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UNIVERSITY PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS IN SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE KSA

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Abstract
The aim of this research is to provide an analysis of the Special Education Diploma Program in Saudi Arabia as offered by the King Abdulaziz University (KAU) in Jeddah. The data utilized for evaluation was comprised of a final sample made up of 50 teachers. Data for the research was gathered using a survey consisting of three Dimensions: Cognitive, attitude and skill. Descriptive figures were also used to define the individual features of members. In addition, inferential tests were utilized to establish whether the individual variables - qualifications, teaching experience, training and age - forecasted the views of the teachers regarding their preparation program. Overall, the outcomes illustrated that their preparation program is efficient, and that the subscales of coursework, as well as the instruction proficiency of professors, are effective. Furthermore, teachers put forward their own proposals for the enhancement of their preparation program. Suggestions for teacher preparation programs and for forthcoming study have been additionally offered.
Key words: Special Educational Needs - Special Education Diploma Program - Teacher Preparation Programs

Literature Review:

Within Saudi Arabia, several special education divisions are available at several universities offering bachelor's and diploma's degrees in Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Diploma Preparation Programs are available to provide a certificate following a bachelor's degree for those desiring to work with children with SEN but who have no degree in special education. Only one analytical study of the undergraduate program in SEN has been carried out by Althabet (2002). His research appraised the teachers' views of the preparation program for mental retardation (MR), however no research has been done to analyse the Diploma Preparation Program. Therefore, the aim of the study is to offer information regarding the efficiency of the Diploma Preparation Program at KAU from the viewpoints of graduates under this program.

This research employs a survey to acquire the views of teachers on the perception program they have undergone at KAU regarding coursework, internships, the teaching proficiencies of professors, classroom applications as well as individual learning experiences. Founded on these outcomes, I will put forward proposals and suggestions which could assist learning planners, regulation formers, and teachers-trainers, in addition to those concerned in the endeavour, to establish, as well as apply better preparation programs for the teachers of the nation.

Numerous teacher education institutions appraise their programs to conform to accountability standards for endorsement. As soon as their programs are endorsed however, they do not print their analysis reports as the main intention of the appraisal is to acquire endorsement (Galluzzo & Craig, 1990). Adams and Craig (1983) outlined that 400 organizations carry out analytical studies, but in actuality few evaluation reports are available in the literature. Comparably, Althabet (2002) sent a letter to 90 special education teacher programs in the US asking for any assessments; he only received three responses. This could signify the severe deficiency of analytical studies within the literature.

Therefore, the present study is an endeavour to close the gap in terms of the harsh lack of evaluation studies in special education teacher preparation programs.

Overall, numerous researches have been carried out in America to establish attrition amid special education teachers, although not many concentrate on burnout. This is most likely a result of the increased availability of optional jobs in the US. Attrition in the US is high in comparison to Arabic nations as the teachers who do not like their jobs may resign and find an alternative occupation. In Arabic nations however, teachers have to keep their jobs whether or not they like them as a result of restricted job opportunities, which can in turn raise the sense of Burnout. This is why attrition is not a significant matter in Arabic nations. In the near future, this could change as a result of the economic crisis, and teachers within the US may have to maintain their jobs whether or not they like them and this could therefore result in more burnout than attrition.

6. Research Objectives:

The key aim of this research is to scrutinize the effectiveness of the Diploma Preparation Program as viewed by teachers who are graduates of the Special Education Diploma Program in KAU. The objective of this research is to gain knowledge from the encounters of previous students. Particularly, the study is aimed at comprehending present SEN teachers' views concerning coursework, standard of internship, classroom applications, teaching proficiencies of professors and individual learning knowledge. This will be done by employing survey data, and contrasting the data using gender, and years of teaching experience. The data will therefore offer an appraisal by previous students on the efficiency of the Diploma Preparation Program.

7. Research Design and Methodology:

As the main objective of this research is to acquire views, attitudes and outlooks from a great number of teachers, the design of the present research comprised a survey research. A survey will be employed to collect data regarding the efficiency of the SEN teachers' preparation program in Saudi Arabia from the viewpoints of the teachers themselves. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) highlighted that "surveys are employed to learn about the opinions, convictions, principles, demographics, conduct, attitudes, inclinations, concepts and alternative kinds of information about people. They are usually employed in commerce, politics, state, sociology, general health, psychology and learning as precise information may be acquired for considerable amounts of people with a minor sample" (p. 233). Additionally, survey research design has been employed in numerous studies in which the evaluation of the programs was the objective, such as the study by Wasburn-Moses (2005).

