated that there are three teachers (T6, T7, T8) displayed positive attitudes regarding the inclusion of special needs students in their classrooms.
While exploring the reasons behind their attitudes, adequate support from the school administration was one of the factors leading to their positive beliefs. In other words, these three teachers work at the same school (school B) and they indicated that their school provides a real inclusive system which helps all students to learn. They also reported that sometimes the school offers workshops and professional development courses related to children with special needs inside their classes.

Another factor that was examined and founded that it related to their positive attitudes was their background knowledge and years of experience regarding inclusion. Despite the fact that this factor was not a good indicator to predict the attitudes of other teachers to the concept of inclusion, this factor worked as one of the essential reasons for the three teachers to demonstrate positive attitudes. For example, although T6 and T8 were from the same school, had attended several special education courses and had minimum from seven to ten years of experience teaching SEN students. According to Awad (2016), the more years of experience teachers have, the more positive attitudes they hold. Moreover, neither the severity of the disability nor the class teaching loads were considered as major factors affecting this group of teacher. During the data analysis, it was easy to examine the effect of the two factors on the teachers’ attitudes. The teachers were aware of the different types of SEN students and were qualified to deal with them. Additionally, as reported by T6, their school ensured that there were an appropriate number of students in each class.

According to the theory of planned behavior, the factor that influences the intentions of this group of teachers to accept inclusive education is their positive attitudes toward inclusion. Their behavioral beliefs indicate that they would prefer to work in an inclusive setting and teach students with SEN. Additionally, the findings showed that those teachers who displayed positive attitude toward the idea of inclusion had sufficient self-efficacy relying on their prior teaching experience regarding inclusion. In addition to their experiences, professional development programs gave a great support to these teachers to believe in their abilities and potentials to educate SEN students. The role of subjective norm component is noticeable amongst the three teachers. For example, the support that teachers feel and receive from parents and school administrators reveals the
presence of positive social pressure regarding inclusive education, in which help the teachers to accept teaching in an inclusive setting.

Other teachers were likely to hold positive beliefs toward inclusion under certain circumstances. Unlike the previous teachers, the severity of the disability and the number of SEN students are two factors which affected the attitudes of the five teachers in the study. T1, T2, T3, T4 and T10 believed in the benefits of inclusion as long as the kinds of disabilities were not severe and the number of SEN students is relatively small in their classroom. It can be inferred that their attitudes contradict with the concept of inclusion as, according to Newton and Hunter-Johnson (2014), all students should be educated in the same classroom, regardless of their diversities. Within this group, it was hard to investigate the possible impact of the severity of students’ disabilities on teachers’ attitudes because they were not familiar with the details and spectrum of disabilities. They were, however, familiar with certain types of SEN students whom they commonly teach in their classes. During their responses, for example, they mentioned the term “aggressive” to refer to ADHD and ODD disorders. This shows that they barely receive medical reports regarding their students’ conditions and their types of disabilities. In addition, it would indicate the lack of support that these teachers receive from their school administrators. The majority of responses revealed that they did not have the necessary resources and training to allow them to teach students with severe disabilities. Therefore, lack of knowledge of different types of disabilities shows lack of support provided by the schools and hinders children with SEN to receive proper educational services.

Continuing on the idea of support, it was unsurprising to find via the teachers' comments that they also lack parental collaboration. Teachers suggested that parents are avoiding them from helping their children with SEN. They further elaborated that some parents are in denial and they do not want to admit that their children are having problems. Based on a study by Peck, Staub, Gallucci, and Schwartz (2004), lack of parental support could be a factor affecting the attitudes of teachers toward inclusion. This returns back to the idea that the administrators of both schools are not providing the needed support to ensure the success of an inclusion environment. Therefore, the five teachers couldn’t fully accept the inclusion of an unreasonable number of children with
severe disabilities in their classroom while they lack knowledge of the disabilities themselves and have little support from parents and administrators.

