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The Inclusivity of Disability Principles in the Early Elementary Curriculum of Jordanian Schools: An Analytic Study

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Abstract

This study aimed to know to what degree the inclusivity of disability principles in the early elementary curriculum of Jordanian schools is an analytic study. Samples were taken from 36 school books in the elementary phase, from 1st grade to 4th grade. Researchers used a Content Analysis Form to achieve this study. It included all the topics in all the books of the lower essential stage curriculum in Jordan. Besides, appropriate scientific methods verified their validity and reliability. Statistical processing: The frequencies and percentages of recurring disability concepts included in the lower elementary stage curriculum in Jordan were calculated. The researchers concluded that no concepts of disability are included in the books on the lower essential stage in Jordan.

Keywords: Disability; Early Elementary Education; School Textbook

Introduction

Education constitutes a foothold in any noble human achievement, and with it, a society rises and evolves. The knowledge of a community and how well-informed a society can be are predetermined by the method by which education was conducted in the early school years. Thus, education is the cornerstone of human life. It has been proven throughout history that mankind is the only species that consumes and provides knowledge. From this standpoint, a necessity arose, to create a facility that provides this experience; therefore, what is known today as school emerged.

School is that safe institution in which society has placed its utmost trust to raise and teach; it is the institution charged with carrying out the education program ⁽¹⁾. It is the excellent expression on which society relies to pass on its ethical and cultural values to future generations. And this will help integrate their adult personalities into the community ⁽²⁾. Leonard Clouse described the school as an organized layout of creeds, values, traditions, thinking, and behavior patterns embedded in its structure and etiology. Ferdinand Buisson defined a school as a necessary social institution that aims to ensure the process of communication between family and state to prepare the next generations, integrating them into the framework of social life ⁽³⁾. A school is a social unit with an atmosphere that helps form a high sense of competence. As a society, culture, and historical period vary, so do the social and educational services of schools.

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The school conducts its message through its curriculum, which is its instrument to build the individual and raise him properly. A school curriculum is at the top of the educational system hierarchy, as it's the core of education and its main principle. Therefore, educational reform cannot be isolated from curriculum development⁽⁴⁾.

Disabled people are the most marginalized group, suffering from negative attitudes and perceptions held by the general public. Besides, these negative attitudes still have a great impact on the way the general public communicate with them. It is vital to employ all available means, the most important of which is the book in general and the textbook in particular, to help correct the negative views. Besides, there should be positive trends through forming the content of these books, especially in the books of the minimum elementary stage. Of which values, principles, and positive trends are inculcated and strengthened early on. Therefore, this study came to examine this vital role of the textbook.

Study Purpose

This study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. How inclusive are the principles of disability in the early elementary curriculum in Jordan?

Operational Definitions

The School Book: It's the cornerstone of education. It's an organized educational instrument that's the result of cultural, social, and technical collaboration and is aimed at specific target groups in a way to match their abilities⁽⁵⁾. This study focused on early elementary school books (1st- 4th grade).

The Disabled people: It's anyone who suffers from any physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory deficit in the long term. They are the individuals who faced certain obstacles and were unable to equally and actively participate in society⁽⁶⁾.

The Elementary Education Stage: It is a compulsory and free education stage in public schools. It constitutes the essential cornerstone for education, building national unity, developing capacities and self-inclinations, and guiding students emotionally⁽⁷⁾.

In 1948, the right to education was recognized as one of the essential human rights. In 1960, the he UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education was established; ensuring the right to equal access to education concerning human dignity. There is a need for the commitment of the international community to ensure good, fair, and comprehensive education. Enforcing learning opportunities for life in 2015 is an example of not leaving anyone behind, as it's a part of the UN sustainable development plan for 2030. Learning allows us to change our lives. It's estimated that the number of children, teenagers, and adolescents who are not affiliated with any school is around 258 million. It's fair to assume that the struggles of disabled people have helped shape the concept of their integration into the community⁽⁸⁾.