Program appraisal is essential to improve, grasp and offer direction for program enhancement. Evaluation can raise the comprehension of a program and the manner in which it functions. It can also show general efficiency and standard (Weiss, 1998). The aim behind the present research is to appraise the SEN teachers' preparation program at KAU, and identify proposals for enhancement. Based on the results, proposals and suggestions may be put forward to assist learning planners, regulation creators and teacher instructors to institute and apply enhanced preparation programs for the teachers of the nation.

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Research Sample and Community

The sample of this study was deliberately chosen from the pool of postgraduate students majoring in special education. Thus, a hardcopy of the questionnaire was distributed once the participants had been identified. In the endonly (50) of the questionnaires were valid for analysis. However, the following table shows their distribution according to research demographic variables:

Table (1)
The distribution of the individuals of the research sample on the specified variables

No.	Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	**Qualification**	BA.	33	66
		Postgraduate Diploma	17	34
2	**Experience**	Less than 5 years	7	14
		5 – less than 10 years	13	26
		10 – less than 15 years	20	40
		15 years and above	10	20
3	**Training Courses**	Less than 5 years	36	72
		5 courses and above	14	28
4	**Age**	Less than 30 years	7	14
		30 – less than 40 years	37	74
		40 years and above	6	12
5	**Did you receive any training at any of the schools or centres of special education?**	Yes	24	48
		No	26	52
The total number of the research sample			**50**	**100**

As shown in the above table, the individuals making up the sample were distributed based on the variables of the study. However, as for the variable of "qualification" we find that the percentage of the BA students reached 66%, while for the postgraduate students it reached 34%. Moreover, for the "experience" variable we find that the highest percentage is for those who enjoy 10 – less than 15 years with a 40%, while the least percentage was for those who enjoy less than 5 years with a percent of 14%. As for the variable of the "training courses", the highest students' percentage is for those who attended training courses for less than 5 years with a percentage of 72%, while those who attended less than 5 courses came with 28%. In the case of the "age" variable, the highest students' percentage was for those aged from 30 – less than 40 years with 74%, while the lowest students' percentage was for those whose age is 40 years and older with 12%. Lastly, with respect to "getting the training sessions at one of the centres", the highest students' percentage was for those who participated and their percentage was 52%. However, those who did not participate made up 48%.

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Rationing the tool of the study:

The data analysis revealed an appropriate degree of validity for the tool to be applied and that it does measure what it was intended to. However, the values of the phrases correlation coefficient with all its dimensions appeared statistically significant at the level of (0.01) and was restricted between (0.343 – 0.711) for the cognitive dimension, and between (0.483 – 0.782) for the skill dimension. As for the dimension of attitudes, the values of the correlation coefficient were restricted between (0.432 – 0.790). Moreover, the correlation coefficient of the three dimensions with the total degree of the scale appeared to be statistically significant at a level of (0.01) with values of (0.86, 0.94, 0.96) respectively. These are high values which indicate a consistency in the phrase and its dimensions within the questionnaire.

Regarding the stability of the scale, the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the measure as a whole was (0.94), and for the three dimensions representing the perceptions of teachers (cognitive, skill, and attitude) the values were (0.89, 0.89, 0.73), respectively. These are high values which indicate the stability of the scale as well as its validity for application.

- **Order of the availability and the degree of the dimensions of perceptions for the postgraduate students in special education.**

The order of the dimensions of perceptions and the availability degree of each and all dimensions are as follows:

Table (2)
The arithmetic means and standard deviations of the dimensions of perceptions and its overall degrees for the postgraduate students in special education

Dimension No. with axis	Dimensions	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	The order of the dimension	The degree of availability
1	**Cognitive Dimension**	4.03	0.488	**1**	Big
3	**Attitude Dimension**	3.93	0.492	**2**	Big
2	**Skill Dimension**	3.88	0.583	**3**	Big
The total of students' perceptions		3.95	0.480	**--**	Big

The previous table (2) illustrates that the frequency of perceptions for the postgraduate diploma students in special education came with a (large) degree, with an arithmetic mean of (3.95), and a standard deviation of (0.480). The values of the standard deviations of the three dimensions which represent students' perceptions ranged between (0.488 – 0.583) which are low values indicating the homogeneity of the responses of the postgraduate diploma students in special education. The arithmetic means for the three dimensions ranged between (3.88-3 4.0) which is to a large extent in the availability of all dimensions.