The component of perceived behavioral control assumes that individuals who have favorable attitude toward a certain behavior are unlikely to perform this behavior if they don’t have the needed opportunities and means to perform the behavior (Azjen, 2005). This study found that the five teachers generally accept the idea of educating children with special needs, yet they hold some concerns about the number of SEN students in their classrooms and the different severe cases of students. In addition, teachers believe that they don’t receive enough resources and school support to teach students with severe types of disabilities. However, they hold favorable attitudes towards inclusive education and its benefits to SEN students learning process.

According to teachers’ responses, two of them (T9, T5) had limited experience in teaching special needs students. During the interviews, they did not hesitate to state that they couldn't address the different needs of students’ with disabilities. They were more comfortable with the idea of sending students with special needs into special education schools. They have their own understanding about the severity of cases through their finite experience which direct their judgments on how it could influence children with SEN inclusion in their classes. As a result, their lack of experience and knowledge about special education led to these teachers holding negative attitudes towards inclusion. Similar findings were suggested in Abdelhameed (2015) and El-Ashry (2009) studies which found that teachers had negative attitudes towards including students with SEN in the general education classroom. The data analysis showed that this was due to the lack of school support regarding inclusion. Similarity, the findings of this study

Despite the fact that the two teachers work at different schools (school A, C), lack of parental and school support were evident in their responses. Previous studies indicated that teachers’ attitudes could vary according to different kinds of support they receive from parents and school administrators (Ahmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2012; Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; El-Ashry, 2009). For example, teachers in the study of El-Ashry (2009) demonstrated negative attitudes towards including students with SEN in the general education classroom. The data analysis showed that this was due to the lack of school support regarding inclusion. Similarity, the findings of this study
indicated that teachers who held negative attitudes toward inclusion do not obtain the necessary administrative support and facilities to aid them in an inclusive environment.

The perceived behavior control is one of the basic components suggested by the theory of planned behavior that influences an individual’s intention to perform a certain behavior (Azjen, 1991). This component indicates that person’s beliefs and sense of self efficacy about his or her skills, opportunities and resources indicate their willingness to perform or not perform the behavior of interest. In this study, the lack of experience and knowledge regarding special education influenced the two teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion in a negative way. This means that the intentions of T9 and T5 to accept the idea of inclusion got affected, when considering their skills and self-efficacy that is needed to educate special needs students in an inclusive classroom.
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Education should serve all students irrespective of their disparities. Inclusive education allows all students to be integrated in the same classroom, regardless of their kinds of disabilities. Issues confronting the Egyptian educational framework have made inclusion a topic which is barely perceived and accomplished. One of these issues is the absence of suitably qualified teachers to meet the needs of all types of students (Emam and Mohamed, 2011). Additionally, a great deal of research has indicated that teachers' attitudes are one of the critical components that determine the success or failure of inclusive education (Al-Zyoudi, 2006; El-Ashry, 2009; Parnell, n.d.).

Therefore, this study endeavored to assess teachers' attitudes towards including students with SEN in the general education classroom. Also, it aimed to recognize the factors that can influence attitudes toward inclusion. The findings of this study showed that the general teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion were positive to a great extent. Possible factors such as adequate support from, school administration, teaching experience and the availability of courses related to SEN education had effective impact upon their attitudes. However, among the teachers who believed in the benefits of inclusion, some teachers articulated that they can only accept inclusion within certain limits. Their most common concerns were the severity of the disabilities presented and the number of SEN students in each class. They also expressed the importance of acquiring more knowledge concerning SEN students in order to be qualified enough to teach them. In addition, they stated that they would be more confident to accept SEN children if they received the necessary support from the school administrators and had access to facilities required.