The international conference of education for disabled people, conducted in Salamanca, issued a firm statement defending the right to full comprehensive learning. It stated that disabled people should have the opportunity to pursue learning⁽⁹⁾.

Uniting education is of social importance because it counteracts segregation and stigma. This mixed environment allows us to appreciate the contributions of disabled people, break down misconceptions, and gradually change our negative attitudes toward them⁽¹⁰⁾.

The school curriculum must be founded on philosophical and educational perspectives derived from society. It's the active instrument that society uses to shape and construct people's personalities as it reflects a society's hopes and expectations through these individuals. It also reflects the reality and surfing of these communities. These cultural variables are usually addressed through the educational curriculum ⁽¹¹⁾.

The educational curriculum has many different definitions, and multiple ways to describe it, all of which share the same core principle. A study defined curriculum as a combination of parental, social, cultural, environmental, physical health, and religious factors that the institution provides to their students to reach their peak growth ⁽¹²⁾. Others defined it as the content, study method, school activities, extracurricular activities, and teaching method that keep up with the latest updates and changes in this sector. The result is an individual who keeps up with his or her era while achieving personal and societal objectives ⁽¹³⁾.

The curriculum was also defined as an educational plan that includes elements formed by objectives, content, expertise, and teaching method. These are derived from a foundation of philosophical, psychological, epistemological, and societal principles; connecting the student with his or her community. simply put, "the education plan" ⁽¹⁴⁾.

School curricula are considered the strongest instrument to achieve the hopes and visions of the community. Nations that want to advance in all aspects of life recognize that the way to this prosperity is through the development and revision of their school curricula ⁽¹⁵⁾. No matter how many definitions there are, they all agreed that the curriculum is a collection of educational experts' efforts to provide adequate opportunities to students, with predetermined objectives and content ⁽¹⁶⁾.

The school book is one of the most essential elements of the school curriculum. It is regarded as the foundation of any educational stage because it is rich in historical, linguistic, and cultural content. It achieves its objective of correcting false misconceptions and enforcing an accepting and equal attitude among students from various backgrounds and circumstances. This can be done, regardless of the great interest in the educational curricula in the areas of human rights, the necessity of cooperation, and the ethics of good citizens. The mention of disabled people's rights was narrow and only seen in a limited scope in an unethical and even illegal way ⁽¹²⁾.

Dr. Hayat Shobaki conducted a study and published by WANA, an affiliated institution of the Royal Scientific Society in Jordan. This study looked for the extent to which the rights of disabled people are included in the school curriculum; especially in the national and civic educational curricula from the 4th to the 10th grade. After analyzing the curriculum, a clear lack of inclusion was evident. Disparities in the application of terms and definitions to this group of people may result in confusion, discrimination, and isolation of disabled people ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Furthermore, Al-Abbadi conducted a study to look at the image of disabled people in the Jordanian curriculum in the first four essential grades. The result revealed that there was barely any reference and a poor introduction to the concepts of disability. The only disabilities that were mentioned were visual, mental, and motor disabilities ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Another study aimed to define the disabled people's image in the Arabic textbooks of the 5th and 6th grades school curricula of the Jordanian Ministry of Education 2020–2021. It revealed that there was no mention whatsoever of any type of disability; the only thing mentioned was the word "blind" twice in the 6th year second semester textbook, and it was out of context. It also did not address any of the characteristics of disabled people ⁽¹⁹⁾.

Jordan approved the Convention on the Rights of Disabled people and Its Optional Protocol in 2006 without any reservation. However, the Higher Council for the Rights of Disabled people (HCD) was established under the Law on the Rights of Disabled people No. 31 of 2007. It was under the name "The Supreme Council for the Affairs of Disabled persons" to serve as a legal and intuitive umbrella for disabled people in the kingdom. Thus, it founded a community in which these people can have a life of dignity and sustainability that allows effective participation based on equity and equality ⁽²⁰⁾. This appeared as a great step moving forward; the application of reality seems to differ.