This study is in line with the study by Eriks-Brophy, Aliceand Whittingham, and Joanne (2013) who showed that teachers have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of students with hearing loss, this

points towards a high level of confidence among teachers in their ability to deal with and teach those students, and indicates that they are fully aware of the effects of hearing loss on language and learning. They also submitted that the teachers' preparation training programs have sufficiently qualified them to teach those students effectively. The study has also highlighted the need to raise the focus on special teaching needs for students with hearing loss within the programs of teachers' preparation and provide the appropriate support for both students and teachers in order to enhance successful inclusion.

This study contradicts the study by Crawford, Lindy & Almond, Patricia & Tindal, Gerald & Hollenbeck, Keith1(2002) which tackled teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. Their study put forward the contention that teachers have expressed their concerns about the inclusion of all students, and that very few of them showed great enthusiasm.

- **The availability of perceptions at the cognitive dimension for the students at the postgraduate diploma in special education.**

The arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the responses of the students in the postgraduate diploma in special education were calculated on the cognitive dimension and its phrases as follows:

Table (3)

The arithmetic mean for the level of the availability of perceptions within the cognitive dimension for the postgraduate students in special education.

No.	Phrases	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Order of the Phrase	The Availability Degree
8	I understand typical child development.	4.24	0.690	1	Very High
5	I have knowledge regarding various disabling conditions.	4.22	0.910	2	Very High
21	I am aware of my role on the eligibility and placement team.	4.08	0.877	3	High
32	I am able to vary my instructional methods to accommodate students with disabilities.	4.02	0.869	4	High
36	I understand the relationship of self-concept and learning.	3.94	0.610	5	High
12	I have knowledge regarding various disabling conditions.	3.90	0.953	6	High
24	I understand the variety of the program alternatives available to students with disabilities.	3.88	0.824	7	High

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2	I know the process required for developing the individualized educational plan.	3.86	0.904	8	High
15	I know the procedures for referring a child with suspected disabilities to be evaluated.	3.74	1.006	9	High
38	I have good knowledge of the alternative reinforcement systems (continuous – intermittent – relative)	3.70	0.974	10	High
30	I am aware of the curriculum of special education for students with disabilities.	3.70	0.974	11	High
18	I am knowledgeable of placement procedures for students who qualify for special education.	3.66	1.002	12	High
27	I understand the relation among multidisciplinary evaluation, selecting instructional activities and evaluating progress.	3.54	0.862	13	High
The overall degree for the cognitive dimension		3.88	0.583	-	High

The previous table (3) illustrates that the degree of the availability of the cognitive dimension as one of the dimensions of students' perceptions of the postgraduate students in special education were (high), with an arithmetic mean of (3.88), and a standard deviation of (0.583), and the values of the standard deviations for the phrases that represent the cognitive dimension being less than integer (1) except for the phrases (15,18) which have a standard deviation value of (1.006,1001) respectively. This is indicative of homogeneity in the responses of the samples to all the statements of the dimension except for these two phrases. The arithmetic mean scores ranged between (3.54- 4.24) with a "high" availability degree, except the four phrases (5, 8) which got a "very high" degree of availability.

This is in agreement with the study of Eriks-Brophy, Alice, Whittingham, and Joanne: (2013) who contended that teachers have confidence in their ability to teach students with hearing loss and that they are fully aware of the effects of hearing loss on language and learning. They went on further to say that the teachers' preparation training programs have sufficiently qualified them to teach those students effectively.

- **The availability of perceptions at the skill dimension for the students at the postgraduate diploma in special education:**

The arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the responses of the students in the postgraduate diploma in special education were calculated on the skill dimension and its phrases as follows:

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Table (4)

The arithmetic mean for the level of the availability of perceptions within the skill dimension for the postgraduate students in special education.