Moreover, few teachers agreed that inclusion is not the correct choice for special needs students. They believed that general education schools cannot meet their needs due to the lack of real inclusive schools in Egypt. Instead, they see that separate special education classes are the most appropriate to meet the needs and to enhance the academic performance of the students with SEN. Besides, lack of support from both the school and the parents, combined with a lack of teaching experience were significant factors that explained their negative attitudes.
The theory of “Planned Behavior” by Azjen (1985) was recommended to guide the study. The theory shows that individual’s willingness to perform certain actions is related to his positive attitudes, taking into consideration the presence of normative beliefs and perceived variables related to his prior favorable experiences and beliefs towards this behavior (Azjen & Fishbein, 1977). The theory supports the assumption that there could be several factors influencing teacher’s attitudes towards inclusion. As per the theory, teachers intended to accept the idea of inclusion when they demonstrate positive attitudes towards it and when they believe that they have the needed resources and support to do so.

According to the findings, many teachers are willing to teach special needs students in their classrooms, however, some of them feel unprepared to teach in an inclusive environment. It seemed that acquiring professional development and training in the area of special education is a must in order to improve teachers’ attitudes of preparedness to educate students with SEN.

Additionally, parental collaboration and administrative support is required to guarantee the success of inclusive practices. Despite the study limitations, these findings might be utilized in further research regarding inclusive education in Egyptian schools.

6.2 Recommendations

Continuing on the previous suggestions stated by the participants, the researcher presented several recommendations that could enhance the status of inclusive education in Egyptian schools. These recommendations will be discussed below.

Firstly, it is imperative to improve the educational status of teachers in Egypt. It is recommended that courses, workshops and continuing professional development programs about special education should be offered to all teachers, yearly by the Egyptian MOE. Further, it should be mandatory that pre-service teachers receive the necessary training programs related to special education before they begin their teaching career. It is important to prepare knowledgeable teachers to meet the requirements of all students with special needs.

Secondly, school administrators should provide teachers with the necessary resources and, professional development programs that would allow them to enhance their skills to teach students with special needs. They should create the proper atmosphere
for teachers to better to effectively accomplish their tasks. This can be fulfilled through rethinking the form of capacity of classrooms through providing equipment and facilities, as well as resources rooms for children to get engaged in school activities.

Thirdly, parents should be better educated about the symptoms and diagnosis of different types of disabilities. In consequence, it is important to train parents to know about the needs and problems of their child, to include him/her with family members and to collaborate with the school staff and administration.

Fourthly, it is strongly suggested that stakeholders should raise awareness about the concept of inclusion among educators, policy makers and the whole educational community. Since the movement towards inclusive education in Egypt is still vague and is not supported by the efforts of the Ministry of Education, inclusive education should be considered in the agenda.

Fifthly, private schools should be well supervised by the Ministry of Education to ensure that the students are “fully” and not “partially” included in general education classrooms. Ultimately, the Ministry should set strict regulations in order to force schools to accept all special needs students. Sometimes, private schools do not fully adopt the inclusive system as they only include SEN students during activities such as art, music and physical education sessions.

6.3 Research Limitations

In the presented study, the number of female teachers significantly outnumbered the male teachers. It was, therefore, difficult to examine gender as a factor that could affect teachers’ attitudes. Although gender could be a variable affecting teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion according to Al-Zyoudi (2006), the current study could not examine this aspect due to the number of participants and their gender.

Additionally, a significant limitation of the study was the tool used for data collection. The limited access to the school themselves prevented the researcher from observing the interactions between the teachers and their students. Observing teachers’ interactions inside their classrooms would provide adequate understanding of their attitudes towards inclusive education. However, the tool utilized in the study managed to assess the attitudes of the teachers towards inclusion in an adequate way.
Another limitation of the study was the minimal presence of real inclusive schools in Egypt. It took the researcher a lot of time to identify schools that follow the inclusive system. In addition, it was difficult to enter some private schools as their administrators refused to allow their teachers to participate in this study. Therefore, the researcher interviewed a limited number of teachers based on their availability and willingness to contribute in the research.