The law showed a clear commitment to developing and reviewing educational curricula to ensure the inclusion of the disabled people's rights in their policies and programs at all stages. This can be done by incorporating public policies, strategies, plans, and programs to ensure their full abilities to express their rights to education; their access to all programs, services, facilities, and educational institutions. This indicated the need for "reviewing the curriculum by including topics that define the disabled people's rights, promoting their acceptance as part of the nature of human diversity" ⁽²¹⁾.

Even though the elementary school curriculum has undergone major development steps, it still falls short when it comes to the inclusion of disabled people in their school books. Besides, the situation is not any different in other Arab countries and some non-Arab countries as well ⁽²²⁾.

The study results, conducted in 2014, showed that there is a correlation between the rights found in the civil education curriculum and a stereotypical view of disabled people. This correlation is physical and in terms of their eye disabilities ⁽²²⁾. Another study found that discussions and scientific opinions are virtually nonexistent in children's school book. This means that disabled children do not see their reflection and representation in the books they read; even worse, it emphasizes stereotypical views and misconceptions about them and their day-to-day lives ⁽²³⁾.

Another study was conducted to analyze the representation of gender, age, and disability in music education books. The findings revealed a genuine lack of girls in the department, indicating that the integration of both sexes in this topic is still on hold ⁽²⁴⁾. Moreover, following a 2016 study, there is a real exclusion of disabled people in schoolbooks ⁽²⁵⁾. In the same year, Hodkinson conducted a study, under the title "An analysis of the cultural representation of disability in school textbooks in Iran and England," It found that the representation of disabled people was extremely low ⁽²⁶⁾.

A study was made to identify images of disabled people in schoolbooks. The study reviewed the entire school curriculum that was applied by the Palestinian Ministry of Education. It checked the accuracy of the information and cultural backgrounds on which these images and texts rely. The language was also checked to see how well it complied with the current language. It was examined whether there is a national vision on which these topics are based. In conclusion, it was preserved that there was a low representation of disabled people in schoolbooks, and even worse; the books supported the misconception that disabled people are weak and dependent ⁽²⁷⁾.

Hodkinson had a previous study in 2005 that concluded that in school books there was a limited version of disability, as opposed to the dominance of the non-disabled representation inside school books, which is taught up until elementary school ⁽²⁸⁾.

All the previous information presented the way of remediating the lack of representation of disabled people. It is to present a positive image that will, to some extent, compensate these people for the poor treatment done to them by educational policies. These remedies should uplift

the disabled people's hopes, make them feel independent, and show that they can adapt to their communities. Besides, these remedies are to educate non-disabled people about the rights of the disabled so that they can support them as they are their rights.

And on the brink of change, we believe that there are a considerable number of educational, societal, political, and cultural issues that should be reformed so as not to be misinterpreted in a book that I want to make universal, exclusive, and mandatory.

Methodology and Procedures

Methodology: The current study employed the analytical descriptive research methodology (content analysis). It is defined as "a descriptive research method concerned with collecting data from written, audio-recorded, or visual documents and analyzing the information contained in the content of the document; it is to reach objectives and specific conclusions" ⁽²⁹⁾.

This study intended to analyze information about disabled people, (mental disability, visual disability, hearing disability, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, communication disorders, health, and physical disabilities, and learning difficulties). These are included in the books of the elementary stage in Jordan from grade one to fourth grade, as written documents. These books are to reach objectives and specific conclusions about the extent to which the books include any of these concepts; they are to show that disabled people are an integral part of the students of the elementary stage in Jordan.

Educational Institutions in Jordan are classified, following their stages:

- The kindergarten stage, with a maximum duration of two years.
- The elementary education stage lasts for ten years and includes the first grade through the tenth grade.
- The secondary education stage lasts two years.