The number of the phrase within the questionnaire	Phrases	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Order of the Phrase	The Availability Degree
22	I can change my teaching strategies so that to adapt with students with disabilities.	4.36	0.693	1	Very high
25	I am able to participate as a team member in the individualized instructional program meetings.	4.20	0.756	2	Very high
35	I know how to plan for the benefits of students in cooperation with specialists.	4.16	0.584	3	High
1	I can work with groups as well as individuals within the same classroom.	4.16	0.584	4	High
6	I am able to identify students who need special assistance.	4.14	0.606	5	High
28	I am able to assist in designing the individualized educational plan.	4.10	0.789	6	High
37	I am able to adapt curriculum to meet the needs of students with disabilities in my classroom.	4.08	0.829	7	High
9	I am able to evaluate my students' learning and however can accordingly adapt my strategy in teaching.	4.06	0.652	8	High
19	I am able to exert an effort to coordinate the instructional programs of students with disabilities with the special education teacher.	4.04	0.755	9	High

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33	I am able to formulate instructional objectives that can be measured and observed.	3.98	0.742	10	High
16	I am able to make effective use of special education resource room materials.	3.98	1.130	11	High
3	I can facilitate learning among students with low achievements.	3.94	0.767	12	High
13	I am able to provide opportunities for the students with disabilities in my classroom to build upon their strengths as well as addressing their area of difficulties.	3.94	0.956	13	High
31	I am able to formulate instructional objectives that are measurable.	3.80	0.782	14	High
39	I can apply alternative reinforcement systems (continuous – intermittent – relative)	3.80	0.857	15	High
10	I am able to select appropriate materials for the students with disabilities in my classroom.	3.68	1.096	16	High
The overall degree for the skill dimension		4.03	0.488	-	High

The previous table (4) shows that the degree of the availability of the skill dimension as of the dimensions of students' perceptions of the postgraduate students in special education were (high), with an arithmetic mean of (4.03), and a standard deviation of (0.488), and the values of the standard deviations for the phrases that represent the skill dimension ranged between (0.584-0.857) which are relatively average values. This points to homogeneity in the responses of the students of the postgraduate diploma in special education except for the phrases (10, 16) where the standard deviations of their responses were (1.130, 1.096) respectively. The arithmetic mean of phrases ranged from (3.68-4.36) with a high availability degree, except for the phrases (22, 25) which came with a "very high" degree.

This is in agreement with the study of Eriks-Brophy, Aliceand Whittingham, Joanne: (2013) who argued that teachers have a great deal of confidence in their ability to teach students with hearing loss and that they are fully aware of the effects of hearing loss on language and learning. They went on further to state that teachers' preparation training programs have sufficiently prepared them to teach those students effectively.

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- **The availability of perceptions at the attitude dimension for the students at the postgraduate diploma in special education:**

The arithmetic mean and standard deviation for the responses of the students in the postgraduate diploma in special education were calculated on the attitude dimension and its phrases as follows:

Table (5)

The arithmetic mean for the level of the availability of perceptions within the attitude dimension for the postgraduate students in special education.

The number of the phrase within the questionnaire	Phrases	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Order of the Phrase	The Availability Degree
20	With training and support, I would be able to meet the instructional needs of students with disabilities.	4.54	0.706	1	Very high
23	The needs of students with mild disabilities can be effectively met in a regular classroom.	4.40	0.670	2	Very high
40	It is my own responsibility to communicate with parents of students with disabilities in my class.	4.24	0.938	3	Very high
29	I feel comfortable to discuss the instructional strategies for students with disabilities in general with other teaching staff members.	4.18	0.800	4	High
17	I am comfortable with the thought of implementing individualized instructional programs for students with disabilities in my class.	4.00	0.808	5	High
4	Students with disabilities can benefit from placement in the regular classroom with appropriate support services.	3.94	0.935	6	High

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11	I am responsible for the education of students with disabilities placed in my class.	3.84	1.076	7	High
14	My attitude and efforts will determine whether students with disabilities succeed or fail in my classroom.	3.70	1.074	8	High
34	I expect all of my students to achieve the instructional tasks designed for them.	3.66	0.939	9	High
26	I prefer to manage the instructional program of students with disabilities in my classroom.	3.58	1.051	10	High
7	Students with disabilities would not be stigmatized if they were educated solely in regular classroom.	3.12	1.222	11	medium
The overall degree of the attitude dimension		**3.92**	**0.492**	**–**	High