As a final limitation, the teachers interviewed for this study only work in private schools. Accordingly, it is important to note that they all were drawn from the same backgrounds and socio-economic level. Therefore, the sampling method failed to generalize the results among all teachers across different schools in Egypt. The sample did not represent the majority of teachers who work in public schools. Thus, it is recommended to conduct different studies in other schools in Egypt.

6.4 Future Research

Because of the limited sample size used in this study, it is recommended that further studies should be conducted using larger sample of teachers in order to fully assess their attitudes toward inclusive education. Using larger sample size would adequately generate more areas regarding the field of inclusion.

Secondly, the researcher faced some difficulties when requesting to observe teaching practices inside the classroom. Therefore, conducting observations to adequately examine attitudes toward inclusion within general education classrooms is desirable.

Thirdly, there are a limited number of studies regarding to inclusive education that have been conducted in Egypt. Consequently, more studies on the benefits of educating teachers in the field of inclusion in this context are needed. It has been reported by one of the participants that teachers should be more educated and qualified to teach in an inclusive setting.

Finally, an expansion of this study might be made by exploring more approaches for enhancing inclusive education in Egypt. Since this study concentrated only on the attitudes of teachers, it is vital to explore those parents and school administrators as well. It is particularly important to examine the attitudes of parents toward inclusion as their collaboration with teachers has a great effect upon the success of inclusive practices.
References


Appendix A: IRB Approval

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

CASE #2017-2018-108

To: Asar Youssef
Cc: Dena Riad & Salma Serry
From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB
Date: March 3, 2018
Re: Approval of study

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled ‘TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS IN EGYPT’ and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" category. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Ashraf Hatem. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

Dr. Atta Gebril
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
T: 02-26151919
Email: agebril@aucegypt.edu

Institutional Review Board
The American University in Cairo
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Appendix B: CAPMAS Approval

قرار رئيس الجهاز المركزي للتعليم العالى والإحصاء

بالتفويض

رقم (2018) لسنة 2018

في شأن قيام الباحثة / أثار إساءة يوفس إسحاقيل - المسمولة لدرجة الماجستير

كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية / الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة - برامج دراسة ميدانية بعنوان:

"آراء المعلمين تجاه معالجة الأطفال ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة في المدارس العامة في مصر"

رئيس الجهاز

بعد الإطلاع على القرار الجمهوري رقم (290) لسنة 1964 بشأن إنشاء الجهاز المركزي للتعليم العالى والإحصاء.

وعلى قرار رئيس الجهاز رقم (213) لسنة 1968 في شأن إجراء الإحصاءات والمتسدات والتفاعلات والاستقصاءات.

وعلى قرار رئيس الجهاز رقم (134) لسنة 2007 بشأن التفويض في بعض الأدوات.


فقرار

مادة 1: تقوم الباحثة / أثار إساءة يوفس إسحاقيل - المسمولة لدرجة الماجستير - كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة، برامج دراسة ميدانية تطبيقية بالقاهرة.

مادة 2: تجري الدراسة على حسبا (200) عشرون مفردة من معلمين ومعلمات المدارس الخاصة بالمناطق التعليمية المختلفة بمحافظة القاهرة.

مادة 3: تجمع البيانات اللازمة لهذه الدراسة بموجب الاستمارة المذكورة، وداد صفحاتها مصنفة مثمنة كل منهما بحالة الجهاز المركزي للتعليم العالى والإحصاء.

مادة 4: تقوم مديرية التربية والتعليم بمحافظة القاهرة، وتحت إشراف دائرة الأمن، برامج إجراء هذه الدراسة الميدانية.


ماضي

2018

محمد محمود مصطفى
مدير عام الإدارة العامة للتعليم
الموضوع:

المرفقات:

التاريخ: ١٠ / ٣ / ٢٠١٨

السيد الأستاذ الدكتور مستشار الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

تحية طيبة وبعد،

بالإشارة لكتاب سيدكم ومرفقاته الوارد للجهاز في ٨/٧/٢٠١٨ بشأن طلب الموافقة على قيام الباحثة / آثار إسماعيل يوفسف إسماعيل - المسجلة لدرجة الماجستير كلية الدراسات العليا في التربية / الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة - بإجراء دراسة ميدانية بعنوان: "آراء المعلمين تجاه دمج الأطفال ذوي الإحتياجات الخاصة في المدارس العامة في مصر".