The **Criteria**, by which the content of the books of the elementary essential stage was analyzed, included:

- The extent to which Jordanian elementary-stage books cover the concept of disability
- The extent to which Jordanian essential stage books cover disability classifications
- Knowledge of the nature and quality of textbooks that include classifications of disabilities
- Checking the language and vocabulary used in the Jordanian elementary-stage books on the concept of disability
- The compatibility of the materials used with modern concepts and philosophy, and in line with the concept of disability
- Checking the correctness and scientific accuracy of information related to the concept of disability and disabled persons

Study Population and Study Sample: The study population and its sample comprised all the textbooks that make up the elementary stage curriculum in Jordan from the first grade to the fourth grade. The book for each subject and each grade comprises two semesters, as there are (36) books, as shown in table (1).

Grade	Names of the books that make up early elementary school curriculum in Jordan							Total
First	Islamic education (First + Second semester)	Arabic language (First + second semester)	Science (First + second semester)	-	-	-	-	6
Second	Islamic education (First + Second semester)	Arabic language (First + second semester)	Science (First + second semester)	Stories (First + second semester)	-	-	-	8
Third	Islamic education (First + Second semester)	Arabic language (First + second semester)	Science (First + second semester)	Stories (First + second semester)	-	-	-	8
Fourth	Islamic education (First + Second semester)	Arabic language (First + second semester)	Science (First + second semester)	Stories (First + second semester)	Social & national education (First + second semester)	Vocational education (First + second semester)	Science Practice (First + second semester)	14
Total	8	8	8	6	2	2	2	36

Table 1: Represents the study population and its sample which consist of all the books in the early elementary curriculum in Jordan.

Study Instrument: The researchers used a content analysis form to achieve this study. It comprised all the lessons included in (36) books of the elementary stage curriculum in Jordan from the first to the fourth grade. Its validity was confirmed by presenting it to a group of experienced referees and specialized professionals who ensured the extent of the existing concepts related to disabled persons.

The instrument reliability was determined through analysis by another specialized analyst, who calculated the coefficient of agreement between them. The value of the coefficient of agreement between the analysts reached (0.92). This value is an acceptable indicator of the reliability of the analysis instrument, as the minimum acceptable reliability coefficient is "0.60".

The **Procedures for Analyzing** the information, in light of the previously determined standards, are included in the books of the Jordanian elementary stage; from grade one to grade four.

- The objective of the content analysis was to determine the extent to which elementary level books include the concept of disabled people.
- The categories of analysis were identified as individuals and disabilities in the light of the criteria that have been identified.
- The researchers used the title of the lesson as a unit for analysis in the study.
- Reading the content of each lesson from the elementary stage books in Jordan carefully and accurately several times to extract any information related to disabled people.

- Putting a tick in the designated space following the occurrence of each of the concepts specified in the analysis list and its frequency.
- Showing the results of the lessons' analyses of Jordanian essential stage books in a prepared special table to extract results of the analyses.

Statistical Treatment: Frequencies and percentages of repetition of disability concepts included in the books of the lower basic stage in Jordan were calculated.

Study Results

The results related to the answers to the first question: To what extent are disability concepts included in the books of the lower basic stage in Jordan?

The researchers completed the analysis of the books of the lower basic stage in Jordan. They concluded that there are no concepts of disability included in the books of the lower basic stage in Jordan, as shown in table (2).