The previous table (5) illustrates that the degree of the availability of the attitude dimension as one of the dimensions of students' perceptions of the postgraduate students in special education were (high), with an arithmetic mean of (3.92), and a standard deviation of (0.492), and the values of the standard deviations for the phrases that signify the cognitive dimension ranged between (0.670-0.939) which are fairly average values. This shows homogeneity in the responses of the students of the postgraduate diploma in special education except for the phrases (11, 14, 26, and 7) which were higher than the integer (1). The arithmetic mean of phrases ranged from (3.58-4.54) with a "high" and "very high" availability degree, except for the phrase (7) which came with a "medium" degree.
This supports the study of Eriks-Brophy, Aliceand Whittingham, and Joanne: (2013) who put forward that teachers have confidence in their ability to teach students with hearing loss and provide adequate support to teachers and learners in order to enhance successful inclusion.

Table (6)

Test results of Mann-Whitney- U Test to reveal the significance differences between the mean levels of the postgraduate students of special education regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities as attributed to the difference in qualification.

No	Dimension	Qualification	Numbers	The average of the levels	The total of the levels	Mann-Whitney-U Test	The level of significance
1	Cognitive	BA	33	23.00	759.00	198.00	0.091
		PG Dip	17	30.35	516.00		
2	Skill	BA	33	22.58	745.00	184.00	*0.048

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No	Dimension	Qualification	Numbers	The average of the levels	The total of the levels	Mann-Whitney-U Test	The level of significance
		PG Dip	17	31.18	530.00		
3	Attitude	BA	33	24.76	817.00	256.00	0.615
		PG Dip	17	26.94	458.00		
The overall of teachers'		BA	33	23.44	773.50	212.50	0.164
		PG Dip	17	29.50	501.50		

- significant at the level (0.05)

Table (6) displays statistically important variances at the level of (0.05) between the averages of the views of special education postgraduate students in relation to the inclusion of students with disabilities in public schools. This is attributed to the difference in the qualification variable, but only on the skill dimension, and not the others. It is also shown that there are no statistically important variances at the level of (0.05) between the averages of the views of special education postgraduate students as regards the inclusion of students with disabilities in public schools which is accredited to the difference in the qualification variable on the general perceptions or the three dimensions that represent them (cognitive, skill, attitude).

Table (7)

Test results of Mann-Whitney- U Test to reveal the significance differences between the mean levels of the postgraduate students of special education regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities as attributed to the difference in the number of training courses.

No	Dimension	Qualification	Numbers	The average of the levels	The total of the levels	Mann-Whitney-U Test	The level of significance
1	cognitive	5 courses and less	36	22.31	803.00	137.00	**0.013
		5 courses and above	14	33.71	472.00		
2	skill	5 courses and less	36	21.63	788.50	112.50	**0.003
		5 courses and above	14	35.46	496.50		
3	attitude	5 courses and less	36	22.24	800.50	134.50	**0.011
		5 courses and above	14	33.89	474.50		

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No	Dimension	Qualification	Numbers	The average of the levels	The total of the levels	Mann-Whitney-U Test	The level of significance
The overall of teachers' perceptions		5 courses and less	36	21.90	788.50	122.55	** 0.005
		5 courses and above	14	34.75	486.50		

* Significant at the level of (0.05) ** Significant at the level of (0.01)

The previous table (7) shows the following:

- There are statistically important variances at the level of (0.01) among the averages of the perceptions of postgraduate students in special education concerning the presence of students with disabilities at public schools which can be attributed to the difference in the number of training courses in favour of the students who have attended (5) courses and above.
- There are statistically important variances at the level of (0.01) among the averages of the views of postgraduate students in special education with reference to the inclusion of students with disabilities at public schools on the three dimensions (cognitive, skill, and attitude) which can be attributed to the difference in the number of training courses in favour of the teachers who have attended (5) courses and above.

This finding is in line with the study of Eriks-Brophy, Alice and Whittingham, and Joanne(2013) who argued that teachers' preparation programs have adequately equipped teachers with knowledge that enables them to teach those students effectively. In addition, they called for an increased emphasis on the special teaching needs in these programs for students who suffer from hearing loss.

Table (8)

Test results of Mann-Whitney- U Test to reveal the significance differences between the mean levels of the postgraduate students of special education regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities as attributed to receiving training from one of the centres.