وذلك وفقاً للإطار المُعد لهذا الغرض.

يرجى التذكير بالإحاطة بأن الجهاز المركزي للتعيين العامة والإحصاء يوافق على قيام الباحثة / آثار إسماعيل يوفسف إسماعيل - بإجراء الدراسة الميدانية المشار إليها بعالية وفقاً للقرار رقم (٨٧٠) لسنة ٢٠١٨ اللازم في هذا الشأن وعلى إعدادها طبقاً للنظام رقم (٧) من القرار.

وسوف يتضمن نسخة من النتائج النهائية كاملة فور الانتهاء من إعدادها طبقاً للمادة رقم (٧) من القرار.

ولفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام،

محمد مصطفى محمد
مدير عام الإدارة العامة للأمن
Appendix C: Consent Form

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: Teachers’ Attitudes toward Including Children with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools in Egypt

Principal Investigator: Asar Ismail Youssef

Email: asar.ismail@aucegypt.edu

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to explore the attitudes of general education teachers towards educating special needs students in inclusive classrooms in the Egyptian private schools. In addition, it seeks to investigate the factors that might affect their views and attitudes towards inclusive education. The findings may be published. The expected duration of your participation is approximately one hour.

The procedures of the research will be as follows; after you sign the informed consent form, you will be interviewed by the researcher and asked some questions based on your experiences about teaching students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. Data will be collected through conducting one to one, audio taped interviews.

There will not be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research.

There will not be certain benefits to you from this research. It is hoped that the results of this study could help the teachers to know more about inclusive practices and raise awareness about enhancing their teaching practices and attitudes towards educating special needs students.

The information you provide for purposes of this research is confidential. Your name will be anonymous and all the audio tapes will be destroyed once the information has been obtained.

An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subject’s rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject; for example: "Questions about the research, my rights, or research-related injuries should be directed to Asar Ismail Youssef at telephone number “01005136569".
Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
Appendix D: Interview Questions

The following interview questions are adopted from the research titled “General Education Teachers’ Attitudes about Inclusion” and conducted by Monje (2017) and “Attitudes and inclusion: An examination of teachers' attitudes toward including students with disabilities” conducted by Walker (2012). Some modifications were done by the researcher.

Interview Questions:

Interviewee: _____________________________________________
Date: ____________________________________________________
School pseudo name: ________________________________

Informed Consent Signed: Yes or No

Questions:
1. Describe your educational qualifications and previous teaching experiences?
2. Which grade level have you been teaching? Describe which grade level do you prefer to teach in an inclusive setting and why?
3. What type of professional development or training for special education did you receive prior to being in an inclusive classroom? (If you received any)
4. How did professional training help you better prepare to work with students with special needs in your classroom? (If you received any)
5. What do you understand by the concept of inclusive education?
6. How do you feel about your overall qualifications to teach students with special needs in inclusive classrooms?
7. What are your experiences and feelings of special education students in your classroom?
8. To which extent do the different types of special needs students affect your attitude towards teaching students with special needs in an inclusive setting? Please explain.
9. How do special education students help or hinder the educational process for other students in an inclusive setting?
10. What makes the presence of special education students successful or not in your classroom?
11. What types of support and guidance do you receive from the school administration for special education students in your classroom?
   a. How do you feel about the support that you receive and the school environment for the special education students in your classroom?
   b. From your point of view, describe any additional support that you believe is important for inclusion to be successful?
12. What challenges have you encountered in teaching in an inclusive setting?
13. What suggestions do you have to make the inclusive classroom more successful for both the teachers and the students?
14. Is there anything we haven’t talked about that you would like to add or talk about regarding inclusion?