Grade	Educational material	The total frequency of concepts of disability in first-semester books	The total frequency of concepts of disability in second-semester books	The total frequency of concepts of disability in first-semester books	Percent %
First Grade	Islamic education	0	0	0	0
	Arabic language	0	0	0	0
	Science	0	0	0	0
Total		0	0	0	0
Second grade	Islamic education	0	0	0	0
	Arabic language	0	0	0	0
	Science	0	0	0	0
	Stories	0	0	0	0
Total		0	0	0	0
Third grade	Islamic education	0	0	0	0
	Arabic language	0	0	0	0
	Science	4	0	4	10.25%
	Stories	0	0	0	0
Total		4	0	4	10.25%
Fourth grade	Islamic education	0	0	0	0
	Arabic language	0	0	0	0
	Science	7	0	7	10.60%
	Stories	0	0	0	0
	Social & national education	0	0	0	0
	Vocational education	0	0	0	0
	Science practice	0	0	0	0
Total		7	0	7	10.60%

Table 2: Frequency and percent of disability concepts in all books of the early elementary school curriculum

Discussion

The school book is one of the most important and effective means of forming awareness, attitude, and ideas among school students. It is also regarded as an important key in the educational process because it is with students throughout their 12th year of school. It also provides an important opportunity to direct young people toward taking an interest in shared national priorities. The book forms the groundwork that establishes and solidifies community values, ideas, and attitudes.

The inclusion of disabled people in the school book can be considered a link between them and regular students. There should be connections between concepts and ideas among them in a simple way. This allows mutual understanding, spreads awareness of the nature of the disability and how to deal with it, and changes the regular students' wrong views toward this group. There should be no wrongful feelings or looks of sympathy toward disabled people⁽¹⁸⁾. This is the main focus of this study, which tried to answer the following question:

1. How inclusive are the principles of disability in the early elementary curriculum in Jordan?

After analyzing the textbooks of the early elementary school curriculum in Jordan, the authors concluded that there was no inclusion of the concepts of disabilities in these books. These results agree with a previous study that indicated that the rights of disabled people were low⁽³⁰⁾. Another study in 2007 aimed to analyze the content of topics related to disability in the Arabian press. It showed a wide gap between journalists and educators who specialized in the field of disability. Besides, it revealed limitations in highlighting disability and its issues in their articles⁽³¹⁾. After reviewing other studies, the researchers discovered that the journalists and educators' concepts and outcomes are similar to the researchers'⁽³²⁻³⁹⁾.

The Jordanian Law Article (20) in 2017 about the rights of disabled people made a clear commitment to the importance of developing and reviewing the educational curricula. It was to ensure the inclusion of disabled people in the curriculum, educational program, and policies. Law article (18) mentioned the importance of reviewing the school curriculum, including topics about the disabled people's rights, and enforcing their acceptance as a part of human diversity⁽²⁰⁾.

The Minister's decision in (2016) included the formation of a committee to develop educational curricula and all which is related to the educational atmosphere to serve disabled people. This decision was the backbone for the effort that the kingdom had made for decades to keep up with all the recent developments in both ideas and practices.

The Prime Minister, back then, formed a committee to develop curricula made for disabled people and methods of teaching them. They were to see the extent of how current curricula include and define disabled people. The results of which would help instill and endorse a culture of diversity and respect.

This study was conducted in the years (2021-2022). School books were analyzed up to the fourth grade. Besides, the study did not find any mention let alone a definition of disabled people. Only two subjects were mentioned⁽¹⁹⁾.

Hence, who is responsible for enabling these laws and regulations? Why have these laws not been implemented until now? The fact that there many activities were made for disabled people on a local, regional, and global level. There was the impression that the state of disabled people is well-cared for when in reality nothing of the sort is true.

The real result has shown that there is a huge gap between what is being said in the media and what is written in the offices of ministries. Every time there is talk of disabled people in the media or in government bodies; it's always a way to achieve a certain agenda, either for political or financial gains.

Study Recommendations

The researchers recommend the following:

- The presence of disabled people in the committees responsible for curriculum development is a must.
- The inclusion of disability concepts in the school book, especially in the early elementary period
- Conducting studies regarding society's role in the inclusion of the principle of disability in the school curriculum in general.
- Conducting studies aimed at knowing the reasons and barriers to including concepts of disability in the school curriculum.

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