No	Dimension	Qualification	Numbers	The average of the levels	The total of the levels	Mann-Whitney-U Test	The level of significance
1	cognitive	Yes	24	27.88	659.50	264.50	0.355
		No	26	23.67	615.50		
2	skill	Yes	24	27.56	661.50	262.50	0.355
		No	26	23.60	613.50		
3	attitude	Yes	24	28.08	674.00	250.00	0.227
		No	26	23.12	601.00		
The overall of		Yes	24	28.10	674.50	249.50	0.225

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No	Dimension	Qualification	Numbers	The average of the levels	The total of the levels	Mann-Whitney-U Test	The level of significance
	teachers' perceptions	No	26	23.10	600.50		

* Significant at the level of (0.05) ** Significant at the level of (0.01)

The previous table (8) shows the following:

- There are no statistically important variances at the level of (0.05) among the averages of the views of postgraduate students in special education with respect to the inclusion of students with disabilities at public schools which can be attributed to the presence/absence of training whether it includes all the perceptions or only the three dimensions as represented by (cognitive, skill, and attitude).

This study differs from the study of Thompson, Tony (2012) in relation to the pre-service preparation of math teachers for inclusion where the results have shown that field and summer activities have had positive effects on the pre-service visions of math teachers towards inclusion. Unlike those who did not have similar experiences in teaching students with disabilities, these effects were much more prominent than any other topics on teachers ahead of service.

Table (9)

Test results of Kruskal-Wallis Test to reveal the significance differences between the mean levels of the postgraduate students of special education regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities as attributed to age.

Dimension	Age	Number	Level Average	Chi-Square	Level of Significance
Cognitive	Less than (30)	7	33.29	2.526	0.283
	From 30 –less than 40 years	37	23.84		
	40 years and	6	26.67		
Skill	Less than (30)	7	34.57	3.342	0.188
	From 30 –less than 40 years	37	23.65		
	40 years and	6	26.33		
Attitude	Less than (30)	7	31.29	1.369	0.504
	From 30 –less than 40 years	37	24.81		
	40 years and	6	23.00		
The overall of	Less than (30)	7	33.50	2.601	0.272

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teachers' perceptions	From 30 –less than 40 years	**37**	**23.85**		
	40 years and	**6**	**26.33**		

*** Significant at the level of (0.05)** **** Significant at the level of (0.01)**

The previous table (9) shows the following:

- There are no statistically important variances at the level of (0.05) among the averages of the views of postgraduate students in special education with respect to the inclusion of students with disabilities at public schools which can be attributed to age whether it includes all the perceptions or only the three dimensions as represented by (cognitive, skill, and attitude).

Table (10)

Test results of Kruskal-Wallis Test to reveal the significance differences between the mean levels of the postgraduate students of special education regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities as attributed to the years of experience.

Dimension	Age	Number	Level Average	Chi-Square	Level of Significance
Cognitive	**Less than (5)**	**7**	**22.64**	**0.500**	**0.919**
	5 to less than 10	**13**	**25.12**		
	From 10 – less than 15 years	**20**	**25.68**		
	15 years and	**10**	**27.65**		
Skill	**Less than (5)**	**7**	**22.21**	**1.092**	**0.779**
	5 to less than 10	**13**	**23.35**		
	From 10 – less	**20**	**27.58**		
	15 years and	**10**	**26.45**		
Attitude	**Less than (5)**	**7**	**27.29**	**0.298**	**0.960**
	5 to less than 10	**13**	**25.31**		
	From 10 – less	**20**	**25.95**		
	15 years and	**10**	**23.60**		
The overall of teachers' perceptions	**Less than (5)**	**7**	**23.36**	**0.314**	**0.957**
	5 to less than 10	**13**	**24.65**		
	From 10 – less	**20**	**26.15**		
	15 years and	**10**	**26.80**		

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* Significant at the level of (0.05) ** Significant at the level of (0.01)

Table (10) shows that there are no statistically important variances at the level of (0.05) among the averages of the views of postgraduate students in special education as regards the inclusion of students with disabilities at public schools which can be attributed to the difference in years of experience whether it includes all the perceptions or only the three dimensions as represented by (cognitive, skill, and attitude).

Review and discussion for the results of the qualitative research:

Three questions were raised to the students who joined the postgraduate program in special education. There were six students and they responded as follows:

First Question: what is your evaluation of the quality of knowledge that you gained through your study in the postgraduate diploma in special education and how can we improve its quality?

Students' responses on the subject of the quality of the postgraduate diploma in special education were shown on a five-degree scale with a "high" availability degree reflecting a high quality of knowledge offered by the program compatible with the developments and recent updates in special education. This is also in agreement with the results of the quantitative research with a cognitive dimension coming first with an arithmetic mean of (4.03) and a standard deviation of (0.488) with a "high" availability degree.
As for the strategy of improving the quality of knowledge, they varied in their responses. Table (11) sheds light on this.

Table (11)

Special education postgraduate students' answers regarding how the quality of knowledge offered in the diploma program can be improved

Question	Answer	Frequency
Through your course of study at the special education postgraduate diploma, how can we improve the quality of knowledge?	Understand the aspects and methods of educating students with special needs	3
	a richness of knowledge and an abundance in academic sources	3
	Relate knowledge with reality	2
	Activate the individualized educational plan	2
	Get students involved in this knowledge	1

Table (11) shows that the cognitive aspects of the nature of the disability and the characteristics of the disabled are predominant in special education postgraduate students' answers and responses to

improving the quality of knowledge offered to them. On the other hand students' involvement in this knowledge was the least mentioned.

However, most of the students' answers focused on understanding the aspects and strategies to teaching students with special needs in addition to the importance of enriching knowledge and relating it to reality and providing them with academic resources. One of the students whose name is (Meshal) indicated that "he benefited from the knowledge pertaining to people with special needs on whom it was applied. He also assures the importance of reviewing studies and information pertaining to people with disabilities and activating the individualized educational plan." (Khaled) also referred to "the importance of understanding the nature of people with special needs and the richness of knowledge linking it to reality in the field of special education". Moreover, (Ali) said "it is very important to know the properties of children with special needs, their methods of teaching and the behavioural problems that they face".

This obviously makes the cognitive and knowledge aspects very important to the postgraduate diploma students in special education; particularly in their search for and gaining of knowledge with them raising as many questions as possible to satisfy their curiosity and enthusiasm towards it.
As for students' participation in this knowledge, (Abdulrahman) refers to "the importance of involving all the students themselves with the knowledge offered to them and getting their feedback on it". This in turn reflects the importance of the student responses to the evaluation questionnaire in their courses to get their feedback on them and to take the knowledge, interests and experiences of students into consideration when planning for curriculum development.

Second Question: what is your evaluation to the skills of dealing with people with special needs through your study in the postgraduate diploma in special education and how can we improve these skills?

This question was addressed to the students who joined the postgraduate program in special education. There were six students and they responded by expressing their opinions on the quality of communication skills with people with special needs that they gained during their study at the diploma. Their responses were categorised according to a five-degree scale with a "high" frequency degree which indicates an improved quality of the skills of communicating with special needs people. These skills were taught to students in an attempt to keep up with modern updates in the field of special education. This agrees with the results of the qualitative research in which the skill dimension was ranked third with an arithmetic mean of (3.88) and a standard deviation of (0.583) with a "high" frequency degree.

As for how we can improve communication skills with people with special needs, the answers varied as clarified in table (12):

Table (12)

Special education postgraduate students' answers regarding how we can improve the skills of communicating with people with special needs

Question	Answer	Frequency
Through your course of study at the special education postgraduate diploma, how can	Courses, seminars and forums	5
	Field training	4
	Visits to the centres of special	4

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we improve the skills of communicating with people with special needs	education	
	Communicating with people with special needs	3
	Participation in special needs clubs and associations	2
	Patience in dealing with them	1

Table (12) reveals that seminars and forums came first, while field training came second followed by visits to the special needs centres and communication with people with special needs. Lastly came involvement in special needs clubs and associations together with exercising patience when dealing with their needs.

This illustrates that the process of improving communication with people with special needs happens only through the practical application of the knowledge and information attained by students as well as through actual involvement in whatever might help in improving their ability to remain updated. (Ali) assures "the importance of having a good knowledge about children with special needs", (Meshal) also said that "each student with special needs has his own special communication style as each one represents a unique case that requires patience in communication". It is also extremely crucial for individuals to get involved directly with special needs institutions through visiting their clubs and associations and offering assistance. (Khaled) makes mention of the importance of getting involved with special needs through their clubs and gatherings.

Third Question: Have your study of the postgraduate diploma in special education changed your attitudes towards students with special needs? How can we then develop the attitudes of students with special needs?

This question was addressed to the students who joined the postgraduate program in special education. There were six students and they responded by expressing their opinions on changing their attitudes towards people with special needs during their study of the diploma. Their responses were sorted according to a five-degree scale with a "high" frequency degree. This indicated that the quality of the programs that the students attended was high and that they were kept up to date with modern developments in special education which contributed to their development of positive attitudes towards people with special needs. This is in line with the results of the quantitative research in which the attitude dimension was ranked second with an arithmetic mean of (3.93) and a standard deviation of (0.492) with "high" frequency degree.

As for how students' attitudes towards people with special needs can be developed, the answers varied as explained in table (12):

Table (13)
Special education postgraduate students' answers regarding how students' attitudes towards people with special needs can be developed

Question	Answer	Frequency
Through your study in the	Raising awareness and	4

postgraduate diploma in special education, how can students' attitudes towards people with special needs be developed	organizing exhibitions.	
	Seminars, meetings and conferences	3
	Strategies for approaching them	2
	The role of mothers in affecting fathers' attitudes. Parents groups and community participation.	2
	Visits to the special education centres.	1

Table (13) illustrates that raising awareness and organizing exhibitions came first, while the seminars, meetings and conferences together with the strategies of dealing with people with special needs came second and the role of mothers and their attitudes and community participation came third. In last place were visits to the special education centres.

This displays that the process of adapting social attitudes in general and students' attitudes in particular towards people with special needs requires the provision of aspects pertaining to knowledge, information and culture to different people through seminars, meetings, conferences and exhibitions. One of the students whose name is (Khaled) said "at the beginning we could not accept them and then later on we started to discover their characteristics and new aspects were made clear at a later stage". (Mesha) also said that "the school community should be familiar with some of the disabilities and how to manage them. We also cannot ignore the pioneering role of the mothers in looking after their disabled children and the effect they have on fathers' attitudes in taking the responsibility and showing the interests, care and attention through making groups for the parents of children with disabilities. (Taher) said that "we should invite parents of the disabled to take their children with them". In addition, we should visit the local community institutions, see their responsibilities towards children with disabilities, and get familiar with the activities and services that they offer.

Recommendations

Program Recommendations

Suggestions centred on improving the overall efficiency of student teachers' preparation schemes are provided in line with the present study's findings. Student teachers who have been involved in this study have made suggestions with a view toward enhancing the internships and training, and also expanding the teaching skills of professors.

Internship and Training

Collaboration between districts and departments in the special education field should be established in an effort to allow students to practice what they have learnt at a university level. Student teachers hold the view that training time spent in actual classrooms is the most critical aspect of a preparation programme, with such initiatives being needed to direct importance to such experiences. It is recognised that the programme, in its early stages, should afford such experiences, which should continue on through to the internship and practicum stages. The internship length should also be

longer, i.e. for a one-year period. Lastly, students should be provided with feedback consistently and regularly in an effort to enhance their teaching abilities.

Professors' Teaching Skills

Professors should provide their students with training through in-classroom practice sessions. Furthermore, there should be a direct connection between the professor and the field, with students benefitting from the presentation of real-life case studies. It is submitted that professors should lecture less, and instead direct their efforts towards helping students to acquire and implement the skills needed in the actual classroom setting. Moreover, it would be valuable for special education departments to give students the opportunity to assess their professors following the conclusion of each semester, where such evaluation would be pivotal in improving in-classroom teaching.

Implications for Further Research

Thus far, there is a lack of research centred on dealing with the competencies possessed by teachers with regard to enabling them to successfully teach those with learning disabilities in the context of Saudi classrooms. However, there have been studies carried out with the view of supporting the idea that student teachers are required to have a certain wealth of skills and knowledge, in addition to positive outlooks, to facilitate themselves in teaching inclusive classrooms—along with preparing for such a task (King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999).

Conclusions

In the current study, the student teachers by and large demonstrated positive viewpoints towards teaching students with special needs within their mainstream classrooms. Moreover, their knowledge and skills self-report levels were mostly pleasing. The perceptions of knowledge and skills levels following the completion of teacher education programmes provide valuable insight into how high quality programmes can be delivered in such a way as to ensure teachers are given the tools and skills they deem necessary to teach classrooms including students with special needs. Following the completion of student teaching courses, it would be useful for general education student teachers to recognise that special education knowledge is not adequate in allowing them to successfully work with students with special needs in the classroom.

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